

Principals Report 2009

As we conclude the school year for 2009, I am conscious of the fact that this is, indeed, the last time I will have such a duty to the school community of Yidarra Catholic Primary School

This year can be characterized as challenging and productive. In 2009, we, as a community, understood the importance of being Christ-centred and relationship-orientated.

2009 saw a Building Education Revolution instigated by the Commonwealth Government. Yidarra received a 3 million dollar grant to build two new classrooms and to extend the current library to include a technology centre. The timeline involves having these facilities completed by the end of 2010. These facilities will launch the school into the early years of Learning with great flexibility and resource. The enrolment configuration for kindergarten and three year old programmes, as well as after and before school care, will change significantly over the next five years. We, as a school, are well placed to meet those challenges with these new facilities.

Other curriculum innovations involve the introduction of a three-year-old programme. One of the key drivers of the Catholic Education Office

of WA's mission is to improve learning outcomes and optimise life outcomes for Catholic students. A Catholic three-year-old program endeavours to provide a learning environment that is concerned with the development of the whole child. The three-year-old program at Yidarra provides an introduction to schooling for children and their families and sets the foundation for future school learning.

Our planning and surveys conducted in early 2009 allowed for our capital development to be measured and considered.

The danger of rushing such an enrolment change without planning and research is that we offer more of the same, but at a younger age. This certainly is not a desirable outcome. As a system, we have now developed a rationale and position statement for the early years of learning. We can now talk about the Why, as well as the How.

Once again, our school participated in the National testing of Literacy and Numeracy for 2009. Our results indicate we operate functional learning environments and Yidarra's mean score is above the Australian schools mean score in all comparisons. The challenge for our staff now is to further analyse those results in relation to whole school improvement. An area of further planning is in the numeracy area. Our results suggest an

extremely strong literacy intervention program, co-ordinated by Yasmin Bell. Our new goal for 2010 will be in the number strand of numeracy. This will involve a strategic plan to value add in this area without increasing staff resource.

Yidarra is part of a National Partnership Project and will be joining with other regional Catholic primary schools to share best practice in Numeracy teaching. The most effective Catholic Schools adopt an attitude of continual whole school improvement.

As suggested earlier, positive relationships between key school stakeholders is the vehicle to providing a safe learning environment. Our school staff model effective positive relationships. Their obvious commitment to Yidarra allows their contributions to be highly valued.

Our school staff has once again demonstrated a commitment to the children in their care. Their work ethic and skill to develop rapport with students allows for an authentic community. Our staff is a successful blend of experienced and staff beginning their teaching careers.

Too often the media treat educators as fair game and on occasion parents use them when they are looking to blame someone. It's a simple game plan

at Yidarra: be positive with your teachers and watch them work hard for your children.

This year, we farewell Tammy Ruchotzke, from our staff, who takes up a position at Seton Catholic College. Tammy has made an excellent contribution to the school and we wish her well. Thank you, also, to Rachel Palmer who concludes her teaching at Yidarra after 12 months and embarks on a teaching career in Melbourne. Anne Stickland, who has given wonderful service in our Uniform shop, departs this year to pursue more family time.

Our school experienced the tragedy of two students, Alexander and Charlotte Dillon, who died in a car accident in August of this year. This was a difficult time for our school community. It was a time to lean on our faith and each other for support. I was proud of our school community who demonstrated a real concern for the Dillon family and each other. I was proud to be part of the Yidarra Staff as they demonstrated leadership, compassion and faith in such difficult circumstances.

Only in times of great difficulty do we find out who we really are!

The relationship between our Parish and School is an example of “best practice” within the Catholic community. This strong alignment is led by Fr Michael Keating and the parish. I have gained much wisdom and advice from Fr Michael over my time at Yidarra and believe our close friendship has been beneficial to both Parish and School life.

I also congratulate our two major parent bodies, the School Board and the Parents & Friends Association, for their leadership in supporting our school needs. Mr Dom Da Cruz and our School Board have worked hard to ensure a strategic approach to the future of Yidarra. Our Board survey, early in the year, was an example of well timed feedback, which our Board was able to utilise in our Capital Development Planning.

Congratulations to our Parents & Friends Association for their efforts in 2009. Mrs Sandy Waller and our Parents & Friends Association have worked hard to build community and develop relationships in our school. The new Fathers’ Day breakfast was an example of our parent body looking for innovative ways of allowing parents to engage in our school setting.

These key stakeholders of our community have demonstrated that leadership is not about making clever decisions and doing bigger deals, least of all

for personal gain. It is about energizing other people to make good decisions and do better things. In other words, it is about helping release the positive energy that exists naturally within people. Effective leadership inspires more than it empowers, it connects more than it controls, it demonstrates more than it decides. It does all this by engaging.

I leave the Yidarra community with great memories! The greatest challenge for any Principal is ensuring you leave the place a little better than you found it. We are a school focused on developing relationships. We are a school focused on improving outcomes with view for the future. We understand the most important resource in any organization is the human resource.

I look forward to the challenges of my new position within Catholic education safe in the knowledge that my time at Yidarra has been a special one.

Thankyou,
Hamish Valentine.