

Northlakes High School Newsletter



“Opportunities for future success”

Find us at: Brava Avenue, SAN REMO NSW 2262 T (02) 4390 0555

Email northlake-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au www.northlake-h.schools.nsw.edu.au

Security No: 1300 880 021 Facebook: Northlakes High School

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PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

I have announced that I have (finally) decided to retire from my career as an educator, and my last, very rewarding role, as Principal of Northlakes High School.

I arrived as Head Teacher Welfare, to a very over crowded and under funded school. The needs were enormous and the staff was amazing. We were relieved when the NSW government finally built Lake Munmorah High School, and our population gradually decreased by about 400 students leaving NHS still housing far more students than it was built for but a lot easier to run!

By 2010, we were receiving National Partnership funding; this was the beginning of real change at the school. Our focus was always on improving student learning but this Federal funding came with many restrictions.

As Principal, I have had the fortune to be leading the school when the “Gonski” funding was finally delivered. This effectively funds schools on the basis of need.

By ensuring every child, regardless of the financial, or other, circumstances of their family, had access to the “tools” of academic success through the school, our whole society would benefit. They would all achieve their potential.

We introduced the amazing AVID program, our House system, Positive Behaviour for Learning, and many other measures. All have helped to make the school what it is today.

While I took some leave this year to travel and spend time with family, Mr Welham was completely able to manage the Principal role, and Ms Byrnes, Mrs Howard, Mr Goodenough and Mr Fleming were all excellent as Deputy Principals.

While the emphasis on schools nearly always focuses on student outcomes, it is actually very important that the school has a strong leadership and knowledge level within its staff structures and I am certain this is the case at Northlakes H.S. As you know, we have Mr

Boake out, providing support in another school. Ms Henry, Mrs Schofield and Ms Calder have also been out at other schools, enhancing the capacity of staff in various other schools.

Recently, I had eleven staff in Melbourne, on another round of training in AVID, our core, and very successful, educational program. Mr Allanson and Ms Lee ran a three hour after school project based learning module, for 26 staff, as part of our on-going Twilight Training program; highly evaluated by staff. Nearly all staff have participated in 8 evening training sessions this year, and all were presented by colleagues. I am proud of the commitment and enthusiasm of my staff.

We have a component of our programs which is student evaluation of programs. Some of their insights and recommendations are amazing and so valuable as real feedback to teachers about how we teach, and what students want, or what engages them. As you know, we highly value what our student body says in Tell Them From Me, which covers a wide range of topics but the immediate, program specific response, is also very important. This year, their responses continued to reflect their developing understanding of what good teaching and learning is, and included significant positive reports of their attendance and engagement. The culture of the whole school is gradually shifting, and anecdotally, we have staff, parents and students commenting on it.

As I leave Northlakes after 20 years as an Executive, I am aware that there is more to do. This is the nature of schools, and especially in this time of significant debate, as societal change impacts on schools across the globe. However, knowing my staff as I do, I am supremely confident that the school will continue to evolve and respond to the demands of our changing world.

I have had the best job of all!

Yours in Public Education,

Merrilyn Rowley



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM



Northlakes high!