School attendance matters

A REPORT from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) re: Respectful Relationships initiatives highlights the importance of forming good attendance habits early. AISLT researchers now have a better understanding of the difference in attendance rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. In 2018, the overall national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendance rate was 82.3 per cent compared to 92.5 per cent for non-Indigenous students. This shows that there is still much more work to do to lift attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Highlighting that ‘every day counts’ when it comes to attendance, the report reinforces the negative correlation between absence from school and achievement, which is cumulative and can affect academic outcomes in future years of schooling.

“While there are many complex issues at play when it comes to school attendance, we shouldn’t shy away from the challenges,” said AITSL chief executive officer Mark Grant. “Clearly it is crucially important to involve families and communities in purposeful, authentic and ethical ways to provide students with every opportunity to reach their potential.”

Get your artwork on a bus

Students from Gippsland Respectful Relationships schools are again invited to enter the art competition, with more respectful Gippsland for 16 Days being the 2019 theme being ‘Challenging Gender Stereotypes’.

This year’s finalists will have their artwork reproduced on local trains and council buses across Gippsland, ensuring these messages are seen.

Ten finalists were chosen to school, is part of the Respectful Relationships initiative, and an impromptu speech makes students to enter the competition.

Students gained great insights into how to present their arguments in the Legislative Assembly, which was presided over by Maree Edwards MP (Deputy Speaker). The final vote for the proposal was as follows - against: 59, in favour: 10.

NEWHAVEN College Year 8 students were excited to participate in workshops with Kate Mildenhall, the author of ‘Skylarking’, and the blending of fact and fiction in her approach to writing the novel. Kate also enabled all students in their own creative writing through a series of writing exercises. She spoke about how just like we warm up when engaging with physical sports, so too we need to warm up when writing.

Students took advantage of Kate being at the College for the day to ask her a range of questions about her intent with ‘Skylarking’, and also her experiences as a professional writer. Kate revealed that she has a new book coming out in 2020 and many students will look forward to reading another Kate Mildenhall book next year.

Life as a biomedical scientist

BUDDING scientists from Wonthaggi Secondary College were among sixty Year 10 and 11 students from across regional and rural Victoria to attend the fifth annual Biomedical Sciences Day in Parkville recently.

Local students Caleb, Ruby, Jessica and their teacher Leith Cummins, had a rare opportunity to experience life as biomedical scientists at the event presented by the School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Melbourne, and the Genet Technology Access Centre (GTAC).

Professor Matthew Watt, head of the university’s Department of Physiology, encouraged the students to think about the science behind what creates, sustains and threatens people’s lives in Australia – and beyond.

He shared his journey to biomedical academia including his laboratory’s ground-breaking research into the pathogenesis of fatty liver disease and diabetes.

Professor Watt discussed some of the revolutionary work underway at the School and GTAC including:

• Biomedical processes – how and why researchers now have a better understanding of human health;
• 3D printing to replace bones;
• Genomics – new tools for cancer treatments; and
• New vaccines to combat disease.

Students worked alongside researchers in the GTAC laboratories to photograph specimens using light, fluorescence and scanning electron microscopes. They have entered their images into the university’s Under the Microscope competition.

A behind-the-scenes look at the university’s Harry Brooke Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology uncovered real tissue specimens and historical anatomical models, while a tour of the Virtual Reality Learning Studio let students experience how cutting-edge digital technology is used to study the human body.

Wonthaggi students were fascinated by the immersive experience of the learning studio and finding out about the human heart and how it works.

Current university students also spoke about their courses, the diverse research topics they are pursuing, and life on campus.

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