**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

As I reflect on the 2007 school year, there is no doubt that the effects of drought and the uncertainty of water quality and availability has impacted on the Meningie Area School this year. The most obvious of these is students enrolment, which is directly related to resource entitlement, that impacts on the number of teachers that we can employ, and hence the type of curriculum opportunities that we are able to offer. The second impact is well-being. As a staff, we are very much aware of the challenges facing the community and our families as we all strive to manage these with as much resilience and optimism as can be mustered.

While there has been a steady decline in student enrolment across the state in the past few years as witnessed by the closure of both city and rural schools, it is largely within the last twelve months that Meningie Area School has seen such a sharp decline. During 2006 there were 276 students R-12 enrolled. We will begin the 2008 year at 220, if there is no further change. The impact of dairy closure particularly on the Narrung Peninsula in the past twelve months has certainly collapsed our enrolment as dairy enterprises have closed or sold up and families have left looking for work in other areas outside the community.

**ENROLMENT**

Against this backdrop, a stable school environment that continues to meet the educational needs and opportunities for all of our students has been and is our continuing goal.

As I flick through the 2007 Diary I am amazed at just what we have achieved in this respect. Not a week has gone by when our staff and students have not been engaged in either academic or extra curricular activities that build on student experiences and opportunity. This does not happen by accident, and is the result of shared community values, dedicated staff, Governing Council and parents to make things happen. Many of the programs and annual events have become unique to Meningie Area School in particular our athletics and sports days, Team sailing, Choir and Band, the learning of a musical instrument at Year 5 and the Connecting Spirits program. These make up what we are. They become our traditions, develop our unique skills, balance our well-being, develop values and character, and build capacity in our community. With declining student number is it critical that we all work together to ensure that the things we hold as valued continue. However with less staff, because of declining number this is becoming more difficult to achieve and should never be taken for granted. Indeed it may require us to prioritise what we do in the future. Such decisions will reflect what the school community, inclusive of staff, parents and students see as valued and supported.

**STAFFING**

The school has a history of high staff retention, with 14 of the permanent staff of 23 having taught in the school for 4 or more years. With a staff turnover of only 21 %, capacity is built and is balanced and energised by new teachers at regular intervals into the school. Staff attendance for 2007 was 96.78% as compared with 93% in 2006. This represents an average of 3.2 days absence due to illness. Other days when TRT’s were employed represent days when teachers were employed and attending a variety of meetings, specific training sessions or programs relevant to site district and state initiatives which ultimately enhance the learning opportunities for students at Meningie Area School.

A number of staff left at the end of the year. Marie-Louise Adams came to the end of her tenure as Middle School Manager, and has taken up a position at Eastern Fleurieu Campus at Strathalbyn.

Her leadership within the Middle School over the past 3 years has seen a greater use of specific data and testing instruments to direct both Literacy and Numeracy resources for targeted students as well as Training & Development of staff in supportive methodologies.

Louise Ramsay transferred to Hallett Cove, after being here for 3 years. Belinda Branford has moved to Willunga, Veronica Allison to Reynella East and Emma Rumble has returned to the Eyre Peninsula. Fiona Heaslip, Judy Woolston, Barb Mann and Kaye Davey came to the end of their contracts. Additionally, at the end of Term 2 Ally Mead left taking up a position as Kindy Director at Coomandook, after being here for a significant number of years.

After thirteen years working mostly across the school as the Aboriginal Education Teacher, Diana Gordon has taken leave from the Education Department to take up a position with Murray
Bridge Council working with youth. Diana has been instrumental in supporting all students in one way or another, but most particularly in Aboriginal Education. She has been an integral member of staff; implementing and supporting colleagues and students equally in issues of Reconciliation and building a culture of understanding and tolerance.

All staff are well qualified with 34% of teachers having post graduate qualifications. More importantly, staff remain committed to professional development and have engaged not only in the mandatory 37.5 hours of focused learning, but have, in most cases, far exceeded this. A total of 907 T&D hours is recorded. Focus was on Strategic Plan outcomes, particularly Literacy and Numeracy, as well as Curriculum and subject specialisation. The budget supported an average of $221.35 per person in T&D throughout 2007.

**ATTENDANCE**

The 2007 year commenced with 245 students. Engagement and achievement in academic studies is our core business. Regular attendance and the link to successful learning outcomes academically and socially have been a focus now for years.

Many strategies have been developed to address this area of priority, yet despite this the Overall Attendance Data 2007 is the worst it has been for several years, not just at this site, but in comparison with State, District and Schools within our index category.

