



# *in Alliance*

THE ALLIANCE OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS (AUSTRALASIA) LTD  
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## *in Alliance*

*The Alliance of Girls'  
Schools (Australasia) Ltd*

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## *in this issue*

- *2003 Annual Conference*
- *Transition Issues*
- *Tech Angels*

## In Alliance Editorial Deadlines for 2003

Volume 28  
Thursday, 28 August 2003  
*Keeping in Touch – alumni and community liaison*

Volume 29  
Thursday, 23 October 2003  
*Staff (inductions, review processes, aspiring Heads)*



Cover: Mr Max Eulo at the 2003 Annual Conference Opening Ceremony

## FROM THE EDITOR...

...a transition point for *The Alliance*



Whilst this edition of *In Alliance* focuses on the Annual Conference held at Loreto Kirribilli and gives an overview of transition programs in some of our member schools, there are other aspects we must address.

A new initiative of the Alliance is to provide two students from member schools the opportunity to attend the National Coalition of Girls Schools Student Forum in Virginia in July. On page 13 of this issue we profile the winning entrants, Katie Keene from Walford Anglican School for Girls in Adelaide and Naomi Hart from MLC School Sydney. Katie and Naomi will be asked to reflect on their experience for the next edition of *In Alliance*.

Of great significance for the Alliance, however, is the resignation of the Executive Director, Edwina Sear who joined the Alliance in November 2000. We pay tribute to Edwina's work in this edition. The accolades she received, and continues to receive, demonstrate the esteem in which she was held. Letters, emails, cards and telephone calls have all been showered upon her and acknowledge the importance of someone sitting just aside from the traditional educator who otherwise may sit in the Director's Chair! As Edwina noted in her parting email to members, "it is always difficult knowing when to leave a one person organisation"; but having seen through such a successful Annual Conference and placed the Alliance on a firm financial footing, the time seemed right. In retirement, she had hoped to spend more time with her mother, whose health was failing. Most sadly, on the night of her final day in the office, and farewell from Victorian members, her mother died.

The Annual Conference brought together almost 200 attendees from member schools and beyond. We had staff from co-educational schools and a number from schools contemplating joining the Alliance, an organisation that has grown so much under Edwina. The conference setting was delightful and Janet Freeman and her Staff are to be commended for their support. This conference was organised out of the Alliance office with no Committee set up for the purpose; particular thanks are therefore due to Edwina for her superb co-ordination of speakers, venue, accommodation and the myriad of details to be covered. Having worked out of the Alliance office for many months, in support of various tasks, I can appreciate the array of tasks the Executive Director is called upon to play.

Our last edition provided some commentary on Mentoring. In this Edition, we look at how Mentoring is occurring in ICT at Wellington Girls' College, the "Tech Angels" of the College. See the article on page 14. How are you using mentors in your school?

As noted in my report to the Annual General Meeting, this magazine is a forum for members to share their wonderful programmes and for us all to appreciate the diversity of opportunity available in Alliance schools. Over the years of my Editorship, I have attempted to showcase a range of issues: thus the remaining editions for 2003 respond to areas not covered to date. Alumni, bequests, fund-raising, staffing and recruitment are all areas of focus facing school leaders annually. We look forward to you sharing some of what you are doing.

Nancy Hillier, Editor



The 2003 AGSA Conference Opening Ceremony

## FROM THE PRESIDENT...

*...a tribute to Edwina Sear*



Few can appreciate the diversity of tasks Edwina is called upon to undertake. Edwina was asked by the Executive to take on the position of Executive Director, having come from a large Architectural company where she was Executive Assistant to the Chairman. Prior to this role she had worked in schools and her own education had been as both a day and boarding student in girls' schools, both in New South Wales and Victoria. She knew what to expect!

What we have seen in her leadership is testament to her wide-ranging skills and ability to cope with students at the Annual Student Leadership Conference, staff, in their on-going requests and we, as leaders of girls' schools... no mean feat.

Just as the role of Principal is seen as lonely and isolated, so to is someone working alone in an organisation. It has been to Edwina's credit that she knows the members so well. Her extraordinary attention to detail, her meticulous record keeping and well-developed links with banks, caterers, publishers and designers, ASIC, lawyers, accountants and the Tax Office, not to mention the Post Office, portray a little of what it means to operate an organisation such as The Alliance.

Thank you Edwina for all you have done in the time with us. The



*Edwina and David Sear with Fiona and Dennis Godfrey at the Conference Dinner*



*Edwina and Heather Schnagl at the Victorian farewell*

growth rate from 78 schools to 106 (with 3 further schools in the pipeline) has been significant, the Student Leadership and Annual Conferences run smoothly and profitably and the profile of the Alliance has developed substantially. Your grace, poise and sense of what needs to be done have been a hallmark of this time.

We wish you and David every happiness as you move on to other ventures in life's journey.

My Report at the Annual General Meeting of The Alliance held at Loreto Kirribilli highlighted key elements of the past year. Our new strategy: "Meeting the Challenges Together" continues to be pursued whether viewed through new initiatives such as the AGSA Ambassador Program or the State "Think Tanks" as we envisioned our possible futures... The demographic and economic pressures on schools are likely to increase, the teacher's role is inexorably changing and AGSA needs to ensure it meets the needs of girls' schools in this context. As an Executive we see a role of clearing house and a driver of best practice in the operation of girls' schools... hence our Annual Conference this year, "Knowing Women Growing Girls" was most timely.

*Barbara Stone, President,*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

*...farewell*



Recent review of current materials from a range of organisations allows me the opportunity to muse on the maturing Alliance and how it fits within the context of societal and business change. Headings such as "Self-Directed School Reviews", texts with sub-titles such as "Education in the age of insecurity" and conferences with titles "Implementing Great Governance" and "The Strategic Board" clearly demonstrate a new order of operation. The Alliance is at a point where decisions are being made around the new strategy of: "Meeting the Challenges Together".

