

THE TOOGOOLAWA SCHOOLS ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - 2007



“The most precious gift in education is character”



MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER



This year marks our tenth year of operating Toogoolawa Schools.

We've learnt a lot.

We've learnt most importantly that it takes more than just a qualification as a teacher to teach these boys. There is a saying we often use: 'Some teachers explain, some complain and some inspire', The boys of Toogoolawa need inspiration. They need role models. They need to be loved and cared for and they need people with patience who care.

These aren't necessarily things you learn at teachers college.

2007 saw Toogoolawa go to the next level in creating a foundation for future expansion. The depth of that foundation came in the form of our teaching staff in all three schools committing themselves even more fully to their own personal development as role models of good character for the boys. Their ongoing evolution in this way has really set a standard of excellence that will not only inspire our present and future students but it also solidifies a template for new staff to adopt in our expansion models.

The measured success of our students this year has been remarkable with literacy and numeracy indicators showing significant growth. This is only eclipsed by the character and behaviour of students that I have witnessed in my visits to the schools, which is highly commendable.

Once again, I also commend the efforts of Ron & Su Farmer and all the teachers from all the schools who have dedicated themselves to the Toogoolawa cause, which is to live and teach the human values so that young men who come to us – often troubled and angry – can leave as shining lights of those human values that we live and teach.

I wish you all a happy, harmonious and loving festive season and I look forward to 2008, which will be our biggest and best year ever with the opening of our first school in Sydney and expansion into primary education.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fitzgerald'.

John Fitzgerald
December 2007



Love Never Faileth

During my life's journey I frequently came across the above saying and each time have felt prompted to wonder about the truth of these words. And, of course, accepting such a Biblical assertion at face value is not that simple as we are often confronted with life challenges in which it seems to be very difficult to keep our love alive without getting tired and dispirited.

As time passed I have come to the realisation that, to keep on returning to a state of open-heartedness, I needed to have a certain faith – faith that Love is our true nature, that a closed heart is a turning-away from who we truly are. From my own experience I can say that such faith automatically, spontaneously, effortlessly leads us to practise love in action.

“Love never faileth”. As each challenge presented itself to me I found myself returning to this guiding wisdom yet again – its three simple words provided the sacred oil to keep my lamp of faith burning. Yet the ones who are called upon to practise this faith in the power of love are our extraordinary teaching staff. It is they who are daily swimming in the swirling, turbulent current of our students' pain, frustration and anger.

A few weeks ago I was privileged to have a heart-to-heart conversation with one of our loving teachers. He remembered, “I had just started working at Toogoolawa when I saw that this big wall-hanging of the face of Jesus was not properly hung, so I automatically straightened it up. Not being a religious person I wondered why they were displaying an image of Jesus as I had not understood the school to be a Christian one when I signed on. However during my time here at Toogoolawa I have come to realise that what we learn in this work is to practise loving our students like Jesus would.” All of us at Toogoolawa – teachers, mentors, parents and students alike – experience such ‘awakening moments’ of great love and we intuitively know that this is our birthright. Such moments can only increase our faith that, no matter how difficult life sometimes seems to be, we can stretch our capacity to love still further and discover anew that Love never faileth.

The year 2007 has taken us through many such moments. As each one of us daily renews our commitment to become an ideal role model for our students, we find that we are being directed to dive deeper into our Being, into who we really are. And as we strive to be worthwhile guides for our boys to find their way to their own ‘Place in the Heart’ I am sure that each one of us grows in our faith that Love indeed never faileth.

As we come to the end of 2007 the Toogoolawa Schools Project will reach its 10th Anniversary. We can all feel confident within ourselves that many more anniversaries are yet to come.

I would like to offer my humble gratitude to John, our founder, for being a clear Divine instrument in the Toogoolawa Journey, and for his love, support and faith in me.

My gratitude also goes to all of my loving staff: Gerry, Tony, Helen, Donna, Neil, John, Marleen, Lyall, Tracey, Haydn, Naomi and Carol, for the many moments of love that we have shared and for what we have learned together.

For John's staff and Custodians, all of the volunteers, and the members of our Auxiliary Committees: Thank you for your loving contribution and for being part of the Toogoolawa Family.

And for our beautiful students: Thank you for the lessons of love and faith I have been granted through you.

May our work in Toogoolawa bring unity and harmony, sufficient to open all of those ‘doors to the heart’ which have been closed in our boys for a long long time.

May our love for each other, for our students and all others flow ever outward, throughout the whole universe, to its height, its depth, its broad extent, until it becomes a truly limitless love.

Su Farmer
December, 2007

Adult Mentor Role Models

One of the unique aspects of the Toogoolawa form of education – we call it ‘Educare’ which is the Latin derivative of the word ‘Education’, meaning ‘to bring forth from within’ – is that each one of the teaching staff strives to become an ideal role model for the good character traits they are seeking to bring out in the students.

This aspiration is not necessarily altruistic nor even idealistic; it is just plain common sense. As a small yet important example, we cannot expect students to speak respectfully to a teacher if the teacher lapses into periods of yelling and making threats when all is not going well. We have to become that which we desire others to be.

