Dandenong Valley SDS
5238

2010 Annual Report to the
School Community
School Overview

School

The guiding philosophy of our school is as expressed in our Vision, Values and Mission Statements. Our Vision for Dandenong Valley School is:

“To achieve excellence in learning and teaching and provide the best outcome for each of its students.”

Our values are summarised in the terms Integrity, Respect and Responsibility.

Our Mission Statement:

“Dandenong Valley School endeavours to equip students with the capacities to manage themselves and their relations with others, understand their world and act effectively in that world.”

We uphold the conviction that every child has the ability and the right to learn. It is with that conviction that Dandenong Valley strives to increase each student’s level of personal independence in all possible areas from communication to daily living skills, to movement and recreation throughout their school lives. During their transition years (16-18) every avenue is pursued to prepare students for appropriate adult programs including supported employment, vocational and work options, leisure and recreation and the ability to cope with change. The partnership desired between home and school is achieved not only by daily communication but also by regular parent/teacher interviews and Student Support Group meetings where individual programs are developed for each student.

Dandenong Valley School strives to provide high quality learning experiences for its students to enable them to become participating members of society.

Our student numbers this year totalled 177 at school age, of this group some are part time at DVS and have an enrolment at another school as well. In addition we had 22 enrolled in our Early Education Program, 30 who access ECD service and 8 enrolled in music playgroup. In 2009 we had 162 students, in 2008 146 students and in 2007, 130 students. It is easy to see from these figures we have experienced major growth in recent years.

Teacher Satisfaction

We employ 3 principal class teachers, 25 teachers, 32 teacher’s assistants, 7 therapists and 5 ancillary staff. In addition we have 2 contract cleaners and a gardener. Our teachers all meet the registration requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The 2010 staff survey indicated that on an individual level our staff, rate their satisfaction at 81% but overall they rated school morale at 86.8%. This was a pleasing improvement on last years’ figures which were 75.5% for individual satisfaction and 80% for school morale. This year a total of 13 new staff were employed at DVS across all staffing areas including the Principal.

Professional Learning

All teaching staff participated in professional development throughout the year. Staff members are surveyed to determine their professional
development needs. They are then provided with professional development linked to these needs and those of the school and DEECD initiatives. As a whole school staff we utilised the 3 days at the beginning of the 2010 school year to participate in whole day workshop on Team Teach Australia and a conference organised by the Southern Metropolitan Special Assistant Principals group on resilience both were exceptionally worthwhile.

Parent Satisfaction

The average score for parent satisfaction with the school has risen slightly to 5.92 on a 7 point scale where seven is the highest score demonstrating that overall parents are quite satisfied with the school. However we will be working to improve this score in 2011.

Principal’s Report

Principal’s Comments

I am so proud to be the principal of our school. 2010 was a highly successful year at Dandenong Valley School. We underwent our review which was a process that caused us to reflect on our practices, report on our achievements and determine our future pathways. From this process we emerged with clearly articulated goals which form the basis of our next strategic plan.

These goals are:

- To improve the student’s capacity to engage in their own learning
- To improve the preparedness of senior students for post school life.

We will be working on these specific goals until 2014.

Our school community is in a strong growth period and at the end of 2010 with projected enrolments at an all time high we were lucky enough to be allocated additional classrooms. These extra classrooms have enabled us to keep class sizes as small as possible. We were also exceptionally fortunate to be given a third building which the staff have decided to use as a resource room and a music room. The development of the music program will take place in 2011 and will add value to our curriculum and to the provision of specialist programs.

Whilst we are excited at these developments it is a great concern to us all that we are running out of space. Once the BER building is complete we will not have any more room for additional classrooms.

The end of 2010 saw the commencement of the building of our multi-purpose room. The projected completion date is the end of September. We have crossed fingers that we will be able to hold our school concert there in December.