Many strategies have been tried, including:

- Regular articles and correspondence to parents linking attendance with outcomes, particularly in Literacy, Numeracy and Retention to Year 12.
- Clear procedures regarding attendance inclusive of phone calls, notes home, home visits by AEW’s for target students and involvement of DECS attendance personnel.

Individual classes reflect similar patterns with attendance issues developing in the early years. It appears that there is an increase in attendance during Junior School, but emerges as an issue within the Middle School, and increases significantly in Year 12.

Supportive anecdotal documentation and school records suggest that factors that influence attendance include:

1. Successful transition from feeder schools
2. Student behaviour.
3. Strong peer group connections and support.
4. Teacher and peer relationships.
5. Parental attitude to schooling in general.

This is an area of real concern, and the responsibility of the whole school community. Whilst all data needs to be interpreted with caution when analysed alongside of (Literacy & Numeracy) data at Yr 3, 5, 7 and 9 both students and classes do best when the attendance is high. It is critical that attendance patterns are established right from reception. Once students begin to miss school for whatever reason, the basic foundations of Literacy and Numeracy are missed and it becomes hard to stay connected; not only with academic learning, but with the relationships between peers and teachers. We live in an increasingly changing world. For our students and your children to have the skills to engage with such confidently and as global citizens, they need to be literate and numerate. We can only do our job if the students are here. Attendance remains a priority in 2008.

Resources allocations across the school reflect our priorities in Literacy and Numeracy. At Junior School we conduct the Early Intervention Program, while Literacy classes, English as a second Language, individual student support, and tutoring are features of our core business.

**LITERACY AND NUMERACY DATA**

Before commenting on actual figures and outcomes it is pertinent to note that this site does not generally exempt students from taking LAN tests. This often means, then, that school averages are lower than what might be expected, however, on a positive note it does provide a reliable and complete data set for all students. This, in turn, provides a more solid and comprehensive basis from which to plan future teaching and learning programs and promotes progress as the more reliable statistic from which to measure success rather than class averages in any given year.

**Year 7**

With the above statements in mind it is pleasing to note that from the students that can be matched to their 2005 literacy results 25% progressed in the upper achievement group, 58% in the middle achievement group and only 17% were in the lower
group. Compared to the state standards these are very pleasing results.

Numeracy progress was not quite so impressive with only 8% progressing in the upper achievement group, 58% were in the middle group which compared favourably to the state average of 50% and 33% were in the lower achievement group.

**Year 5**

The averages for this year level were particularly affected by transient students. However, one positive general observation is that this group performed comparably better on the numeracy portion of the test and without the inclusion of the transient and NEP students would have in-fact reached the state average.

**Year 3**

The year 3 cohort was relatively small for 2007 consisting of only 10 students. In the literacy component these students managed to achieve the state average with 6 of the 10 students scoring above this figure.

As there is no comparison data for these students this can be seen as an excellent start. Again numeracy figures were not quite so pleasing, nevertheless several students scored above the state average and those that failed to meet benchmarks were generally NEP students.

**Summary**

Literacy achievement was generally quite pleasing when reading the data in an informed way as indicated above. Numeracy needs to become a focus area in 2008 and careful dissection of individual strands and questions data has been undertaken by teachers as part of their planning processes for this year.

**SACE**

**Stage One**

Generally results at this level were pleasing and comparable to that of like schools and the state. It can also be seen that achievement level has improved within the school this year as compared to 2006 results.

Ultimately it was clear from the data that students that failed to meet academic requirements had very poor attendance records and therefore continuity of learning became the defining issue.

**Stage Two**

The 2007 Stage Two cohort was one of the biggest of recent times with 23 students taking part including part-time students and a student taking a Stage Two subject while enrolled in Stage One. Of the 20 students that indicated that they were striving to complete their SACE in 2007 19 were successful and this is very pleasing. In addition a positive trend can be seen in relation to average achievement scores. These have improved since 2006 and are higher than like schools in the state.

Among these 20 students, three indigenous students completed their SACE and two of these young people have found employment. Compared to district data this is very favourable and teachers are to be commended on the way in which they managed to vary the curriculum to suit the individual student.

Indeed this year saw success for all types of students, even those that had left school the year before and enrolled again on a very flexible basis. Once again teachers should be congratulated for managing this kind of study in an already crowded schedule.

**Destination Data**

Of the 20 students that were striving to complete their SACE in 2007 the following destination data was gathered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Study-TAFE, University</td>
<td>6 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to secondary schooling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeking work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note most of these students also engage in part-time work, however, study is their primary focus.
OPINION SURVEYS

All stakeholders (parents, students and staff) were involved in opinion surveys. Students from Years 3 to 12 completed these online with class teachers. Parents were informed through DECS letters posted home on how to access the surveys and were given the option of completing a hard copy on request.