Each teacher, welfare officer, teaching assistant, counsellor, chaplain, director and volunteer in Toogoolawa tries in their own particular way to improve their thinking, feeling and behaviour, not just in front of the students but in all aspects of their lives. This is the commitment we make when we become part of the Toogoolawa Schools Project. Upon reflection at the close of a day one teacher might be thinking, “I find it so hard to feel caring and compassionate towards Jason, particularly when he bullies Fred and then lies about it. How can I rise above this and love each one of the students the same?”

Toogoolawa staff are guided by the Code of Conduct for Teachers which can be accessed on our website (www.toogoolawa.com.au) The code is in five parts, one for each of the five Human Values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-violence, and each Human Value has nine guidelines.

Recognising that we can profit from the insights, understanding and experience of others, Toogoolawa teaching staff have five inter-school phone-conferences throughout the year, during which we discuss for an hour or so all of the guidelines for a particular Human Value. Each person is asked to share their understanding of a guideline, after which they comment firstly on the benefits that accrue to oneself from endeavouring to behave in that way, and secondly on how our living the guideline is of help to the students. Also, during their preparation time, staff identify which guideline is the easiest to live by and which is the most difficult, and why.

Gerry, the head teacher at Toogoolawa School, Ormeau (QLD), has thoughtfully made notes of these phone-conference exchanges and I am sure you will find it interesting if I share some of them with you now.

LOVE

Guideline No.1: ‘Love can be expressed by relating to the wise inner goodness of each student’

Meanings:

“Looking at the positives instead of the negatives. Overlook the irritating habits and look for good qualities.”

“I guess it’s like only ever wanting to see the ‘diamond’, ignoring the ‘mud’ that is covering it up.”

Benefit to oneself:

“By looking at the inner goodness of others we can reflect on our own behaviour. We have to develop the inner ‘Witness’ so we can observe our own preferences and prejudices.”

Benefit to students:

“By doing this we are calling to their higher nature by acknowledging the perfection within them.”

“It is of benefit because you would probably treat students as if they already had the qualities that you desired for them to live by, instead of falling back into admonishing them for poor behaviour.”

PEACE

Guideline No. 4: ‘Showing patience and tolerance’

Meanings:

“For me, this means accepting the boys for who they are”

Benefit to oneself:

“Practising this helps us in our family lives as well as in dealing with some parents who become abusive to us.”

Benefit to students:

“Our behaving in this way brings about a defining change in the attitude of our students.”

“It has a great effect on the students in that they know you are trying to understand their foibles.”

“It helps them learn another way.”

This inter-school dialogue every four weeks or so on ‘living the Human Values’ reminds each one of us of the vital role that adult mentors play in the lives of children. If we judge, they will judge; if we get angry, they will harden their hearts and be even more angry. On the other hand, if we give selflessly, they will strive to do likewise; if we are at peace, they will follow until they join us there; if we insist on seeing the best in them, they will allow themselves to believe that they really are a ‘King who has gone to sleep’.

Observing and experiencing their teachers, day by day, striving in all humility to live by the Human Values ignites a spark in these young ‘gentlemen’. Without always being aware of it happening they begin to feel good about themselves – “I am the diamond, not the mud which sometimes hides it from view.” Each time an inner shift takes place they realise that it feels good to wake up and behave like the gentle giants that they truly are. Such is the effect that teachers (and parents and carers and volunteers) can have upon the young.

Ron Farmer

December, 2007



ORMEAU (QUEENSLAND) TOOGLOLAWA SCHOOL

Gerry's 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Ormeau, QLD

“May all beings in the world be happy!”

We say this sentence at Quiet Time every morning and every afternoon. I have sat many times looking into the faces of our boys wondering what happiness means to them. Would I swap places with any of them? Definitely not! Was my childhood like theirs? Definitely not!

Jason is in his thirty-ninth foster home. What makes him happy?

“I’m happy doing school-work because it’s fun and I’m happy when my carers pick me up on time.”

Nathan can’t hold down any work experience because he forgets to take his medication and ‘blows up!’ What makes him happy?

“Spending time with my friends at Toogoolawa and making my family proud of me.” Not much to ask is it?

One thing Toogoolawa does for staff and volunteers is to force people to live and work in the present moment. We can’t afford the luxury of daydreaming! To this end we are looking at introducing walking meditation next year as an introduction to the art of mindfulness for all of us. Simply walking slowly, in a relaxed way with a smile on our lips. No real destination just a desire to let peace and joy fill our hearts and the wish to be happy.

This year our little school has touched the lives of twenty-six boys. We started the year with six boys, quickly grew to ten then ebbed and flowed from term to term losing some and gaining some. Presently we have fourteen students. Those that have left have gone back into mainstream, moved away or tried their hand at working.

Along the way our little team has been pushed, jabbed, kicked and humoured into quite a formidable unit. Helen is always wise in counsel and straight down the line. Her classroom masterpieces are on show for all to admire! Tony is forever caring and consoling. He has been able to keep seven boys in work experience this term. No mean feat! Donna joined us four weeks ago and has brought along her effervescent smile and hearty laugh. Her culinary skills delight us all.

Special thanks to John, Ron and Su for their guidance, presence and support. Their fingerprints are all over the Toogoolawa family album.

Thanks to Lisa and Corne for braving the elements weekly to assist us in many different ways. The boys love sharing their stories with them. Thanks also to Owen, our second year Golf professional trainee. We started golf with some trepidation but it has had a great impact on the boys.

