



### Message from the President ...

Only a few weeks to the opening of the very first International Middle Schooling Conference in Perth Western Australia; are you excited? I am!

This conference has been at least two years in the making and we are indebted to those who have had the vision and drive to make the conference a reality. We are also indebted to our major sponsors and in particular the Department of Education and Training for their generous support. It has been a team effort and we are on the winning team, although it might not feel like it on some days in the classroom. That is why a conference like ours is so important to those involved in the education of young adolescents. We need to share our experiences and to learn from those who have something to teach us. We are very fortunate in the wealth of experience the various presenters will bring to the conference. This conference will also be an excellent opportunity for networking.

There is much research to support the importance of the teacher to student learning. We connect with our students and we facilitate the larger connections our students make with their knowledge and understandings of the world around them.

I came across an interview last year in the NSDC (National Staff Development Council, USA) Library entitled "Look for ways to ignite the energy within: An interview with Jane E Dutton". The purpose of the interview was to discuss the book, *Energise Your Workplace: How you Create and Sustain High Quality Connections at Work*, by Jane E Dutton. The word *energise* (I was feeling particularly jaded at the time) caught my eye as did the word *connections*: so I read on.

In the interview Dutton makes the point that learning requires risk taking, self-disclosure and vulnerability and that high-quality connections produce all three of these. This struck a chord with me and I could see that in the theme we had chosen for the conference we had at its core the notion of connection

Motivation-Connection:

What engages our students? How do we encourage them to become learners, not just receivers? Do they feel confident to take risks? Do we set them up for success?

Meaning-Connection:

How do we best facilitate student learning? Do we encourage self-reflection? Is it OK to make a mistake? Do we allow students to self-assess?

Management-Connection:

What is the best way to achieve community and personal goals given that we are part of a larger whole? Is our planning flexible? Are we open to new ways of doing things?

It is my hope that you will come to the conference and connect with others who care about the education of young people today. It should prove to be a truly awesome few days.

*Christine Lee*

**Reference:** Sparks, D. (2004). Look for ways to ignite the energy within: An interview with Jane E. Dutton. *JSD* 25(3). Retrieved 10 March 2006 from <http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/dutton253.cfm>

### Special Points of Interest:

- **President's Report**
- **National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy**
- **Letters to the Editor—The Need for Balance; Learning Teams in Middle Schools: What Works Best?**
- **MSAWA International Conference — Keynote Speaker Profiles**
- **MSAWA International Conference — School Visit Profiles**
- **Interesting Internet Sites**
- **Conference Registration Information**



If you have not yet registered for the **MSAWA International Conference (13-15 May, Perth)**, please *hurry*. The venue allows for a **set number of delegates—first in, best dressed**. If you are unable to attend on Monday, 15 May, please consider attending on Sunday, 14 May. **One-day packages are available**. This is the first International Middle Schooling Conference to be held in Perth: you may never again have such a wonderful opportunity to access so many outstanding Middle Schooling presenters for the cost of attendance —no airfares and no hotel accommodation charges (for city attendees)! **Great networking opportunities!**

Check out the details at our website: [www.msawa.asn.au](http://www.msawa.asn.au)

The results of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy were released in December 2005. A full report is available at [www.dest.gov.au/nitl/report.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/nitl/report.htm)

The Committee made 20 recommendations to the then Federal Minister for Education. The following recommendations are those with most relevance for Middle Years teachers.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that teachers be equipped with teaching strategies based on findings from rigorous, evidence-based research that are shown to be effective in enhancing the literacy development of all children.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that literacy teaching continue throughout schooling (K-12) in all areas of the curriculum. Literacy must be the responsibility of all teachers across the curriculum, to provide an educationally sound program meeting the specific skill and knowledge needs of individual children from diverse backgrounds and locations.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that all education authorities and school leaders examine their approaches to the teaching of literacy and put in place an explicit, whole-school literacy planning, monitoring and reviewing process in collaboration with school communities and parents.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that all schools identify a highly trained specialist literacy teacher with specialised skills in teaching reading, to be responsible for linking the whole-school literacy planning process with classroom teaching and learning, and supporting school staff in developing, implementing and monitoring progress against individual literacy plans, particularly for those children experiencing reading and literacy difficulties.