Andy Hargreaves in his text, "Teaching in the Knowledge Society" notes "the benefits of creative learning communities are most often offered to teachers of the affluent. Prescribed programs of teaching and learning are inflicted on the rest"; I would hope that my time with the Alliance has offered an

increasing range of opportunities for all. Of particular joy to me has been the increase of membership to our current 106 and the increased involvement of Government and Catholic Colleges. It is only through such understanding that this organisation can be reflective of current thinking and assist in new ways of being.

As indicated in my email to you, the timing of leaving a one-person organisation is not easy. However, with another successful Student Leadership Conference, the Audit, the AGM and the Annual Conference all successfully concluded, I felt the time was right for another person to take on these ventures for 2004. I have left at a time of strength of administration and wish you and your schools success and prosperity as you take on the challenges so clearly articulated in the titles of papers and programs daily passing your desk.

*Edwina Sear, Executive Director*



## REFLECTIONS...

*The AGSA Annual Conference  
23-25 May 2003*

# Knowing Women: Growing Girls

*held at Loreto Kirribilli, Sydney*

When The Hon Justice Stone opened our 2003 Conference, she shared the issue of choice we make as women: a woman can do everything but not all at once! There tend to be feelings of failure amongst young women if they can't "do it all at once, with young women apologising for not achieving it all!"

This Conference allowed attendees to focus on the hard choices girls have to make and what we, as educators, have to do to focus them on their choices.

SOME INTERESTING SITES TO VISIT...

<http://sofweb.vic.edu.au/eys/resources/audproc.htm> for Auditory Processing Assessment

<http://abc.net.au/rn/talks/lm/stories/5820704.htm> for recent information about Auditory Processing

<http://acer.edu.au> where the Rowe and Rowe invited submission, *What Matters Most* to House of Representatives Inquiry on the education of boys, is found.

AND BOOKS TO READ...

*Learning to listen, listening to learn*, University of Sydney Press, 2003. This documents the experiences of knowledge building schools.



## THE TRANS-TASMAN VIEW...

*...challenging and power-packed*

What could be more exciting than waking up in Sydney on a Friday morning, a short walk from the Sydney Harbour Bridge and in full view of that jewel of an Opera House on a shimmering Harbour!

In fact as darkness lifted, I was stroking the lengths of the Olympic Pool before linking with the 8.45am bus that would take me on a tour of 3 of the 10 schools that had opened their doors to visitors.

I came away from all three visits with great ideas for current projects in my own college, here in Wellington, New Zealand; the building project at Queenwood, the new library at Pymble Ladies' College, the gym and pool at Abbotsleigh. The tour was a great start to an invigorating few days.

Conference was an intellectually challenging time. It made me think hard about learning and pedagogy and the way we do things to 'grow' our young women.

The Hon Margaret Stone's opening address was a timely reminder of the need to 'balance inspiration and realism' and that our task is to make young women aware of the compromises they might have to make in life if we are not to gear them to failure, when they want both a successful career and a successful family life.

The solid research base of Drs Kathy and Ken Rowe, who talked about the impact of successful auditory processing and learning, indicated the dire need for teachers to understand how learning happens.

This delivery complemented JoAnn Deak's presentation on brain research and the impact latest findings have, for how we teach girls in particular. JoAnn was the highlight of conference for me and I was very pleased I had signed up for the Monday workshop to hear more of her stories. Who of us will forget the green blanket story or the lifeline and the helicopter? I have since read JoAnn's book *Girls Will Be Girls* and eagerly await the next publication. I have a mission to get her out to New Zealand.

I thoroughly enjoyed Barbara Lepani's address; I was riveted by Alma Fleet's account of the impact of Reggio Emilia on our preconceptions and previous knowledge about how children learn.

Kris Needham and the students of Asquith Girls' High School provided a fantastic model of school based research to improve learning – again something I could see immediate use for in my own school.

Conference was a power packed few days. I listened, talked, networked and grew. Many thanks for the splendid opportunity.

*We acknowledge and thank Margaret McLeod, Principal,  
Wellington Girls' College NZ for this article*

*All Conference photography by Edwina Sear and Nancy Hillier*

## THE SOUL OF A GIRLS' SCHOOL...

*...a South African perspective*

At St Stithians Girls' College, a Methodist church school and one of five schools on a beautiful campus in Johannesburg, South Africa, we have a statement of strategic intent which states:

**'A South African school making a world of difference.'**

The Conference in Australia, Sydney made a 'world of difference' to Lisa and me as we visited seven different girls' schools during the week we attended. Each school had a definite soul found in its pupils, its staff and in the very mortar of the buildings.

It is comforting and affirming to realise that across the sea, there were similar issues in education; management structures, curriculum changes, pastoral issues and financial implications.

What did the two South Africans take away from the conference material? Much wisdom about girls' schools and the learning brain of girls:

- We learned that more than ever it was imperative as teachers to listen more, talk less and in shorter sentences. 'Give children a voice' became a theme.
- We learned to search for a balance in girls' lives because unlimited freedom and unlimited choices make women believe that unless they do it all, and have it all, they are failures.
- We learned about how different the brain function is between girls and boys and the educational implications thereof.
- We learned that girls together grow community spirit, girls comfort and support and promote opportunities for leadership.
- We learned the implications of different learning styles within the class and how to be more inclusive of all.

We learned from Drs Kathy and Ken Rowe that our generation of learners suffer from Auditory Processing difficulties (1 in 5), which educators can remediate through appropriate intervention particularly in the prep school phase. Many children are 'gulping for air' in a sea of teacher-generated blah, blah, blah. Unstructured group-work just exacerbates the problem. What is needed is shorter sentences, few instructions at a time and routines.