Thanks to John’s staff – Kathy, Ray, Mike, Ian, John Farley & his son Justin, Darcy, Peter and Lissie for your contributions.

This year the boys have helped us paint the office, kitchen, classroom, staff training room, sick room, dining room and verandas. They also clean the school weekly. So we hope if they ever move out they can patch a hole in the wall, paint it and clean up after themselves!

Next year we are looking forward to our Chaplain joining us for two and a half days a week. Alice can’t wait to start.

We are also looking forward to the arrival of two new classrooms to enable us to expand into the primary sector. We are losing seven boys. We already have their replacements lined up with more on a waiting list. I don’t think we’ll ever run out of diamonds to clean and polish!

Gerry

Tony's 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Ormeau, QLD

My second year at Toogoolawa has been a continuing opportunity to strengthen the ongoing personal development of the five Human Values that are taught each day at the school. Without these there would be little change in the boys. Through these values, I believe the boys develop a solid foundation for their future. As I reflect back on the year it has been a full and an amazing journey with surprises at every turn.

Apart from setting up the Maths & English folders which has been wonderful to see the response and progress of each individual boy in these areas, it has also been my privilege to be the representative for Toogoolawa School at the stakeholder meetings throughout the year for several of our boys in Government care.

Our association with the Beenleigh Region Industry Training Network has continued this year, with some of our boys gaining their HIA Blue Card while some successfully completed a bricklaying course. The opportunity for the boys to combine studies at school with work placement has not only given the boys hands on experiences, but also opened up links to a variety of possible career paths in the future. It was my pleasure to visit most of the boys at different workplace industries up and down the Coast, (bakery, panel beater, animal welfare, fibreglass moulders, mowing company, video store, motor bike sales/repairs, supermarket, tiling firm, a building site and a diesel mechanics workshop). Each boy experienced the rigours and demands of the workplace and it was encouraging to get positive feed back from the variety of employers.

The Toogoolawa team thanks BRITN's Julie Bromley and all employers for giving their time and for their patience and understanding shown in helping our boys gain and experience the workforce.

It has been a wonderful experience getting to know John Fitzgerald better this year. He is a very generous and incredibly passionate individual. I cannot say enough about the tireless dedication and passion that Ron & Su Farmer put into Toogoolawa Schools. To my co-workers and all the people associated with Toogoolawa nationally, I wish you every success in the future.

I wish everyone a safe refreshing Christmas and a blessed 2008.

Tony Sutherland.

- Donna's 2007 Report -
Toogoolawa School – Ormeau, QLD

Mathematics:

In the time I have been at Toogoolawa I have seen a dramatic improvement in the boys in this area. They are now showing a willingness to tackle a set task and see it through to completion. The Accelerated Maths Program has seen a sequential development in the understanding of many maths concepts.

The area of greatest improvement has occurred in Number with an understanding of Division as the reverse of Multiplication. A significant outcome for 2008 will be that the majority of the students achieve familiarity with the 12 times table. What an achievement this will be for our students.

Space has been another area that has seen improvement. The boys have shown much enthusiasm for the new Lego, which has been introduced into the program. The boys have been working with the large and small pieces of Lego and following the sometimes-frustrating instructions with determination and concentration I had not seen before. I have told the boys that when Gerry comes into the room we are working not playing with Lego and also improving our spatial concepts.

Language:

As with most boys there is a loathing of putting pen to paper or of reading anything that does not have a picture attached. Gerry has solved this using the overhead projector. The boys just love doing cloze activities on the white board using this method. The lights are turned out and the boys feel secure. (Research suggests that less fluorescent lighting results in more settled behaviour by boys and simultaneously creates an atmosphere in which they are more able to talk about their feelings.)

Not only do we achieve 100% participation in the cloze activity but the boys talk and debate on issues related to the activity.

The boys have also been having success giving their talk about the weekly story and most of the boys will tell a personal story to demonstrate the virtue. They especially enjoy being asked to judge their peers' performance.

Silent reading sees the masters outside in the hammocks reading the ever-popular Simpson's comics or motor bike books. This literature is also popular on the bus when we are driving to community service.

Each of the students has a Language folder for spelling and comprehension. In this way we are able to keep track of their progress in these areas.

Home Ec and Science:

Here at Ormeau, having a great meal is paramount and we have Fish Wednesday and Burger Friday. The boys look forward to lunch on these days and the preparation is done with enthusiasm. On Wednesday, Corne and sometimes Lisa, help with the slicing and dicing that goes along with the making of a healthy lunch and all the students, teachers and volunteers enjoy the meal together.

Helen whips up smoothies and cuts up apple each morning to keep the students sugar levels on an even keel. In 2008 the students with minimal supervision may be able to do this task.

A roster sees setting up and cleaning duties done daily and if there is no willing helpers the tasks are distributed between all the students. Students in search of bonus points often volunteer.

The cleaning on Thursday is always done quickly and efficiently and some of the boys have learnt to vacuum and may some day be able to keep a reasonably clean house.

Sewing is not yet on the agenda at Ormeau but hopefully next year buttons and iron on patches will form the beginnings of sewing kit which each student will treasure???????