Recommendation 9 (not reproduced in full): The Committee recommends that the teaching of literacy throughout schooling be informed by comprehensive, diagnostic and developmentally appropriate assessments of every child, mapped on common scales. Further, it is recommended that:

- The Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 national literacy testing program be refocused to make available diagnostic information on individual student performance, to assist teachers to plan the most effective teaching strategies.

Recommendation 16 (not reproduced in full): The Committee recommends that a national program of literacy action be established to:

- *design* a series of evidence-based teacher professional learning programs focused on effective classroom teaching, and later interventions for those children experiencing reading difficulties;
- *produce* a series of evidence-based guides for effective teaching practice, the first of which should be on reading;
- *investigate* ways of integrating the literacies of information and communication technologies with traditional literacies in the classroom;
- *establish* networks of literacy/reading specialist practitioners to facilitate the application of research to practice.



### The Need For Balance

Is it just me or are other people concerned about the lack of balance in schools today?

I have been a teacher for many years and I remember when computers were first introduced. I was so excited by the possibilities the use of the machine availed us. It was indeed a brave new world and I was at the head of the queue when it came to learning how to use this wonderful machine. For once in my life I could be neat with little effort. I could design my own worksheets and create to my heart's content.

With the advent of the widespread use of the internet once again I was there saying, "Let's find out what we can do with this amazing new tool for learning."

I even convinced my husband to get us hooked up at home and in those days the computer technician visited your home to get you connected for the first time. Whoa, that was a long time ago. As I often remark to my students when talking about something from the past, "This happened in the dark ages when I was a girl....."

The point I am trying to make is that I see technology as a wonderful tool to serve us in the classroom. However, this is not to say I have no concerns regarding the flood of administration generated by the use of the computer. Is the machine still a tool or in some instances has its use become our master?

How many emails do you deal with on a daily basis? How much time do you spend reading the latest curriculum advices etc, drawing up new assessment rubrics? We are in the age of information and it is a wonderful time to be in the teaching profession but I think it is time we started asking more questions about the efficacy of the use of technology in the lives of practising teachers. Could a case be made for more support staff to deal with emails etc?

As a young teacher graduating in Scotland in 1973, the idea was voiced, by some of our college academic staff, that in the near future there would be one teacher's aid for every two teachers. Is it still a possibility?

What do you think?

Christine Lee

### Learning Teams in Middle Schools? What Works Best?

There are a variety of different approaches to learning teams in middle schools and some are more effective than others. Some learning teams may be considered as 'Comprehensive' in that they have as their over-riding direction, improved relationships between student,

teacher and parents. Other structures may indicate that this is also important; however, when under the microscope it is apparent that their structures do not support this goal. If learning teams are small groups of teachers working with a small clientele of students with the aim of building supportive learning relationships, then I believe there are several essentials. These being:

- Team leaders to have additional FTE (ie 0.5 FTE) for coordination of team activities
- Teachers teaching outside of their specialist learning area (ie Maths/Science, Eng/S&E,etc)
- Teachers follow the students through each year (ie Yr 8 to Yr 9 to Yr 10 say)
- Students to have their own area of the school where they are located for 3 years.
- Teachers do all of their teaching in their team.
- Common team time for teachers each week for planning (ie say 60 min).
- There are no option subjects. These are called Arts and T&E and are staffed like Maths, Science, English, etc.
- Class sizes are 25 or less.

Students are in the same class for all of their subjects and class changes are kept to a minimum.

These essentials are primarily focused on building better relationships. Whilst I have seen these structures work well in middle schools, they are often difficult to develop in senior high schools. Where these schools have re-structured to develop an 8/9 middle school and a 10/11/12 senior school, invariably many of the essentials do not occur due to the incongruence of the timetable. I believe some tough decisions should be made at this point. Such as:

- Do we split the timetables so that teachers teach either in middle school or senior school, but not both?
- Is there a need for the timetables to be different to cater for each group's special needs?

In senior high schools which run learning teams in Yr 8/9 or Yr 7/8/9 or Yr 8/9/10 unless the two questions have been answered in the affirmative and unless the essentials are occurring, learning team effectiveness will be fragmented and less than what could have been obtained. To me learning teams can be ineffectual if they become too diluted and lose their comprehensiveness. Their potential for being effective can be plotted on a scale ( from say 1 to 10) based upon the merits of their structures.

Where does your learning team fit?

and

What do you think?

