



Education &  
Communities

Public Schools NSW

# Regional Director's Message

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## South Western Sydney Regional Principals' Conference – *Beyond Transition to Transformation*

Earlier this week our 276 Principals, Regional Leadership Team and Principal Education Officer team enjoyed a day of professional learning at our Term 4 Principal's Conference. The conference allowed each of us to engage in professional conversation with our colleagues during this time of significant change and opportunity in public education.

Kevin McGuinness, an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer in South Western Sydney, shared his powerful story of growing up in Minto, of Julie Finn his primary school teacher who had such a profound impact on his early schooling by believing in him, of his professional football career, of the assistance afforded by the staff at Sarah Redfern High School in completing his HSC whilst being a first grade footballer for the mighty Western Suburbs Magpies and of undertaking teacher education at the University of Western Sydney and next year becoming the first in the McGuinness family to attain a degree. The stories of our people in education are very powerful and Kevin's was fantastic to hear as the opening to our conference.

Dr Judy Halbert and Dr Linda Kaser co-leaders of the Networks of Inquiry and Innovation and the Aboriginal Education Schools Network in British Columbia, Canada presented on the importance of having every learner leave our schooling system as curious as when they arrive, every learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options, and of innovation being the recognition that old forms are not working for all learners, identifying what the key needs of our learners area and then creating new forms based on knowledge about what does work. For the past 12 years Judy and Linda have worked with an inquiry based network of 500 schools in British Columbia to

create new mindsets about learning and leadership. They highlighted the importance of working through a spiral of inquiry to change the results for young learners. In addition whilst each school is unique they re-enforce that there is a great deal to be learned through conversation and exchanges with other schools and the importance of networks to do so – the power of coherence, motivation and meaning for everyone involved in education networks. Judy and Linda also spoke of the positive impact that vulnerable learners have if they have two adult advocates in their school lives. One adult is not enough. The presence of two caring adults on an ongoing basis helps to build in a needed protective factor for learners who struggle. Their coverage resonated strongly with us all.

Brogan Mulhall, Student Welfare Consultant and our regional Student Representative Council also launched the '*Put the Boot into Bullying*' initiative at the conference that they have developed which has been endorsed by the state SRC. *Put the Boot into Bullying* is an anti-cyberbullying initiative which aims to provide school students with a simple non-confrontational strategy to intervene and diffuse incidents of cyber bullying on social networking forums.

The strategy invites students to sign up to the *Put the Boot into Bullying* pledge and to promote the initiative in their school and wider community. In living up to their pledge, students are invited to be proactive when witness to events of cyber-bullying and drop in the *Put the Boot into Bullying* link within the forum.

The development of *Put the Boot in to Bullying* was based on the premise that action against cyberbullying needs to take place at the point of conflict online. The approach incorporates the important concepts and effects of Bystander Behaviour. *Put the Boot into Bullying* is a proactive strategy that invites online bystander students to behave in a supportive way to others who are being cyberbullied, to intervene in a non-confrontational way and to report the incident where appropriate.

Well done to Brogan and our students on this fantastic initiative! I encourage each school to look at meaningful ways of including this initiative into their Anti-bullying approaches.

Inclusive of celebrating the leadership, staff and student excellence I have been privy to in 76 educational visits to our schools in 2012, I was able to use the opportunity in my presentation to highlight the lessons we can take from the work of Dr Norman McCulla the Australian College of Educators Sir Harold Wyndham medal recipient this year, who speaks of the transformative power of education, of who you are being how you teach and of the importance of school leadership in being an enabler of teacher quality. The attributes of good school leadership according to Prof Stephen Huber and Dr Guri Skedsmo are ones that exist in many leaders in our system and these were also highlighted along with the Monash University Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing survey which

demonstrates the outstanding commitment of our leaders and the significant replacement factor in leadership confronting us all when 7,000 of our 10,000 Principals across Australia have indicated that they will retire in the next 5 years. In addition the work of Mark Prensky, educational innovator, in ensuring authentic learning experiences, of fostering global and peer connections for all learners and leaders has strong applicability to the work we undertake. David Zyngier from Monash University reminds us of the powerful role we play in filling the '*invisible backpacks*' of our vulnerable learners with rich, broad learning experiences and the focus in this area was highlighted as a key attribute of the work we undertake.

The presentation also allowed for coverage of the rationale of the proposed new model to support our schools in walking through with our leaders the proposed organisational charts, principal's networks and education service provision. The proposed model is available at <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/psportfolio> with questions, feedback and comments welcome through [DDGSchools@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:DDGSchools@det.nsw.edu.au)

I would like to thank the organising committee, led by Cathy Brennan, Leader Curriculum, Professional Learning and Leadership and Samantha Jackson, Quality Teaching Consultant Professional Learning, Leadership and Standards, for their work in organising a great conference.



## 2012 Aboriginal Student Achievement Awards

Last Wednesday evening I had the great pleasure and privilege of attending the 2012 Aboriginal Student Achievement Awards for South Western Sydney Region, held at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown Campus. In its 22<sup>nd</sup> year, there were over 500 nominations from 70 schools, which represents a significant growth from the previous year, and demonstrates the wonderful support, encouragement and ultimately the recognition that schools are affording our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



With an appreciative audience of 550 family members, local community, principals and school staff the evening was an enormous success as 112 award recipients received their awards in 8 different categories. Awards included the KARI All-rounder awards and the prestigious Uncle Wilbur Dixon Encouragement Award given to Kobi Foster from John Warby Public School and the Mil-Pra AECG Award given to Harry Pitt, a Year 12 student from Bonnyrigg High School.

Entertainment by the South Western Sydney region Aboriginal Student Voices choir, Talyssa Baker (*Leumeah High School*) and Samantha Lindsay (*Campbelltown Performing Arts High School*) rounded out a wonderful evening for all that attended. Congratulations to the organising committee, members of which are shown below. The second photo shows Kobi Foster accepting his award from Sue Dixon with the last photo showing Mil-Pra AECG Award recipient, Harry Pitt with Auntie Mae Robinson.



## Priority Schools Program (PSP) Student Voice 2012

Recently the delivery of the 2012 Student Voice Program took place. This annual PSP program is designed to give students from low SES communities the opportunity to explore issues relating to justice and express their views in relation to their world.

This year, the vehicle of their expression was a radio play. In the very short time of one day, students worked in small groups together across Stages 3 and 4, to produce a play with sound effects!

The 91 students from 23 schools discussed differing aspects of fairness including equity for boys and girls, aspects of ageism and diversity of cultures and beliefs. To produce their plays, students modified a traditional fairy tale to tell a story which included a moral about equity and fairness.

Students were fortunate to have this process led by a playwright from *WestWords* - the Western Sydney Young People's Literature Development Project. Plays were written, performed and recorded by the students on the day. 20 short radio plays were recorded and are to be sent to all schools involved.

Due to the popularity of these sessions, another Student Voice workshop will be held in the last few weeks of the term.

The students achieved extraordinary things in a very short amount of time and participated in an authentic learning experience that was great fun – well done to all our students and staff involved – the power of authentic learning experiences in action!



## Leading Educators Around The Planet

Many of our leaders have taken part in the international program for principals and senior education officers in New South Wales with rich professional development and learning experiences facilitated through the program.

LEAP applications are now open for the 2013 LEAP Program to Ontario and Alberta (Canada); or Essex and Worcester (England). Application forms (and information) are accessible from the web-site by entering as a URL: [www.aleap4principals.com.au](http://www.aleap4principals.com.au)

For further information ring Warren Marks (0412049637) or Sue Lazenby (0412960108).

# November 2012 SWSR Principals' Conference