Science will be tackled in 2008 by blending it in with the other life skills taught and demonstrated to the boys. The garden will again be blooming. The new buildings with rainwater tanks will mean water will be able to be recycled and conserved.

Art:

At the moment with painting in progress, the art program at Ormeau has been disrupted but I have convinced Gerry that we need a separate art room so that projects can be left and returned to at a moment's notice. (The boys here at Ormeau have a busy social life.)

We started making paper-mache moneyboxes but as you can imagine interest dwindled quickly. (It was the boys' suggestion). There are three abandoned paper shapes and only Brendan has persevered and is almost finished. He now wants it to be a Christmas pinata. When the art room is up and running the other shapes will be out on display for everyone to have a go and hopefully we will get some fish to decorate the classroom.

But!!! We have had a few successes. We made a set of skittles for Corne's little boy out of recycled Cappuccino cups and we enjoyed making Christmas crackers to share with our families on Christmas day.

The program we will implement in 2008 will rely on a great deal of recycled materials and will be about making useful STUFF. All these boys will most probably have kids one day (not too soon one can hope) and they may turn their hand to making and creating with their own children with items that are available around the house.

WE have big plans for Ormeau in the Art Department. Keep alert for UPDATES!!!!

Community Service Program - Helen's 2007 Report Toogoolawa School – Ormeau, QLD

Toogoolawa Schools exist because of the charity of others. Charity meaning – giving to and helping others in need; and tolerance in judgement of others; love of one's fellows.

These are the virtues bestowed upon us. Without this generosity we would not be able to operate. I am sure that each boy who has had the opportunity to come to our schools would feel an immense sense of gratitude for the generosity of our benefactors. In turn we express our gratitude by including community service in our weekly program.

The students give back by helping out at three different venues – Oz Care, SWARA (Sunshine, Welfare and Remedial Association Inc.), and Keystone.

Keystone is probably the least favourite for the boys. It is situated in Logan City and is a place where people with disabilities can work, socialise and earn some money. It is here that all the head-sets from QANTAS airlines are recycled – both first class and economy class. We help out by performing all the tasks involved in this recycling: removing old foam pads; sterilising headsets; testing sets to ensure they are still operating; refitting new foam pads; bagging & sealing; weighing for transport back to the airport. I guess it is the least favourite because the work can be a little tedious at times.

SWARA is situated at the top of Roma Street Parklands and was set up many years ago by 2 ladies known as the "Pink Twins". Here people with disabilities (both mental and physical) come to work and socialise. At SWARA we mainly help out by dismantling old electricity metres and separating all the different metal components which are sold for scrap. The students are well known down in the metre shed and are usually greeted with loud welcomes and wide smiles. I'm told that we are missed on the weeks we go elsewhere.

At SWARA they also do lots of crafts, cooking, ceramics, art, woodwork and maintain their grounds/gardens. The cooking and crafts are sold at street stalls to raise money to help towards the running costs of the centre.

I have seen our boys admire how hard working and happy others can be regardless of their handicap. It's not always easy. Some boys do feel uneasy and unsure at times, but are generally accepting and involve themselves in the open friendliness of others without judgement.

OZ Care is probably the favourite place for the boys to visit. Here we make up hundreds of ham and cheese sandwiches and then at 12 noon we serve food to less fortunate/homeless people. At times when confronted by grumpy, hungry people, I have seen our students be respectful and respond in a positive and caring manner.

When we have finished serving others, the boys can help themselves to whatever lunch is on offer that day. This is the big draw card for some of them – they love the food there. And I guess that explains why it is their favourite community service venue.

Well done boys – be proud of your helpfulness towards others.

Students' Graduation Speeches

Toogoolawa is a good school for kids that don't like normal schooling. My time here with my mates and the staff has been awesome. The places we go are really cool and some of the places we went to, were the beach and to the golf and to Swara and Oz Care. It is really mad to come to this school. The boys are really good to get along with. The staff and our lovely volunteers like Lisa, Cornea, Su, Ron and John they are very friendly people and I'd like to thank Gerry, Tony, Helen and Donna for their lovely help and Tony's lovely help with our work experience and trying to get us jobs. Also Gerry for accepting me into the school, it's so fun here and it's sad to have to leave the coolest people I know, but it's my time to go.

Adam, Toogoolawa School, Ormeau (QLD)

I have been at Toogoolawa School for one year and have had a good time. I have made a couple of friends. At times they can be hard to get along with, but, at other times they can be very easy to get along with. My time at Toogoolawa has been a life time experience and I am very thankful to all the staff here at Toogoolawa. Gerry for putting up with my behaviour, Helen for supplying the school and the students with fresh food. Tony for helping all the students with all their work and being strong when fights broke out between the students and stepping in when needed to stop the fights. To the newest of staff Donna, extremely nice, kind hearted, very patient and best of all Donna is very helpful.

To this day I am extremely grateful to have come to this school. The staff here at Toogoolawa have helped me in lots of different ways. Day in and day out the staff are helping kids change their lives. Helping them to grow up and live normal lives when they leave school and home.

One day I hope that the students who came through this school can repay the staff who helped them through life. I, Jason, will make sure that I repay the staff of Toogoolawa School.