*"It is comforting and affirming to realise that across the sea, there were similar issues in education; management structures, curriculum changes; pastoral issues and financial implications."*



Ms Barbara Lepani spoke about *Wisdom in Life: Harnessing the Power of Mind*. We were challenged as educators to go beyond "cleverness" to wisdom through the teaching of focus, discipline and values in a world which presented extremes, materialism and consumerism. Our youth are seeking the spiritual, not necessarily the religious.

Professor Alma Fleet spoke about the masterful educational challenges coming from a little town in Italy called Reggio Emilia where good teaching is about giving children a VOICE, teachers listening more and talking less; where PEACE is taught as part of the curriculum; where the unexpected is looked for; where all are the participants in the educational community.

South Africa's private girls' schooling can be rated as amongst the best of what we saw in Australia. I am aware, however, of the haves and have-nots in S.A. - the have-nots being the vast majority of schools. There is still much work to be done.

The professionals we met were welcoming and generous. They treated the S.A. delegation as VIP's, with warmth and grace. We thank them all. As professionals in the field of education, the speakers, the food and accommodation was excellent and affirmed us as educators.

Every speaker who presented to the Australian, New Zealand, Singapore member Alliance was well chosen and of an excellent standard.

The Opening by the Hon Margaret Stone, Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, spoke to us of the value of girls' only education in that it provided women with opportunity to break the "glass ceiling" but it also warned us that balance is required, as the unlimited freedom and unlimited choices make women believe that they have to have it all, do it all NOW. We need to teach our girls that there is a COST to wanting the world

and to make choices with our eyes wide open.

*We acknowledge and thank Ivanka Acquisto, Head of St Stithians, for this article*



## MUSINGS FROM MARYLAND...

*...a feast for the intellect and the spirit*

I brought back from my time in Sydney at the Annual Conference many rich memories, which I will savour for a lifetime. For a first time visitor to Australia, the city of Sydney itself, with its sparkling water and spectacular views, was a marvellous treat. Loreto Kirribilli School could not boast a more beautiful setting, and the hospitality of Janet Freeman and her staff was warm and gracious. The indigenous opening ceremony, performed by Mr Max Eulo and Ms Elsie Heiss, from the Aboriginal Catholic Church Ministry, set a tone of reverence for the past and for our connections to the sacred earth and those who have gone before us. It was especially moving for this visitor from the U.S.

The next three days, followed by the day-long workshop by JoAnn Deak at Kambala School, were a feast for both the intellect and the spirit. Particularly exciting for me was the opportunity to visit a variety of girls' schools in Sydney and share experiences with colleagues from around the world. In addition to myself, there were heads from as far away as Singapore and South Africa, as well as representatives from all over Australia and New Zealand. It was fascinating to learn how many different kinds of schools we represented and at the same time, how similar many of our concerns are. I think I packed a year's worth of conversation into three days!

The conference itself was beautifully organised and provided us with a rich array of speakers and ideas, both inspiring and provocative. The keynote speaker, Justice Margaret Stone, reminded us of the balance we must try to achieve with our students between the message we want to inspire them with, that they can do anything they set their minds to, and the reality they will inevitably face, that many of the choices they make will inevitably involve compromise. If we tell them they can have it all, we disguise the difficulty of those choices and may well leave them vulnerable to guilt and apologies, rather than empower them. Justice Stone argued that they need to face those choices realistically with their eyes open.

On the heels of her powerful beginning came a variety of presentations that brought together research and practical application for our schools and our classrooms. Drs Kenneth and Kathy Rowe informed us about some of the issues around auditory processing, its connection to learning and to reading, its developmental nature, and the need to train both elementary and secondary teachers in some fairly simple interventions which can make a significant difference for the students in their classrooms. Barbara Lepani inspired us all with her discussion about harnessing the power of the mind in a fast-paced global society full of change and toxic levels of depression and anxiety. She reminded us that our students need

spiritual intelligence in addition to academic and emotional intelligence so that they can move through the traps of hope and fear, through mere cleverness, to real wisdom. Associate Professor Alma Fleet enlightened us about the peace curriculum of Reggio Emilia, which is committed to listening to young children, valuing aesthetics, looking for the unexpected, and giving children real tools

and real problems to solve. She showed us examples of the kind of collaborative work the children have done in a program that values families, heritage, and children's voices. Dr Kris Needham told us about the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools and about a series of projects that her school had done to involve students as leaders for change through inquiry and analysis. She brought some of her students to speak first hand about their experience. Bill Toppin presented his research about both co-ed and single sex schools and the data he has collected about student attitudes in a wide range of schools around the world. Last, but certainly not least, JoAnn Deak gave us a lively and provocative talk about research on the brain, on learning, and particularly on the differences between boys and girls and the implications for the classroom. The next day, in a workshop at Kambala, she extended that talk with a wealth of additional information and entertaining examples. Throughout both days, she modelled the kind of teaching that would best help our students with memory and deep processing.

Particularly meaningful were the sessions arranged for small groups to meet and discuss each presentation and give feedback to the conference planners. I know we are all looking forward to the compilation of those notes.

I could not have asked for more. I left the conference feeling exhilarated and enriched. I am grateful to my gracious and generous Australian hosts, to the National Coalition of Girls' Schools, your counterpart in the U.S. for sending me, and to the relationship between our two associations that encourages global collaboration for excellence in educating girls. My only regret is that I did not have time to visit New Zealand, but you can imagine that I

am looking forward to the Alliance Conference in Wellington in 2005!

In the meantime, I hope that if you visit North America anytime in the near future, you will include Washington, D.C. in your travels and take the time to visit some of the many girls' schools in this area. I would be delighted to see you at Holton-Arms.