A highlight for 2010 was the opening of our new junior playground, it is a truly beautiful play space and Margaret Edmunds came and cut the ribbon to officially declare it open. In addition to this playground we are delighted with our new horticulture centre. This upgrade of our existing area has
provided us with a beautiful user friendly area where students can grow fruit, vegetables and flowering plants.

I am very excited and positive about the future facing us all at Dandenong Valley School, I am delighted to be a part of the team here. All of the staff are dedicated and hard working. We are all committed to the growth and development of each student’s full potential. I have received their utmost support and I am truly grateful. I also stand in awe of our wonderful families, they support our school programs, appreciate our efforts and work with us to ensure the provision of the best possible learning program for their child. I feel it is a very great privilege to work with you all.

School Council President's Report

The past year has been has been a very busy, challenging year, and also very successful. School Council is extremely pleased at the progress the school has made. As we enter into 2011 we are facing a growing demand for placements.

We are anticipating a school population of just over 200 students with the new enrolments for 2011, the influx of places required is very indicative of the growth of families with young children requiring Special Development Schools. To cater for our growth a further three portable classrooms have been organised. All the new portables are being located on the secondary college grounds as we are limited with very little space left except for student recreational purposes.

It is anticipated that a new school for special needs will be built at Officer or in the Pakenham area after a public meeting was held which was attended by Sue and Michael.

The new BER building will be completed late in 2011 which will provide new facilities which have been planned after many meetings with Senior Staff; this will enable new programs to be implemented and will give improved outcomes for our students.

Work continued during the summer break with the redevelopment of the North courtyard and the installation of the Liberty Swing donated by the Variety Club in partnership with Acceptance Finance.
On behalf of the School Council I would like to thank Michael Weston for the extra work and his responsibility of directing school building projects, also making recommendations to School Council, ensuring that Dandenong Valley SDS is safe, has well maintained grounds, and also ensuring that the school complies with OH&S regulations.

Redevelopment of the Horticultural Centre has now been completed allowing wheelchairs to access this area, again School Council thank Michael Weston and Paul Norton for their leadership and the committee that worked on this project.

The new Junior Playground has been completed and an opening day was organised at which Margaret Edmunds, past Principal, cut the ribbon and made everything official. Thank you to all the staff that helped to set up and also organised morning tea.

The School Council Finance Committee and the administrator are continually focusing on the financial accountability and will continue to develop and implement strategies to ensure financial sustainability. The Schools audit was very complimentary.

Thanks are extended to Pam Blackburn our Business Manager for her effort and dedication.

The School review was completed in July 2010. The report tabled by the reviewer congratulated the ongoing commitment of the school, which has resulted in improved student outcomes in each of the goal areas in the School Strategic Plan.

Our new Strategic Plan 2011-2014 will reflect the efforts of the school, to improving its performance in several key areas and to further develop pathways and strengthen the curriculum with options for students in the final years at school.

On behalf of School Council I would like to thank everyone who had input to the Strategic Plan ensuring that the school will continue to deliver strong curriculum development and will broaden the curriculum options for students in their final three years.

Throughout the year many fund raising efforts were held which achieved excellent results. School Council appreciates the efforts of Kim Lipari and her team that organised the Trivia Nite and worked tirelessly on the Bunning’s BBQ to mention just two.

School Council, staff, and parents take this opportunity of thanking the many service clubs, community groups and
volunteers who have supported Dandenong Valley SDS during the year.

Special thanks to Danni Panozzo and her team for organizing the Art Show and the end of year concert. Every person that attended were most impressed by the talent which was displayed by the students.

I would like to thank Judy Norton who accepted the role of Assistant Principal whilst Jo Atkinson was on long service leave and extended absence through a broken ankle although this did not stop Jo from doing homework passed on from Sue (a hard taskmaster), thank you Jo for the dedicated role you play.

The graduation ceremony for 2010 was held at the City of Casey Council Offices where the graduating students were presented to the City Mayor. This I feel is a wonderful acknowledgement to the school staff and the students. Thank you to Kim Lipari and the many staff who made this night a wonderful success.