To all the staff of Toogoolawa School thank you very much for helping me, you've shown me a great many things and I am grateful. Toogoolawa School forever.

Jason, Toogoolawa School, Ormeau (QLD)

One thing that I will miss about this school
Will be the kindness of the teachers and the help they give us

What I will miss most will be the friends
That we make and the knowledge that we learn

THANK YOU

Gerry, Tony, Helen, Donna, Lisa, John, Corne, Sue, Ron and Owen who taught us golf.

SO THANK YOU.

Nick, Toogoolawa School, Ormeau (QLD)



WICKHAM (NEW SOUTH WALES) - TOOGOOLAWA SCHOOL

John's 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Wickham, NSW

What a year this has been! I have now been a part of Toogoolawa for just over 6 years and have seen the growth from an “infant”, with initially 1 school at Ormeau running and ours just starting out in October 2001, to being a much larger and more professional organisation with many plans and opportunities to expand to cater for more boys in the near future. There is a strong emphasis on growth within our schools. This encompasses not only what I have already mentioned, but growth towards good character for not only our boys but for our staff as well.

Once you become part of Toogoolawa you will feel your life change. You will look at how you operate in the world and how you get along with all around you. What we try to do for the boys we must also do for ourselves. As an agent for positive and long lasting change within, Toogoolawa is a very powerful force.

On a personal level, my year has been quite interesting to say the least. Due to health problems and some leave without pay I have only been in the school about 2 terms all up. In that time the school has been very well administered by Neil, who took over the role of head teacher. We also saw 2 new staff come on board in Marlene and Lyall. Much credit should go to both as they jumped in at the deep end and did a great job in helping Neil keep the school on an even keel. My sincere thanks go to all the staff here for their love and dedication to the boys and the work they put in continually.

A disappointing aspect for us was the failure of the Lake Macquarie School to find suitable long-term premises and the eventual demise of the project. Many thanks and love must go to Frances and Martin Pavitt, who worked so tirelessly to get the school off the ground only to see it falter at the last hurdle.

We started the year with 8 students, while the Lake Macquarie School had 4 that were using our premises until their venue was finalised. By term 2 we grew to 11 with the addition of some of the students from Lake Macquarie when it folded. There has been a substantial turnover of students throughout the year as some boys gave the school a try and found it didn't suit them. Others, however, spent a few terms with us and felt it was time to move on as we had perhaps done as much as we were able to do for them. Sometimes the seed we have sown for the boys about their true nature and goodness is done in a short time and they feel restless and need to move on. We may not feel they have changed much in their time with us but at some point in the future it may become apparent.

Such a story comes to mind with one of our ex students who appeared to be making good progress until about mid way through 2006 when he began running off from home and mixing with a bad group. His attendance dropped right off and when he was at school refused to work and created many problems in the classroom. It was agreed with his mother that he finish with us as he was nearly 15 and didn't want to go to school any further. When he left we had concerns about his future but these were dispelled when he returned this year to visit and told us that he had moved in with his dad and was attending TAFE and studying hospitality. He was very focused and happy and had been keeping out of trouble, most unlike the boy who left our school 12 months earlier.

As far as the future is looking, we are hoping to expand to include a primary section in 2009, once our lease here finishes and a suitable premises is obtained. At that point we will take students from year 5 up to year 8. The next 12 months should be quite busy preparing for that and assisting in the start of the new Sydney school at Flemington.

Once again we need to acknowledge the love that is shown to us and the boys by many people. First and foremost to John Fitzgerald, your vision is enormous and your desire and capacity to achieve your goals is truly amazing. You inspire us to do greater things with our lives. Thank you John!

To Su and Ron we love your presence and input into the school and thank you deeply for your tireless efforts to keep the school, the staff and the boys growing strong. Your love and energy is beautiful to witness. Personally, I thank you for the love and consideration you and John gave to me during my recovery from the health problems that I encountered this year.

Then there is Quinny. I know how much you love Toogoolawa and how much you want to help the boys. You too are an inspiration to all of us to give our best and a great example for the boys who want to aspire to greatness. You're great!!!

Very special thanks go to David Kibcork, who started this year wanting to help out as a volunteer even though he lived in Sydney and surprised us all with a magnificent donation of funds that we will use to purchase new furniture for the classroom and a new laser printer. Thank you for your love and generosity.

For Simon and David Hall from the Clean Plumbers, we would love to say thanks for "Trade Skills Days". David allows Simon to come up to Newcastle every term to present the boys with instruction in basic plumbing skills and the example of excellent customer service that will save them much money in the future or even get them started in a trade course. This is a fantastic gesture as it costs David time and money to do so, yet he is more than willing to do so to help the boys.

Every year I am amazed at the reaction that Toogoolawa has on people from all walks of life. The boys, the parents, the staff and all who come in contact or hear about what John, Su and Ron have put in place cannot help but be effected in some way. We see it all the time and know in our hearts that what we are doing is a good thing.