*We acknowledge and thank Diana Coulton Beebe  
Head of School Holton-Arms School Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.A.  
for this article*

*"For a first time visitor to Australia, the city of Sydney itself, with its sparkling water and spectacular views, was a marvellous treat."*





# *in Alliance*





## JOB ALIKE SESSIONS...

*...the luxury of reflecting with colleagues*

An innovative feature of the 2003 AGSA Conference was the introduction of 'Job Alike' Sessions at two stages of the proceedings. All conference participants were invited to select a group that would best reflect the nature of our job descriptions, and to assemble with this group to discuss the keynote presentations from our particular perspective.

The representation of Deputy Principals at the conference was high, and because of the variety of emphases that this role can assume in a school, we were further subdivided as to whether we judged our major concern to be curriculum or pastoral care, or whether we considered ourselves best described by the label 'general'. The last was the category I identified most closely with, and I found myself in a group of a dozen or so similar souls ably chaired by Mary-Ann Rogan from Loreto Kirribilli.

We were asked to discuss the Keynote sessions we had heard from these perspectives:

- Ideas that resonate
- Implications for policies and practices
- Key words or phrases

We were asked to appoint a recorder from the group, and advised that the deliberations we recorded would be collated by Susan Groundwater-Smith and presented as a research document emanating from the Conference.

The discussion in our group was lively - reflecting the different perspectives that are contained in the word 'general'! Our main criticism would be that there was insufficient time to do justice to the insights afforded by the terrific group of speakers we had heard. Our first session of 40 minutes on the Saturday afternoon required first of all brief introductions and choosing a recorder, and left insufficient time to do justice to what we had heard from the Drs Rowe the night before and the two sessions from the Saturday morning. Some delegates had, through the vagaries of airline flights or school commitments, missed the Rowe talk on auditory processing, so there was much explanation required as well as analysis. And the change of timing on Sunday to accommodate those who had to leave early meant that 30 minutes was all we could be allowed to look at three very meaty and challenging speakers.

However, time constraints aside, in my opinion these Job Alike sessions were a highlight of the Conference. The luxury of being able to reflect on what we had heard with colleagues of (fairly) similar job backgrounds and interests was appreciated by all of us, and I certainly gained additional insights on the keynote addresses from the process. Perhaps next year these sessions could be a little longer, or at least given as much time as stated on the programme, and judiciously placed so that we could gain more from the experience.

*We acknowledge and thank Janet Maber, Deputy Principal Melbourne Girls Grammar for this article*



*Presenter JoAnn Deak, Judith Wbeeldon and host for the day at Kambala, Principal Maragaret White*



## WORKSHOPPING WITH JOANN DEAK...

*...entertainment, excitement, challenge and inspiration*

The 75 participants in the JoAnn Deak workshop at Kambala on the Monday following the Alliance Conference were treated to a day of entertainment, excitement, challenge and, above all, inspiration.

As promised, JoAnn Deak reviewed some of the newest data available on brain research in relation to gender differences. She then went on to outline ways in which our practice within schools should be informed by this knowledge. The implications surrounding our pastoral care of the girls in our schools was not ignored and each person there gained great insight no matter how experienced in the field of education.

JoAnn herself used good pedagogical techniques to reinforce our own learning! We were provided with the opportunity to manipulate or become actively involved with reflecting upon the information we were given in some way. We were told wonderful, moving stories to illustrate her points and we were all able to relate to her anecdotes.

Those involved with school organisation were interested to learn that we often expect adolescents to engage in critical learning tasks when they are not at a peak thinking time. Despite our timetabler's best efforts to schedule prime teaching time at the beginning of each day, the brain research now tells us that these young women should really be in bed asleep at that hour and that school should begin for them some one and a half hours later than our current practice dictates.

We were also challenged by the contention that much of the homework we set is in fact counterproductive to the learning process. It was explained that we learn most effectively that which we encounter first in the day after we wake naturally (primacy) and that which we encounter just before retiring to bed (recency). It is therefore important that new work not be attempted at this time as it may establish incorrect understanding which is deeply embedded.

Further time was spent examining the issue of self-image for girls. JoAnn stressed the importance of moving on to 'doing' rather than continuing with analysis in isolation.

She spoke of the significant connection between finding an activity or area of interest in which a girl regards herself as competent and transferring that competency into a more general confidence in herself. Many people within the room found this to be a powerful message.

The entire day was a stimulating and most enjoyable experience. Those present were given insight into ways of teaching with "The Brain in Mind" and there is no doubt that the schools represented will all benefit from members of their staff having the opportunity to hear JoAnn speak with such passion about issues which impact so directly upon that which we do within girls' schools within Australasia.

*We acknowledge and thank  
Margaret White, Principal of Kambala, for this article*



*JoAnn Deak with a friend from Kambala*



## BIG SISTER...

*...trust, respect and friendship*

Transition periods can be stressful times for students, particularly when they occur during adolescence. Successful negotiation of transition points can promote a student's sense of belonging and identification with the school community, which are considered factors that promote resilience in Australian adolescents. Penrhos College in Perth, Western Australia has a strong tradition in pastoral care and specifically addresses the issue of transition in the care it provides for its students.

Penrhos College consists of a Junior School (K-6), Middle School (7-9) and a Senior School (10-12). Two major transition points at Penrhos College are the entry into Middle School in Years 7 or 8 and the move from Middle to Senior School at the end of Year 9. The issues facing students as they make the transition from primary school years are varied and complex. They have to learn to cope with a different and usually bigger school environment as well as develop friendships and a sense of belonging in a new school. This occurs at a time in their life when they are coping with the changes of adolescence and when self-confidence and self-esteem may also be more fragile. The move from Middle to Senior School parallels the move from adolescence to young adult and during this time students' grapple with career paths, subject selections and academic performance. A peer support program can provide an extra dimension in assisting students during these times of adjustment.