Warren Smith  
Deputy Principal  
Cecil Andrews SHS

### **Check out the profiles of our distinguished keynote speakers:**

#### **James A Beane**

A former classroom teacher, James A Beane currently divides his time between his position as a professor at National-Louis University and as a school reform coach at Sherman Middle School in Madison, Wisconsin. He is the author of *Reason to Teach: Creating Classrooms of Dignity and Hope* (2005); *Curriculum Integration* (1997); *A Middle School Curriculum* (1993); *Affect in the Curriculum* (1990). He is co-author of *Democratic Schools* (1995); *The Middle School and Beyond* (1992); *When the Kids Come First* (1987); *Self-Concept, Self-Esteem and the Curriculum* (1986). He edited the 1995 ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Yearbook: *Toward a Coherent Curriculum*. James Beane has spoken at numerous conferences, has consulted for international educational projects and served in leadership capacities for several education professional associations. In 1997 he received the John Lounsbury Award from the National Middle School Association.

He will be speaking at the Building Citizenship in the Middle Years conference in New Zealand later in the year. *See him first in Perth!*

#### **Robin Fogarty**

Robin is president of Robin Fogarty and Associates, Ltd. Her doctorate is in curriculum and human resource development from Loyola University of Chicago. Known as “the teacher’s teacher”, Robin has consulted with state departments and ministries of education in the United States, Puerto Rico, Russia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands. Her work in professional development is in great demand.

Robin’s articles have appeared in *Educational Leadership*, *Phi Delta Kappan* and *Journal of Staff Development*. Her books include: *Brain Compatible Classrooms*; *Standards of Learning*; *Ten Things New Teachers Need*; *Literacy Matters*; *Problem-Based Learning*; *Integrating the Curricula with Multiple Intelligences*; *How to Raise Test Scores*; *Blueprints for Achievement in the Cooperative Classroom*; *The Adult Learner*; *A Look at Transfer*; *Nine Best Practices*.

#### **Dr Andrew Martin**

Andrew is a Registered Psychologist and Associate Professor (University of Western Sydney). He is widely recognised for his high quality and practical application of evidence-based research into motivation, engagement and achievement. He has developed the Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel and the accompanying Student Motivation and Engagement Scale, a reliable and valid instrument normed with over 12,000 high school students and used in many countries across the world. He has also developed the Student Motivation and Engagement Workbook, a proven intervention tool for enhancing educational outcomes.

He regularly conducts professional development for teachers, student workshops, parent nights and student testing and intervention programs focusing on motivation, engagement and achievement, as well as work into boys’ education, gifted and talented, disengagement, educational resilience, pedagogy, parenting, teacher-student relationships and Aboriginal education.

He was listed in ‘The Bulletin’ magazine’s SMART 100 Australians and in the Top 10 in the field of Education. In 2002 his PhD was judged the world’s Most Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation in Educational Psychology by the American Psychological Association and before that was judged the Most Outstanding PhD in Education in Australia by the Australian Association for Research in Education.

He has had over 50 scientific papers published in the world’s top education and psychology journals, written two books for parents and teachers, compiled 12 commissioned government reports, is reviewer for many academic journals, presented over 90 invited/keynote presentations and conference papers, won numerous prestigious Australian Research Council grants. His books, *How to Motivate Your Child for School and Beyond* (Bantam) and *How to Help Your Child Fly Through Life: The 20 Big Issues* (Bantam) have been enthusiastically received by schools and parents across Australia and beyond.

## 2006 International Middle Schooling Conference Update ...

As part of the Conference, school visits have been organised to Ballajura Community College and Penrhos College (Option 1) and Kinross College and Wesley College (Option 2). *Both these visits are rapidly reaching capacity numbers. If you wish to join one of the school visits, you must register for the Conference and register separately for the school visit.* Over the next two issues of the newsletter, we will preview the schools.

### WESLEY COLLEGE

The Wesley College Middle School opened in 2000 and currently has 340 boys in Years 5-8. It is a sub-school within a K-12 College that also has a co-educational Junior School (Years P-4) and a Senior School for boys in Years 9-12 on the same campus. The introduction of the Middle School into a conservative independent school setting required careful planning and specific implementation strategies, especially as more middle schooling practices were adopted. Specific aspects of boys' development have also been emphasized to promote opportunities for boys to be themselves and achieve their potential.