Learning to Learn – Neil’s 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School - Wickham, NSW

Learning to Learn has been the theme of the educational activities this year. According to research done by Brian Cambourne there are seven elements that need to be present to optimise learning outcomes:

1. Immersion – the learner must be fully immersed in the subject matter they are attempting to learn;
2. Employment – the learner must have the opportunity to use their newly acquired knowledge as soon as possible and repeatedly after the initial learning takes place;
3. Approximation – the learner is encouraged to make miscues and errors as they attempt to master a piece of learning – we learn by our mistakes;
4. Demonstration – a knowledgeable person is on hand to provide a well structured demonstration of the new concept;
5. Feedback – the learner receives immediate and constructive feedback at the point of learning, so as to reinforce their learning or adjust their thinking if necessary;
6. Expectation – the learner has a high expectation of success and approaches the learning situation with a positive outlook;
7. Control – the learner controls which next piece of the puzzle they will solve. Ideally the content for learning should not be forced upon the learner.

At Toogoolawa this approach is consistently applied to both the educational and behavioural components of the school program, with sound results.

Numeracy

There are three components of the Mathematics Program at the school. They are **Maths Mentals**, **Maths in Practice** and **Computer maths**.

Most mornings the students work through a Maths Mentals sheet that thoroughly reinforces their understanding of the counting system and the basic operations used to manipulate the values. The Maths Mentals sheet focuses on the mathematics of games that are played, during Maths in Practice: darts, table tennis, pontoon.

Each of these games has a major mathematical component when played and this can be represented in abstract form on the Maths Mentals sheet to reinforce the link between practical and conceptual mathematics. The fact that this process is repeated constantly enables the students to gain mastery over the basic combinations and operations of the counting system, thus providing an excellent basis for the understanding of higher level mathematics.

Extension work moves the students to a basic understanding of algebra, negative number, fractions, decimals and percentages. The understandings gained are reinforced and extended in the computer based program for Year 7 and 8 maths, which the students work through on an individual basis at other times during the week.

Literacy

Learning to be a confident, competent reader is a purpose worth pursuing and at Toogoolawa a great deal of emphasis is placed on it.

Students' Talks on the Thought for the Week

Avoid thinking, talking or behaving as if you are better than others

What this means to me is don't talk or act as if you are the best be modest.

A Positive story from my life about this is when I was out jumping on my push bike and my friend Tom, was better than me but he just acted as if I was as good as him and instead of teasing me he helped me to improve.

The benefits of doing the thought for the week are you can gain more respect just by doing a little thing to help and encourage someone.

From now on I am going to do this encouraging people to be the best at something, than they are, and help them get better.

My advice to others who are trying to learn is don't be selfish just lend a helping hand and you will be surprised at how much you get respected.

Dylan, Toogoolawa School, Wickham (NSW)

Think lots of good thoughts and try to put those good thoughts into action

What this means to me is that if you think the right things you might do the right things.

A positive story from my life about this is about my carer Irene. She always seems to have good thoughts about the people and she tries to help others and she is well respected.

The benefits of doing the thought for the week are if you think positively and have good thoughts you will be successful.

From now on I am going to do this by thinking about why I let negative thoughts have such an influence on me. Why do I shut out positive thoughts?

My advice to others who are trying to learn is if you can live a positive life, trouble seems to fade away and things get better.

Andrew, Toogoolawa School, Wickham (NSW)

No matter how difficult life gets, do not give up being good, loving and kind

What this means to me is if something really bad affects you in life never ever stop caring for others.

A positive story from my life about this is when my sister was born, mum, dad, Chris and I got told that she may die, I felt angry and sad, my mum and dad were very upset and I went over and gave them a hug and said she will be fine, even though I was telling myself it's not alright. In doing this I comforted mum and dad, though I wasn't feeling very positive, In the end my sister got better and is now 3 and can crawl.

The benefits of doing the thought for the week are to help stay positive and not give up at all.

From now on I am going to do this by being more loving and caring to friends and even to people I don't really like.

My advice to others who are trying to learn this is if your life gets bad, think and stay positive eventually things will get better.

Ben, Toogoolawa School, Wickham (NSW)



HASTINGS (VIC) - TOOGOLAWA SCHOOL

Traceys' 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Hastings

In 2007 Toogoolawa School - Hastings has produced an exceptional display of students realising their potential. The students this year have worked solidly on bringing about positive change in their character and academic performance.

As the school year draws to an end Toogoolawa School - Hastings has a full complement of 12 boys enrolled at the school as well as an ever-increasing waitlist.

Our boys have independently worked toward master level on a weekly basis. Their integrity to improve has been a pleasure to witness this year as it has given the staff the ultimate reward of knowing that their efforts and role modelling are on target.

The year began with the school working solidly on swimming, the brotherhood program, SOSE, the weekly talk, literacy and numeracy, science and home economics. Two students who worked to an outstanding level I for both behaviour and academic excellence were selected to attend the World Swimming Championships at the end of Term 1. For the two boys selected for this exciting event it was an opportunity to support Australia at an international level as well as be inspired by what achievements can be gained through hard work and persistence.

Term 2 saw students investigate the environment through science, SOSE and community service and environmental science with the creation and expansion of the garden project. The boys also worked solidly on the weekly talk, art and home economics. As a reward at the end of term the boys were treated to an experience with the Dalai Lama in Melbourne.