A program based on vertical peer connections was established across Middle and Senior Schools with the aim of supporting students through these periods of transition. The program has become an important part of pastoral care delivery at Penrhos College. The girls named the program 'Big Sister' because of the natural and friendly contact between the older and younger girls. Students in Year 10 are linked to a Year 7 form group and maintain contact with those girls over the next three years. They start their contact during orientation for Year 7 and conclude the program during orientation for Year 10. At any one time there are Year 10s working with Year 7s, Year 11s working with Year 8s and Year 12s working with Year 9s.

There are 96 Senior School students, the entire Middle School student population and 24 form teachers involved in the Big Sister program. Big Sisters meet with their Middle School form once per eight day cycle during form time and design and run activities



with their girls. Activities can range from 'getting to know you' games, team building exercises, craft activities, collation of portfolios, preparation for Chapels and assisting the form teacher. The Big Sister program is coordinated by Middle School Counsellor, Pieta Cameron and Senior School Counsellor, Jane Clarke.

The Big Sister program provides a broad peer support network with the opportunity for Middle and Senior School students to develop meaningful and long term relationships within the school. Senior School girls act as role models and mentors to the younger girls. It is this ongoing and positive contact that has a significant impact on the success of integration during times of transition.

Monica Cormack, Head of Year 7 states "the Year 7s have loved having the support and friendship of their Big Sisters this year. The older girls have a significant impact on the confidence of the younger girls and strong bonds have formed between them. The Big sisters have offered advice, encouragement, support, and have played an integral role in fostering a sense of community within each Form group."

Senior School girls also benefit from the leadership and mentoring role they undertake. The older students gain significantly from the experience and grow in confidence, communication and leadership skills as a result of their involvement in the program. This undoubtedly assists them in their transition to life beyond school.

Head of Senior School, Meg Melville states: "the response to the program has been overwhelming. There have been no girls 'drop out' of the program and we have a significant waiting list of girls who wish to be involved. The Big Sister program provides an excellent opportunity to form strong positive relationships based on trust, respect and friendship."

In our school, a network of positive peer relationships is making a major contribution to the successful transition of primary and middle school students. Recently, a Year 7 form class planned a Chapel Service on the theme of family. In their discussions about what family meant to them, the Year 7s spoke of their Big Sisters as part of their school family. The final presentation was a genuine reflection of the relationship between these older and younger girls and confirmation of the important role that Big Sisters play in our school.

*We acknowledge and thank Jane Clarke, School Counsellor Penrhos College for this article*

## NEW ENVIRONMENT: NEW LEARNING EXPERIENCES...

*...feeling connected and valued*

*Transition to Middle School at Walford Anglican School for Girls*

Whether a student is new to Walford, or a current Year 5, the transition to the Middle School can be both exciting and daunting. Year 6 students are excited by Walford Middle School's well resourced computing laboratories, a two storey Information Centre, new classrooms and of course, the tuckshop. However, a larger campus can equally daunt students, older girls sharing their playground and many new and unfamiliar teachers. Our aim at Walford is to devise a transition program that will help Year 6 students settle comfortably into their new environment and excite them about their new learning experiences.

Walford Anglican School for Girls, located 5km from Adelaide's CBD, is an independent school of 720 students from Early Learning Centre (ELC) to Year 12. The school is divided into three sub-schools. The junior school, Prep – Year 5 is located with the ELC in close proximity to the secondary campus, while the Middle (Year 6 – 9) and Senior Schools (Year 10 – 12) are located together on the main campus.

The Middle School underwent an exciting change in 2001, complemented by the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP), a new building development and the decision to move the Year 6 students, previously located in the Junior school, to the secondary campus. This prompted us to review our practices to ensure that a suitable transition program was in place, enabling the students to feel connected and valued in their new environment.

Early in Term 4, teachers arrange for the current Year 5 students to write to the new students, introducing themselves and Walford. Continued communication is encouraged, via letters and emails and in some cases, phone calls so that a relationship is well established prior to Orientation Day. This takes place toward the middle of Term 4. On this day, all students in the Middle School move up a year, enabling the Year 5s to visit as Year 6s. The girls attend a day of school in casual clothing and have an opportunity to meet their Year 6 teachers and each other as well as experience a variety of lessons that they can look forward to in the following year.

The highlight of the day is the big sister activity. On joining the Middle School each student is placed in a House. A special lunch takes place on Orientation Day involving the new Year 6 students, their House leaders, and a 'big sister' who is allocated to mentor a Year 6. These lunches provide wonderful opportunities for the older girls to meet their younger sisters in a relaxed environment and to swap email addresses so that

correspondence can occur during the remainder of the year. A tour takes place and big sisters escort their little sisters to various parts of the school including Middle School play areas, answering questions along the way. At Walford, we have found that an older, friendly face on the first school day helps students relax and settle more confidently into their new environment. Many students in their later years at Walford often comment on their big sister relationship as being a fond memory of their early years in the school.



Behind the scenes, teachers work very hard to prepare for the Year 5 – 6 transition. Collaborative learning activities are essential on Orientation Day so that opportunities are maximised for students to meet new friends. The learning support coordinator and Head of Middle

School meet with parents of students with special needs during this time to advise of suitable support program which will nurture each student to achieve her maximum potential. Year 6 teachers are included in this process so that they can factor students' learning needs into their new year programs. All parents of Year 5 students are invited to an evening session where information about the Middle School is shared. The Year 5 – 6 transition is also a time of change for parents and thus we include them in the process by electing early on year-level parent representatives who can plan a number of social functions during the year, bringing parents together.

