



PRINCIPAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014

As another year draws to a close, it is timely to reflect on the celebrations and occasions which highlighted the year at St Rita's School. We have had an eventful year, with enrolments fluctuating as families moved into the district and others have left in search of work elsewhere. Fortunately, I successfully applied for Over-allocation of classroom teachers late last year, and could once again have three multi-age classes in the school for 2014.

CURRICULUM

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum in English, Maths, Science and History has continued this year. The staff was excited to begin teaching from our accredited Geography Learning Area Plan from Term 1. As Literacy Enrichment Teacher, Mrs Bernadette Anthony competently mentored teachers in the area of English as well as assisting with the successful implementation of the PM Guided Writing pedagogy.

Science, taught by Mrs Taryn Greenwood, has continued to be a highlight of the curriculum in 2014. Students have benefited greatly from specialist Science lessons as their scientific knowledge and skills have developed well. Our special event, Science Day, was an enjoyable and worthwhile learning experience for all students. The introduction of the Perceptual Motor Program for the Prep – Year 3s saw marked improvement in the physical skills of gross motor, balance and coordination for these young children.



Throughout the year, teachers participated in extensive Professional Development sessions after school and on weekends. By attending PD, teachers are enthusiastically committed to developing their teaching skills so as to deliver the most effective teaching practices for students.

These sessions covered such interesting topics as Explicit Instruction, 'First Steps' Writing, 'First Steps'



Oral Language, Teaching Spelling, Consistency of Teacher Judgment and 'Circle Solutions'.

The school also participated in the diocesan *Literacy and Numeracy Coaching* initiative, which aimed at further supporting teachers with the teaching of reading, writing and spelling. Ms Carly Steele modeled literacy lessons, focusing on best pedagogy, and Mrs Vicki Jago and Mrs Bernadette Anthony provided further coaching support throughout the year. Parents were also provided with information sessions on how to use the 'First Steps' and THRASS teaching strategies at home.

This year, an additional curriculum innovation at St Rita's has been the implementation of the *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden* program. In this program, the students have grown, harvested and cooked using produce from our vegetable garden. SAKG has been a valuable and engaging learning program at our school, and Mrs Jenni Stone has worked hard this year to ensure its success. I thank the St Rita's P & F for providing financial support of *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden* throughout the year.

Digital Learning continued to be a major focus for 2014 with the establishment of a purpose-built Computer Room for students to develop skills using desktop and laptop computers. The development of computer skills has been astounding! The trialing of take-home iPads in Term 4 was a huge success, and all students in the Year 4/5/6 class will be assigned an iPad from the beginning of next year. To further keep our students upskilled in a range of technological devices, Chromebooks will also be used in the senior class in 2015.



FAITH LIFE

The Religious Life of our school continued to be capably guided and nurtured by Assistant Principal (Religious Education) Mrs Sarah Hession. Working with our Parish Priest, Father Kerry Crowley, Mrs Hession planned and organised the Religious Education and Social Emotional Learning programs, and prayer and liturgical celebrations throughout the year.

Students from St Rita's and local state schools participated in the Parish Sacramental Program this year, and they received the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. St Rita's Parish acknowledged the APRE's valuable role in this significant event in the school calendar.

Religious Education lessons were taught in our classrooms using the Brisbane Guidelines, and class prayer, liturgies and Masses were significant features of our term calendar at St Rita's School. In 2015, a new Religious Education curriculum will be rolled out across the diocese, and staff will engage in professional development for this early in the new academic year.

COMMUNITY

Our school community was strengthened in 2014 with two new classroom teachers, Miss Melanie Cuskelly and Miss Kate Watson, who successfully developed their teaching skills throughout the year. Mrs Bernadette Anthony ably supported classroom teaching programs, in her role as Literacy

Enrichment Teacher, and Information Technology lessons were taught by Mrs Clare Nielsen in Semester One.



I am proud to report that St Rita's has an extremely hard-working, dedicated and committed staff who worked collaboratively with each other and the Catholic Education Services Curriculum Team to provide an enriched, engaging learning environment for all students.

I wish Miss Cuskelly and Miss Watson all the best as they continue their careers at other schools in the diocese next year.

Throughout the year, my aim to promote parent participation at St Rita's was embraced by our families who became enthusiastically involved in a multitude of ways:

- * Parent Information sessions
- * Class Masses and liturgies
- * Sporting carnivals - Cross Country, Athletics and Swimming
- * NAIDOC Week celebrations
- * Under 8s Day & Science Day
- * St Rita's Community Fair
- * Regularly helping in classroom
- * Babinda Harvest Festival
- * Working Bees
- * Tuckshop



I am extremely appreciative of the continued support and assistance given to the school by St Rita's families. I am proud that we are a happy and thriving community, and the school is indeed a 'better place' because of it in 2014!

CULTURE

In 2014, we continued to develop a whole-school approach to building and maintaining positive learning relationships for students. This was achieved through the school's Social and Emotional Learning and Peer Support Programs, and by having targeted social learning groups organised by our Counsellor, Mrs Carmel Parisi, each term.



Also, through explicit teaching of the school values of *Learning, Respect, Community and Faith*, and our *Relationships and Resilience Framework*, we intentionally taught all students positive behavior and relationship strategies.

Many opportunities were created for acknowledging and rewarding students for making good choices for learning, with Assembly Awards, newsletter articles and 'Good News' points with the Principal being awarded to many students this year.

BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

We started the new school year with a freshly-painted Block A which matched the Library in colour and added freshness to the school façade. In Term 4, the Administration Area was refurbished and renovated for both practical and aesthetic reasons. The Principal's Office is no longer used as a thoroughfare between the Staffroom and Office!

The St Rita's Feast Day Committee generously sponsored the installation of lighting and power to our Multi-purpose Court Area. This was of great benefit to the students who now use this large undercover area for a wide variety of curriculum programs, such as 'Dance Fever', the Perceptual Motor Program and of course the evening event, St Rita's Community Fair.

This year, two Grant Applications were written by the P & F Secretary, Katie Francis, for the installation of a new Junior Playground. Although Katie completed a comprehensive application, of which we were most grateful, unfortunately both of these were unsuccessful. I hope to proceed with the vision to provide a new playground for our Prep-Year 2 students next year.

What a productive year we have had at St Rita's! We have achieved our goals, made solid plans for 2015, and so deserve a well-earned holiday. I hope that you have a relaxing and safe holiday with your family and friends, and I look forward to seeing everyone back at St Rita's in January 2015.

Yours in teaching,

Judy Billiau

Principal St Rita's School