For Term 3 our boys continued their academic subjects but were also treated to their annual school ski camp to Mt Baw Baw. Many students quickly mastered the ski slopes. Their camp saw students expanding their ambitions in life to looking at ways to incorporate skiing as a recreational sport into their lives. Our new vocational training and work experience program was also introduced this term. Work experience for senior students has become another aspect of Toogoolawa School bringing about a constructive transition into the workplace for those boys not wishing to return to school. With access to Special Education funding Toogoolawa School also witnessed the newly created role of Counsellor implemented in Term 3.

Term 4 has given the boys the opportunity to consolidate some trade skills with the renovation of our portable building. This refurbishment has brought about a performance area for drama. The boys have concentrated on drama and performance this term which will conclude with the end of year Graduation Day which will see students performing skits, singing and delivering their weekly talks to a large audience on the day.

It is with a great deal of thanks and awe that I congratulate the staff of Toogoolawa School - Hastings for their consistent delivery of the curriculum, their strong belief in the wise inner goodness of our students and their steely determination to engage our students in positive learning based on the five human values. Our Counsellor, Carol Boulton has begun the arduous task of one on one work with the boys, which the boys have really enjoyed and shown a willingness to express themselves in. Our Social Welfare Officer, Haydn Bucher has complemented the school by producing and designing the garden project and ongoing refurbishment of the school buildings. Haydn has also contributed to art, drama, and home economics. His dedication and support to the other staff members is to be commended and it is a truth that without him the school would not run as effectively as it does.

Sadly we will be saying goodbye to Naomi Le Nepveu, Toogoolawa School's teacher for the past 2 years. Naomi has remained a constant force in the school. Her tireless work with the boys in literacy, science, art, community service and sport has brought about admiration and respect from the boys. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Naomi for her wonderful team work skills over the last 2 years and wish her all the very best as she leaves the school in good standing to have her second child in January.

Lastly I would like to thank Su and Ron Farmer for their constant inspiration and support to me and the school. It has been another wonderful year for the school with continued success in all areas.

I would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year and look forward to working with you in 2008.

Brotherhood Program – Naomi’s 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School - Hastings, VIC

The Brotherhood Program is a therapeutic program that is designed to assist our students recreate and maintain good character. The premise of this program is the philosophy of the Toogoolawa Schools; that there is a diamond in all of us and if we can live our lives by practising the five Human Values of Love, Peace, Truth, Right Conduct and Non-Violence, we will have the tools to create the best person we can be.

Tracey Graham researched many aspects of the several Alternative to Violence programs to develop a series of workshops which would be suitable for Toogoolawa’s boys.

This fantastic program involves the teachers and students working as a team to explore Toogoolawa’s values, conflict resolution skills and how to work cooperatively, using self-esteem building activities and role-plays.



In Term 4 the school has come together once a week for an hour and a half on a Tuesday morning. Each session begins with a fun activity incorporating body movement or expressions of positive statements towards themselves and others. We have found that starting each session with this type of gentle physical activity enables the students to settle their bodies and allows their minds to become still and focused before introducing the concepts of the program. Two examples of activities are Win/Win and The Pretzel.



To explain a little bit further, The Pretzel is a simple, fun activity in which two students are asked to leave the room while the remaining participants join hands and manoeuvre into a pretzel shape by ducking and moving their arms. The two removed students then re-enter the room and have the challenge of untangling the pretzel back to a circle of linked hands. The activity centres on using effective communication, cooperation and listening skills. As you can see in the photos, all participants enjoyed the activity. Unfortunately the circle came out backwards, which provided a new challenge for everyone.

The Win/Win activity involves using conflict resolution skills and developing them through role-plays, to achieve a favourable outcome for each party in any given situation. Students use calm and non-violent language to communicate with each other and resolve differences.

Over the weeks the boys’ participation and trust in the group has grown and their skills in cooperation, listening, team work, conflict resolution, self empowerment and perhaps most importantly, their self esteem have all improved considerably.

Carol's 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Hastings, VIC

Over the last two terms I have been counselling at Toogoolawa School - Hastings. It has probably been one of the most rewarding times of my life. To share the journeys of the children as they explore their inner worlds through sandplay, symbol work and other creative processes is often a humbling experience. It frequently leaves me with an awe of the power of the Higher Self to guide and provide wisdom to the children as they learn to grow, change and find strengths, talents and the ability to connect to their truths.

Sandplay is a self-discovery approach that provides a safe and protected space for the children to explore and express their feelings and emotions. Using a sandbox and a small collection of miniature figurines that represent the different aspects of life and also connects to our inner worlds, the children are free to create the solutions to their problems and to explore the unconscious. This process can be non-verbal and at times is also extended by Gestalt Therapy. Gestalting allows the symbol to talk (a form of role play) and helps provide insights into behaviours and attitudes that have been projected or disowned thereby allowing them to embrace and extend their understandings of themselves and others.

Working with the children on connecting to their bodies through the use of drawing activities, breath and yoga techniques has been an area that I feel is vital for the children who have often split off from their feelings due to personal traumas. It also helps connect the body, mind and spirit and supports the journey to wholeness.

The guiding values of Toogoolawa School of Love, Peace, Truth, Right Conduct and Non-violence support the counselling process and I hold in highest regard the teachers here at Hastings who provide constant support, warmth and encouragement for the children to feel safe, loved and accepted.

It has been an exciting and enriching time and one I am looking forward to continuing in the New Year.

Wishing everyone a peaceful and happy holiday season.