At Walford, the transition to every year level is considered important, but the Year 5 – 6 transition requires extra attention. Nurturing a connection with a new environment is paramount for students entering a Middle School for the first time. Once the student feels connected to her school, she develops the confidence to pursue new opportunities and thus maximises the potential of new learning experiences.

*We acknowledge and thank Rebecca Clarke,  
Head of Middle School, Walford  
Anglican School for Girls,  
for this article.*



## SPRINGBOARD INTO SECONDARY SCHOOL...

*...self reliance, independence and organisation*

*Transition Programme for Year 6 students moving into Year 7 at Melbourne Girls Grammar*

Transition is an intrinsic part of the Middle Years of Schooling. This is a time of rapid social, emotional and physical changes for young people and all develop at different rates and stages. There is no question that the leap into Year 7 is a challenging one for all students but with 130 new girls commencing in Years 7-9 in Term 1, around 40% of our students were adapting to a strange environment, finding classrooms, learning names and meeting new teachers at the start of the year.

At Melbourne Girls Grammar this transition begins at the end of Year 6 when the Junior School students leave the Morris Hall Campus and meet up with new students from a wide variety of primary schools and enter Merton Hall Campus in Year 7.

Melbourne Girls Grammar is a P-12 School and as around one half of our students come to Merton Hall from our Junior School, it is essential that the communication and links between the two campuses are strong and purposive. A number of staff move between the two campuses for the teaching of Religious Studies, Chinese and Italian. The School Counsellor also works at both sites to get to know the younger students and then acts as a trusted adult for students moving on to the senior campus.

To relieve the anxieties of young people and their parents it is essential that this transition process is made as smooth and enjoyable as possible. This is facilitated in a variety of ways through internal structures and the curriculum.

At the end of each year a number of meetings are arranged between the Year 6 teachers and the House Tutors, as well as other special education and support staff for a briefing on the students coming up. All teachers who will be teaching a Year 7 class in the following year are also invited to visit the Year 6 classes to meet with students and gain an insight into the classroom environment in the primary area. Year 7 students also visit the Junior School to talk through any anxieties that the younger girls may be feeling.

### ORIENTATION DAY IN OCTOBER

Late in October the School holds an Orientation Day for all prospective Year 7 students for whom a full day of classes is arranged on a 'mock' timetable. These students are able to get a "taste" of moving around to different locations for a variety of specialist subjects and also have a chance to familiarise themselves with the layout of the school. At the end of the day, the students have met a few other students, possibly exchanged phone numbers and are usually impatient for the end of the year so that they can LEAP into Year 7.



### MIDDLE SCHOOL HOUSE STRUCTURE

Pastoral Care at the School is arranged on a House basis and is the responsibility of the fifteen House Tutors for Years 7 to 9 students. Each House/year level group meets for roll call and a House or Worship Period at the start of every day. Students are encouraged to get to know the girls in the other levels in their House and a wide variety of In-House and Inter-House activities make this a reality.

Leadership is an important focus for students in Year 9 in the Middle School and the Middle School Captains are responsible for ensuring that each Year 7 student has a 'big sister' in Year 9. Meetings and activities are organised to assist the integration of the Year 7 students into our community. Some groups have Breakfast together whilst others engage in games or activities and some have an 'Easter Egg' swap towards the end of Term 1.

A number of strategies are implemented for those students commencing in Years 8 and 9 at the start of the year. Each new girl is allocated a mentor to show her around and give her a crash course in "what to do if... at MGS". All mentors are given prior notification and briefed on the aspects of orientation they should cover.



## WEEK ONE-YEAR 7 CAMP

Term One of Year 7 at Melbourne Girls Grammar does not begin with textbooks, new uniforms and timetables. It begins with a 4-day camp in North-East Victoria. The purpose of the camp is for students to get to know one another and their five House Tutors, the Principal and the Head of Middle School, whilst participating in a variety of challenging activities. When all students are in unfamiliar territory and are grouped according to House they learn a great deal about each other and make new friendships. Then, when they come into School on the Monday morning to face timetables and new subjects they can take some comfort in knowing they have some friends to share this experience with.

## CURRICULUM PROVISION

In Year 7 it is important that students are given the opportunity to experience or 'sample' the wide variety of subjects within a structure which facilitates cooperative and collaborative learning by allowing students to form working relationships with their teachers. This is achieved through the semesterisation of some subjects and encouraging teachers to teach two or more subjects to Year 7 students.

## INCREASING INDEPENDENCE AND DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

The pathway from child to adulthood is long and frequently 'bumpy'. However, the basic aim of the Middle School Curriculum is to develop the self-reliance, independence and organisational skills necessary to equip students for the VCE and beyond. It is at this most formative time that students are given help with developing their study and organisational skills in Personal Development and other core subjects, and whenever necessary a more individual approach for support or extension is offered by the Special Education Extended Curriculum Departments.

## THE MIDDLE YEARS-A TIME OF CHANGE

Being new to the Middle School should not mean being lost and lonely. At Year 7 the students are all eager to meet new friends and move beyond the groups of girls they knew in primary school. They are friendly by nature, welcoming and ready to participate in the variety of sporting, musical and dramatic activities on offer. In fact, in the Middle School, being 'new' is an integral part of the experience, but it does not last for long.

*We acknowledge and thank Lynn Broadway, Head of Middle School, Melbourne Girls Grammar for this article*

## BOUND FOR THE UNITED STATES NCGS STUDENT FORUM



**KATHERINE KEENE**

Katie is a Year 11 student at Walford Anglican School for Girls in Adelaide, having attended this school since reception. (Katie's mother is also a Walford old scholar.) Katie is outstanding academically and has been accelerated into Year 12 mathematics and physics this year.