Di Haslett and her committee are to be commended on the production of the 2010 Yearbook which showcases the whole school community and recognizes the many community groups, donors, and volunteers.

The year has been very challenging especially for our new school Principal Sue Chernishoff who was appointed at the beginning of term 1 and was welcomed by the school community. Sue’s enthusiasm and dedication over the year has given the School Council every confidence in her commitment to lead the school in continuing excellence and effectiveness, with support from dedicated professional staff, committed leadership team, and a great school community.

The excellence of Dandenong Valley School would not be possible without the commitment and dedication of the Principal, Assistant Principals, Senior Team, and the School Community.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all the many teachers, their assistants, therapy staff, administration and the many volunteers for their dedication and hard work which is the basis of the success of Dandenong Valley SDS.

My sincere thanks to my fellow councilors for their generous commitment of time and contribution to assist with planning for the future of Dandenong Valley SDS, with Sue. We look forward to the challenges in the year ahead as we continue to work defining what we need to do to achieve our vision through the new Strategic Plan.

Tony Wride
Student Progress & Achievements

Student Learning

Throughout the previous years of our strategic plan, staff at Dandenong Valley has applied a variety of strategies to their curriculum planning in order to continually improve student learning. We have focused on each element - curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, their interrelationship and the ways they support student learning.

During 2010 we continued to review our curriculum and to ensure it aligned with DEECD Working Towards Level One document. Teachers again used the curriculum to develop goals for student learning, to identify and clarify expectations and outcomes for class and department programs. Using the curriculum in a variety of ways has enabled teachers to continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and its content. Focus statements were developed in the domains of personal and interpersonal learning and draft key performance indicators were also developed for these domains. They clarify the intent of the stages within the domains and further enhance teacher ability to prepare programs and establish clear, relevant and challenging learning expectations.

The performance indicators will be used during 2011 to establish baselines in student learning and facilitate student assessment, enabling evaluation of both student learning and the programs being used to improve learning. Results from the parent survey indicate their satisfaction with learning focus has increased from previous year and is also now well above the state mean. Their satisfaction is also well above the mean for stimulating learning and on the state mean for student motivation.

Results from teacher assessment of student progress in the dimensions within literacy and numeracy (speaking and listening, reading, number, space etc), show ongoing improvement for students - the key performance indicators enabling identification of even small steps. Overall improvement in Health & Phys Ed and ICT were also indentified. We will continue to develop our assessment tools, ensuring they align with DEECD initiatives and they provide valid and consistent assessment which can reliably inform which future teaching and student learning.

Information Communication Technology is a strong motivator of student learning and powerful teaching aid. Dandenong Valley SDS is extremely well resourced in this area and uses the technology well to improve student learning. In 2010 the power of the Ipad was identified and utilised. Judy Norton initiated their use by trialling her own in her class. Now we currently have 8 ipads in the school which are being used to motivate the behaviours associated with turn taking and communication in particular. Currently students are learning more from the use of the ipad than from any specific application. We will continue to monitor their use & research best practices which improve student learning.

The web based Student Tracking and Reporting program (STAR) was introduced last year for both goal and
report writing. Although there were some minor glitches as is normal for the introduction of any new system, the program has proved successful overall. The program has our curriculum as its data base, from which student goals may be identified.

As part of the whole school approach to augmentative communication - the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) was commenced with some students. This provides another positive strategy to improve communication for our students and will be further extended during 2011.

The draft Transition curriculum was trialled during 2010 and will be reviewed during 2011. This curriculum acknowledges the different needs of students 16 plus and the need to ensure their readiness for transition to adult options at the age of eighteen.

The year was again productive, with the school review providing an opportunity to reflect not only on the previous year but also the previous years of the strategic plan. It is rewarding to observe the continued growth and improvement in the all elements which improve student learning - curriculum, assessment and pedagogy.

Jo Atkinson
Assistant Principal
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