Carol Boulton

Community Service Program – Haydn’s 2007 Report

Toogoolawa School – Hastings, VIC

Community Service has seen the emergence of community based relationships for the students here at Hastings with the alternate weekly visitation to a local nursing home for the aged and infirm.

These people many of whom are fraught with the common array of symptoms and syndromes that affect the elderly have welcomed our students with interest.

The boys in turn have been fantastic in their willingness to learn about how to successfully manage relationships with these people, many of whom are from an often-neglected part of our community.

As you might imagine the boys offer colour and movement and we hope growing affection for the elderly. The boys’ genuine concern is a credit to them and this includes all the students.

Through the instigation of the head of public relations for the nursing home one of our students Jason was interviewed and photographed for an editorial piece in the Leader newspaper, a local paper with wide distribution in our region. This was a proud and distinguished moment for Jason who is a “natural” given his outgoing and never seen to be shy nature.

The second string to our community relations bow for this final term has been the alternate weekly visit to an early settlement property called Sages Cottage, close to the township of Baxter here on Mornington Peninsula.

The Sages Cottage property is managed by the Good Shepherd Foundation who has support arms for the disadvantaged and marginalised and uses the property as a focus to this end.

The property as well as being a fascinating snapshot into pioneer life on the Mornington Peninsula also serves as a community base for locals who see it’s survival as culturally important hence it’s National Trust listing.

The team who manage the property are trained in youth support and offer specialist services for young adults.

A connection to the rural environment is well established with many of the usual farmyard animals and all of the gardens well managed with some of great age and beauty the property as a whole covering many acres.

The boys have been introduced to the aspects just described and we hope to foster our relationships with the Sages property and it’s staff into next year also.

The last but not least aspect of our community service has been our involvement in crown and common land cleanups in the Hastings area. These have been in foreshore and roadside areas at which the boys have worked with enthusiasm developing a sense of community pride.

Great effort has been put to renovation and refurbishment of the portable building now home to our stage and drama area. The contribution by the boys here has been magnificent. They have worked really hard and are very proud of their achievements in this part of the program. It has been marvellous to watch the process.

As a closing statement I can say that the year has been very worthwhile with the students taking strides as young men in their own right and to their credit.

Haydn Bucher

Hastings Toogoolawa

Students' Talks on the Thought for the Week

“Truth knows no defeat, Truth knows no fear”

This thought of the week relates to the Human Values of:

- ◆ Love, because if you are being truthful to everyone around you, you are respecting the Human Value of Love
- ◆ Peace, because being truthful makes everyone around us peaceful.
- ◆ Truth, because being truthful shows that you are a man and have no fear of the consequences. Being truthful also makes others respect you and look up to you and also trust you.
- ◆ Non-violence, because being truthful you should also show respect to others and there will be no violence.

I think the thought of the week relates most to Human value of Truth, because in every value there is always got a piece of honesty in them.

My story is all about Tracey, Naomi and Haydn, because there is never a lie that comes out of them and they are always truthful and they take the time to try teach us boys the right things so we are able to get some where in our lives instead of going nowhere. They all have put good thoughts into our mind that telling the truth is so much powerful then telling a lie because in the end the truth always comes out. I remember when I use to lie a lot and it got me nowhere but ever since I've come to this school I don't need to lie. I can tell the truth and be proud of it.

Mason, Toogoolawa School, Hastings (VIC)

“We must train our minds to think more and more good thought”

This thought of the week relates to the Human Values of:

- ◆ Love, because if you think good thoughts you are being loving in your mind.
- ◆ Peace, because if you think good thoughts you create peace within your mind.
- ◆ Truth, because if you think evil thoughts you are always telling lies so if you think good thoughts you are telling your mind not to lie.
- ◆ Right Conduct, because if you think positive thoughts all the time then your mind good so you are doing the right thing so that is right conduct.
- ◆ Non-violence, because if you think bad thoughts you are violent to your mind so if you think good thoughts you are not violent.

My story is about me and about me think bad but changing my thoughts. When I had evil thoughts I was very bad never listened to myself or no one else and I got in a lot of trouble and never had any friends because I was very bad so one day I started to think good thoughts and started to listen to people and I started to be nice to everyone and then started to get friends and I was more happier.

Jason, Toogoolawa School, Hastings (VIC)

“Be sincere to others”

This thought of the week relates to the Human Values of:

- ◆ Love, because when you are being sincere to others you are being loving.
- ◆ Peace, because you will be peaceful when you tell the truth which is what sincerity is all about.
- ◆ Truth, because when you are being truthful you are showing sincerity.
- ◆ Right Conduct, because when you are showing sincerity you are showing right conduct.
- ◆ Non-violence, because when you are showing truth you are showing non-violence.

I think the thought of the week relates most to the value of truth, because when you are being truthful you are showing sincerity.

My story is about the Crazy Philosopher.

There was a philosopher and he left his house to live in a cave and he would roam the streets and avoided people because he said that he was looking for a truthful person and one day he got sent to the king because, he saw two police officers arresting someone. He said, “Look there is two big thieves arresting one little thief.” The king said, “Not even I can be truthful all the time and I would try harder if I was not the king and that he would do the same as the philosopher.”

Mat, Toogoolawa School, Hastings (VIC)