In the application process for the chance to represent the Alliance in the US, students were required to make a film about themselves. In her short film Katie chose to present a rainbow as a symbol of what she is and believes. A rainbow is multi dimensional and this is reflected in Katie's wide ranging interests including Tournament of Minds, hockey, tennis, netball, choir, debating, public speaking and drama. A rainbow radiates to all irrespective of who they are. Katie values the opinions of others and values opportunities to absorb energy from others. She believes young people are part of a universal community. Finally a rainbow can take something negative and make something positive from it. Whether this means donning a frog costume to participate in the swimming carnival when you are not a good swimmer or participating in activities just for the fun, Katie has a positive outlook on life that inspires and motivates others.



**NAOMI HART**

Naomi is an excellent example of the sort of "whole person" that leaders of girls' schools aspire to grow: musical, sporty, a great public speaker, a good mind, a thoughtful and compassionate person and an activist. Challenges excite her. Her spirit is indomitable. She has a strong sense of herself as an insatiable learner with a responsibility to build a better future. Although quietly spoken, she can influence the groups she belongs to, regardless of size.

Last year, as well as being awarded Dux of Year 10, Naomi organised the making of hampers to be distributed by the Salvation Army, was involved with Interact (a school version of Rotary) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, represented the school at soccer, hockey, cricket, softball, cross country, athletics and public speaking and acted in MLC School's award winning Amnesty International Drama group. Naomi also sings with the school choir and chamber choir and plays saxophone in the concert and stage bands.

In everything her benchmark is excellence. Naomi will be a worthy ambassador for AGSA and its schools.



## TECH ANGELS...

*...learning to be; learning to do; learning to know; learning to live together*

*The four pillars of U.N.E.S.C.O's Delors Report: <http://www.unesco.org>.*

2003 has seen many ICT initiatives at Wellington Girls' College.

These build on the work begun 5 years earlier through the partnership of Laurence Zwimpfer Board of Trustees chair and Margaret McLeod Principal who set a Blue Skies ICT project in place.

This article outlines aspects of the Wellington Girls' College ICT infrastructure as the physical learning environment and the process for developing Tech Angels as ICT coaches at Wellington Girls' College.

### THE INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2003 Wellington Girls' College has an infrastructure of 282 PCs and laptops, fibre optic cabling, servers and a recently upgraded system from Windows NT to 2000.

All staff and students at Wellington Girls' College have their own individual desktops on the First Class Intranet and are able to access these from anywhere at anytime.

Internet and intranet services are open but within the parameters derived from Netsafe and the MOE. There are currently no time restrictions on staff or student use of the intranet and Internet, an exceptional deal with the ISP provider Comnet. There is a fixed monthly charge for the school. With costs taken care of there is only the learning to focus on.

Access to equipment and training is the key to changing teachers. The computer stock held in the school includes fifty-seven STELA laptops—the school B.O.T pays the lease. Each department has at least one PC and printer. Seventy PCs are in time tabled labs. Pods of up to ten PCs are strategically placed near music/art/ graphics and multi-media. Thirty PCs are not timetabled and are available all day on a drop in basis, in the library and in a separate supported teaching area. Forty-five PCs have Pinnacle video editing capability. Staff and students alike borrow the ten digital, still and video cameras from the library or department resource areas. With the change to the 2000 and XP operating systems all the staff can make use of the peripherals more easily.

### ICT AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In this multimedia environment the staff of Wellington Girls' College, Kapiti College and Queen Charlotte College



*Principal Margaret McLeod with her Tech Angel Cherrie Kong*

came together in a 1.5 day hands on conference to celebrate the beginning of a three-year collaboration as part of the MOE Lead School ICT project.

The conference introduced the First Class intranet that ties the three schools and the software packages and skills needed to create materials for the intranet. The work of the conference has been further supported with a formal tutor based PD training programme available to staff at each school.

In a 'no excuses' multi media environment, the need for professional prompting and support of teachers as learners became apparent. Mentoring needed to be offered, on the spot and just in time. The Tech Angels were invented.

This is uniquely Kiwi answer to bridge our digital divide. There are multiple benefits for staff and also the students' home communities.

*“Although the teacher’s role is still essential, classrooms of the Net Generation will become more student-centred, with teachers and students engaging in learning activities together.”*

*Educating the Net Generation, Don Tapscott  
<http://www.ascd.org>*

Tech Angels are public service orientated students, who select this leadership role from many offered in the school. These students want to develop their own skills in ICT in a wide range of areas. They are happy to give up time to coach and support staff. They even write their own course materials e.g. *How to make a PowerPoint presentation and present it in a PowerPoint reader.*

Each Tech Angel has up to two hours of training per week and delivers at least a thirty-minute lesson and provides support to two staff members individually for an agreed period of time.

Over the 18 months this innovation has been operating the staff of the college have come to rely on this support. When ICT support or help is required they nearly always say *“Perhaps a tech angel can show me.”* The surprising outcome is how much teachers actually prefer and feel they can learn from the Tech Angels. Interestingly the teachers also show the angels how much they appreciate their support by exhibiting their new skills.

For the 60% of staff who are currently working with an Angel, the outcome has been transformative. They comment frequently on how their confidence and enthusiasm has altered. The passion and interest the angels take in their mentoring has been infectious. Digital concepts that did not seem important in the past, for example using multimedia as part of a lesson or engaging in discussion about how the students see the intranet as part of



lesson, have become interesting and worth spending valuable time on

It is hard to say what has changed this ICTPD culture the most. The infrastructure? The laptops and peripherals? The move to Windows 2000 and XP? The stream of inspirational speakers? All provided the motivation. But the addition of such a simple intervention as the Tech Angels may have tipped the balance. It is certainly true that many schools like us engage in ICTPD.

However we have looked towards a multifaceted approach. Teachers as learners, students as teachers. Tech Angels make this a win-win opportunity.