The Middle School has its own purpose-built setting and core staff, but with growing numbers and a wider understanding and appreciation of middle schooling there have been ongoing innovations and refinements to structures and practices across the campus, as well as within the Middle School. Examples include many K-12 appointments, a Year 9 program incorporating off-campus studies and the development of specialist facilities catering for boys in their middle years. External audits suggest that the Middle School has developed a strong culture and has become an effective and positive agent of change, especially in the integration of the College and in the development of its learning and teaching program.

As well as understanding the planning and evolution of the Middle School and its related issues, delegates will tour the wider campus (including the Year 9 site) and spend time in the classrooms with staff and students. To find out more please visit the website at: <http://www.wesley.wa.edu.au>

### KINROSS COLLEGE

Kinross College is unique in that it is the first public school in Western Australia that has been specifically designed to cater for the needs of Yr 6-10 students. The school is located in the West Coast District in close proximity to Kinross Primary School. The school meets the specific learning and social needs of young adolescents through innovation and current best practice trends in education; eg, anywhere, anytime learning.

Kinross College opened in 2002, catering for 240 students in Years 6 and 7. The school progressed to Year 10 in 2005. Kinross College reflects a seamless education for students. The main intake is from Kinross Primary School (K-5) and most students will go on to Mindarie Senior College (11-12).

Teaching staff work in a collaborative team approach with each learning community having autonomy to design and develop curriculum to meet the needs of students. All teaching team staff have skills and experience incorporating Learning Technologies into the curriculum. There are six middle school teams for the 6-9 learning communities. There are two Year 10 teaching teams: Humanities and Science & Technology. Each learning team is led by a level 3 Team Leader.

Each 6-9 Learning Community is staffed with a five-member core learning team. The Year 6-9 cohort of students follows an interdisciplinary learning model covering all learning areas predominantly in the Learning Community, accessing the specialist learning facilities where appropriate. There will be transition towards specialist or specific learning area focus for older students. Year 10 students are housed in a year 10 community and have separate learning areas and a greater access to specialist learning facilities. All students have the scope and support to be self-directed independent learners with their learning involving the "doing" and "hands on" critical in middle schooling. To find out more, please visit the website at: <http://www.kinrosscollege.com.au/content.php?article.15>

### Interesting Internet Sites ...

Many thanks to Maria Northcote for the following sites.

Mikids – Online resources for teachers and students <http://www.mikids.com/>

New Basics Project <http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/>

School zone <http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/>

UK based site with a variety of lesson plans and resources for teachers

## Extras:

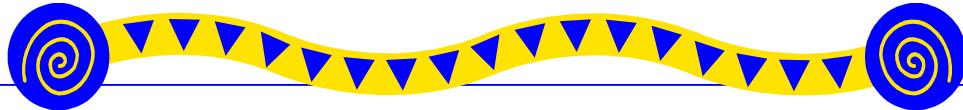
**Posters & PowerPoint presentations:** A large range will be available for viewing, with PP presenters in attendance.

**Keynote luncheons:** Limited places are available for delegates to enjoy a private lunch with a keynote speaker.

**School visits:** Tuesday, 16 May: Option 1: Penrhos College & Ballajura Community College  
Option 2: Wesley College & Kinross College

**Social functions:** Saturday, 13 May: Golf at Burswood; Swan Valley Winery Tour; Informal Dinner

**School musical performances:** Churchlands Senior High School & Penrhos College



## Conference Packages:

NB: All prices inclusive of GST

<u>Deluxe Conference Package:</u>	\$572.00
<u>Standard Conference Package:</u>	\$506.00
<u>Student (Full-time only) Package:</u>	\$286.00
<u>Day Registration:</u>	
<u>Sunday, 14 May:</u>	\$286.00
<u>Monday, 15 May:</u>	\$286.00

**Memberships to MSAWA are now available. To become a member, or to renew your membership, please visit our website at: [www.msawa.asn.au](http://www.msawa.asn.au)**



**MIDDLE SCHOOLING**  
ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)

The Middle Schooling Association of WA (MSAWA) warmly invites all those who are dedicated to the education, development, and well-being of young adolescents to the

**INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOLING CONFERENCE**

*motivation, meaning & management  
in the middle years*

**13 – 15 May 2006**  
SHERATON PERTH HOTEL, WESTERN AUSTRALIA