Parent Response

Analysis of Parent Surveys from the current and past 3 years shows consistency in response, with the following strengths highlighted in 2007:

Teaching & Learning
- Teachers help my child
- Teachers provide clear information about learning programs
- Teachers know what students can, and need to, know

Support for Learning
- Teachers provide help and support when it is needed
- Students are happy at Meningie Area School
- A safe, secure learning environment exists
- The school is well resourced

Relationships & Communication
- A welcoming school environment
- Assists the development of students’ personal and social skills
- Varied communication – well informed about school activities
- Helpful information about student progress and achievement, with opportunity to discuss progress

Leadership & Decision Making
- Parents are confident in how the school is managed with effective education leadership
- The school is always looking for ways to improve what it does
- Opportunities to be involved in decisions about students’ education exist

Overall parents are satisfied with the school’s planning.

Areas for Improvement
- Concern about resources for learning
- Some parents expressed concern about fair treatment of students from all backgrounds
- Improving parent opportunity to participate in decision making about children’s education and development of school plans.

ANALYSIS OF EACH AREA:

Parents see strength in –

Teaching & Learning
- Teachers wanting to help my child
- Parents being clearly informed about the learning program
- The teachers know what my child can do and needs to know

Support for Learning
- Teachers provide help and support when it is needed
- Children are happy at Meningie Area School
- The school provides a safe and secure learning environment
- Well resourced
- School encourages a sense of pride

Student Response

Teaching & Learning
- Teachers know what I can and can’t do
- Teachers explain what we are learning
- I know how I am doing and how to improve

Support of Learning
- Teachers expect me to do as well as I can
- I really want to learn at school
- There is someone I can talk to if I have problems
- Staff would take good care of me if hurt or sick

Relationships
- Students are encouraged to participate in school events
- I get on well with others at school
- I like to try new things and help others
- My school reports are accurate

Leadership and Decision Making
- The school is well organised
- I am involved in making some decisions about my education

Areas for Improvement
- Great opportunity for student voice, particularly in relation to decision making
- Everyone needs to take care of the school
- Many students do not want to go to school every day
- Improve perception of fair treatment for students of all backgrounds and cultures

**Teacher Response**

- Most teachers in the school are extremely hard working and develop learning programs to support individual students
- Leaders within the school really support teachers in the management of students and their welfare
- Staff work well and issues of grievance are managed using appropriate procedures
- Leadership is supportive and work well as a team

**Monarto Zoo Program**

The Monarto Zoo Program was initially set up in 2001 as an initiative to encourage attendance and provide alternative programs for students in the Middle and Senior School, who were at risk of leaving school early, particularly Indigenous students.

Over the 5 years, many students have achieved SACE Stage 1 & 2 subjects before reaching Year 11. This has made Year 11 a less stressful year for students as they have already achieved some of their work units in Community Studies and/or Integrated Learning before the SACE years.

A highly successful and popular program, 15 students from Year 8 to 12 attended regularly throughout 2007.

Three Indigenous students completed their SACE because of their involvement in the Program, completing Stage 2 subjects in Community Studies and Integrated Learning.

Meningie Area School students are well known at the Zoo. They are great ambassadors for the school, and their work is recognised as part of tour guide overviews at Monarto Zoo.

**ESL**

**Student Achievement Data – Running Records**

The ESL Program supported 56 students across the school during 2007. A teacher and an SSO were employed to work with all identified students in either individual group settings as determined by need and student plans.

Professional development training and ESL Scaling sessions were held at least twice in 2007, enabling all Junior School staff and English teachers to become more familiar in assessing targeted students specific writing ability.

Individual tracking and data collection shows that the ESL Program effectively improves individual student skill.

**Running Records**

Data, particularly at Year 2 level, reflects the priority Running Records have been as part of the Early Intervention Strategy. By comparison with State, District and Category of Disadvantage, there are no Year 2’s in Level 1-5 and 58% of all Year 2’s are reading in the top level. This is an excellent achievement, though boys still perform below girls at both Year 1 and 2.

Once again our students participated in the Premier’s Reading Challenge. A total of 65 students successfully completed the challenge this year with 2 receiving gold medals, and others receiving silver, bronze and participation awards. Many middle school students participated this year for the first time. This was widely supported and encouraged through the English Faculty with excellent commitment.