Those choosing Tech Angels are a wide mixture of staff. However it is those staff who have not previously connected with ICT as users, who comment most often about the non-threatening and gentle nature of the coaching and how good they are feeling about ICT.

Any Year 13 student has the opportunity to be an Angel. No special interest or ability is required, as all are part of the extensive training programme. In a school like Wellington Girls' College the angels are a mixture of cultures, interests and abilities.

Tech Angels grow their responsibilities through the year.

Using the mantra of **planning, dialogue, presentation, support and feedback** the Angels are metamorphosing into skilled trainers.

### JENNIFER MACKRELL

HOD CHEMISTRY, WELLINGTON GIRLS' COLLEGE

#### **What has the mentoring/coaching/having a tech angel been like for you?**

Excellent. I have learnt new skills when I need to use them - I have then been able to use them and practise immediately. The one-on-one mentoring has worked really really well, even better than I imagined.

#### **What have been the tangible and intangible benefits of having Matea as a tech angel?**

Matea is so keen to help. I just feel that might stress her sometimes. I think she was quite pleased to see my successful PowerPoint presentation in her class yesterday ("You did this all by yourself?") I really like having the students in a teaching role - I think it is good for their confidence and our humility.

### BARRY SWEENEY

#### **What makes a successful mentoring program?**

Where there's an openness to feedback and other ideas to take on some complex professional challenges which may not work perfectly the first few times they do them and then make mistakes in front of each other and to learn, knowing that they're going to be supported. So if you take those values or those norms that are established within a good mentoring relationship, and extend that to the entire school, what you capture then is that the adults who are going into their job everyday go in expecting to learn just as much as the students.

#### **In what ways can a mentor be supportive?**

The mentoring relationship creates that kind of support system, where a very effective person who's there to support you and encourage you and challenge you in your learning is also there to help you get up off your knees and dust off and try again. It's the trusting relationship that mentors have with their protégés that make that happen.

<http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1040>



*The skies are very blue  
and the Tech Angels  
are our skywriters...*



## THE TECH ANGEL PROGRAMME

TERM ONE	TERM TWO	TERM THREE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic training in Windows trouble shooting</li> <li>Intranet Trouble shooting</li> <li>Acrobat and PDF training</li> <li>Microsoft Office intensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking training – Windows 2000/XP</li> <li>Basic repairs and maintenance of peripherals and cables/switches/hubs</li> <li>Photoshop Training (Natcoll)</li> <li>Pinnacle Multi Media training (video editing using Pinnacle software)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further Network training</li> <li>Studio MX (Dream weaver) (Natcoll)</li> <li>Photoshop (Image ready) Natcoll</li> <li>Further Photoshop (in house)</li> </ul>

## ORGANISING ANGELS

We talk as a group once a week and then communicate through email and chat rooms on the intranet.

The Angels log each session with their teachers, to chart needs and direction. They plan jointly, presentations to provide their teachers with scaffolding that encourages experimentation and play. We consult about the skills and directions we need to take as a school using ICT and how this will move teachers into situations of comfort and fun.

We all agree, that we are building the digital leaders of the future when Angels take these ICT training communication and collaboration skills.

Of the 17 Angels at Wellington Girls' College many are not the obvious leaders and communicators of their year group. They have found a home in the school, have gained a sense of belonging and contribute to a newly emerging leadership group.

This successful experiment has lead to a high profile, for this group of students and now the students see ICT support as quite 'cool'.

The reported comments from our first tentative foray into Tech Angels in 2002 revealed that being a Tech Angel actually supported learning for these students, increased the learning of others and led to a greater level of ICT activity in a wide range of subject areas at Wellington Girls' College.

The programme is being developed for our cluster partners Kapiti College and Queen Charlotte College who are initiating their own 'angel' programme. Students from these schools will share the holiday STAR courses.

With STAR funding we employ tutors from Natcoll Design Technology here in Wellington. In 2002 the Tech angels became so involved that further opportunities were developed in specialist areas

Two Angels graduated with wonderful grades from a programming course through Weltec 2002. Tech Angels entered the 2002 NZOOM competition in the secondary individual areas. Amal Shawani won an individual award for science with an exceptional piece of work in the physics of sound waves.



## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES...

*Being involved in the Wellington Girls' College Tech Angel programme has been really rewarding. It has given me an opportunity to make use of my organisational skills especially and the ability to put in place systems that I think will benefit the school. One of these systems involves our small team of Tech Angels tutoring the staff in one-on-one lessons. Personally, I find these lessons to be really enjoyable especially since they give me a reason (and the opportunity) to learn more skills. I have had the privilege of teaching my Principal (Margaret McLeod) and other members of the staff. I find it very satisfying that they would want to come to me for help and I love seeing them marvel at the technology as I unveil it to them.*

*Cherrie Kong, Head Tech Angel 2003*

*Joining the Tech Angel Team has become one of my most rewarding commitments this year! I absolutely love it, and feel as if it is an invaluable opportunity for any student wishing to advance in this fast approaching, extremely vital IT world of ours. I have learnt so much, and have applied my knowledge in so many ways, for example giving computer lessons to the teachers and going to Te Kete Ipurangi organised by the Ministry of Education to reward kids doing various educational activities on the WickED site. As a Tech*

*Angel I have also had the privilege to attend a 3-day course held at Natcoll, where I learnt how to use Flash MX at the generous expense of our College.*

*Matea Osti, Tech Angel 2003*

In addition to this, the school was supported by ICT mentors for the Tech Angels who pushed boundaries. These full time web designers, Matt Poff of the Media Unit of The Correspondence school, Marc Broad, Match Communications and a number of staff from CWA New Media and Natcoll Design Technology are again proving that partnerships are the way forward for schools in ICT.

The skies are very blue and the Tech angels are our skywriters.

*We acknowledge and thank Wellington Girls' College for this article*