There has been an increasing focus on Math right across the site. Once again students in Years 3 to 11 participated in the West Pac Math Competition. Held throughout the ASIA Pacific region it always attracts thousands of participants. Our students performed particularly well with several credits and a distinction. At a local level middle and senior school students participated in a regional math quiz night at Coomandook, and we gained both a second and third. Students in Years 3, 4 & 5 have been involved in a program Maths 4 inclusion. Into its second year both the teachers and students engage in a range of activities throughout the year that has a focus on making math skills enjoyable and relevant. This year we attended a math quiz day in Murray Bridge, where our teams were placed well An exciting highlight of the program was the selection of games developed by our Year 5 class for publication and use by teachers and schools.
across the state, and will be showcased at a national Maths conference in Adelaide during May 2008, at which Belinda Branford will be a presenter.

While students within the school respond well to opportunity, we often underestimate ourselves and perhaps do not appreciate just what students can do at Meningie Area School. Of note is our remarkably unique Year 5 Music program. It attracted the attention of the DECS Music Review Committee this year. Our model has been seen as an example of good practice and will be trialled in sites across DECS during 2008. We know this is an excellent program inclusive of all students at year 5 and is the foundation on which to build a rich and varied program of music appreciation not only within the school, but within the community. Many of our students take private music tuition throughout the school day. Additionally, both Choir and Band are features of the Middle School curriculum and students can go on to participate in either or both the School Concert Band and Community Band.

This program should however never be taken for granted, as the funding comes directly out of our Resource Entitlement (a direct link to our enrolment), ability to attract private music teachers and the significant good will on the part of teachers and members of the community who support with student instrumental music lesson supervision.

While our music students perform in a number of scheduled events throughout the year, one of the highlight on the calendar 2007 was the Sweet Sounds evening held in the Bowls Club during August. It was a sell out event bringing together all aspects of the music program, and catered for by our students at senior school studying Hospitality. The other highlight was the performance of our Year 5-7 Choir and Band at the Festival of Music at the Festival Theatre during September. Many thanks to all of the teachers who support this program, in particular Anne Wright, Belinda Branford, and Shaun Hickey.

Throughout 2007 students at Meningie Area School excelled at site, district, state and national level. We performed well at the traditional district Interschool Athletics and Swimming events held in Term 1, and many students were selected to participate at state level. For many students this continues to be a huge leap of courage, and one we steadfastly support. Over the year students have competed in a number of sporting arenas, both individual and teams which is a credit to the dedication not only of the students themselves, but also the teachers, coaches and parents who are there to support them.

The 2006 Connecting Spirits project achieved its objective. On Sunday 11/11/07 a launch of their book was held at Keswick Barracks Adelaide. This launch was attended by 300 people including a range of dignitaries and politicians as well as Meningie and Birdwood High students and personnel who supported the project. Eric Bogle performed a song written especially by him in relation to the Ngarrindjeri Indigenous Soldiers. Selected film footage was projected throughout the launch highlighting the objectives of the project and its achievements. This was for me a moving, experience and one of the highlights of the year. This is an example of what a small school is able to achieve and the experiences that we are able to offer within a supportive community environment. To this end, Meningie has committed to two more trips in collaboration with Birdwood High School, in 2008 and 2010. Mal Jurgs, will once again co lead the tours with Julie Reece, of Birdwood High School.

We continue to upgrade our grounds and facilities. A major upgrade this year was the reproofing of the school gym. In particular the roof and front foyer
door were replaced. The acoustics have certainly improved as a consequence of this, but remain a project to work on. Work has begun with an upgrade of the area between the Resource Centre and the staff room, with the mural being the first stage of this development.

PROGRESSION & RETENTION

Throughout the school year we have students coming and going. If all of our enrolments had stayed this year, there would have been 290 students at the school instead of 220. We do have a very mobile population. Of the 80 students who left Meningie Area School during 2006, 34 students (42.5%) transferred to another Government school in South Australia. This reflects the sudden and dramatic socio-economic picture emerging regarding drought, water shortages and consequential family movement. 18 students left and went to private schools, both in the city and regionally. Free bus transport to Murray Bridge (a government initiative since 2002) has certainly impacted on parent decision making in this regard. 6 students (7.5%) took up employment, 11 students (13.8%) either began a university or TAFE course and 6 students (7.5%) went interstate or destinations remaining unknown.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, 2007 has not been without its challenges, as we knew would be the case, given the issues of drought and water that are beyond our control. I believe as a site we have continued to provide an education for each and every one of our students that reflects our teaching values here in South Australia. Parents of Meningie Area School students should be proud in the knowledge that their children have opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understandings, so that they are well equipped to take their place in an increasing changing and global world.

Our priorities in 2008 reflect site, district and state initiatives. They will include targets and strategies in:

- Attendance
- New SACE Introduction
- Aboriginal Education R-12
- Literacy and Numeracy

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Monica Williams
PRINCIPAL

______________________________
Judy Appelkamp
GOVERNING COUNCIL
CHAIRPERSON

26th March 2008