



Association of Heads of  
Independent Schools

# 2017 BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

## IGNITE SESSIONS

Sunday 1 October 2017

IGNITE  
SESSION  
ABSTRACTS

You are able to register for your choice of three ignite sessions as part of Sunday's conference program. These concurrent sessions will be fast paced with 6 presenters in each group, presenting for just 7 minutes each, igniting new ideas, concepts, and conversation. Abstracts for each group are below, to help guide your selection.

### GROUP 1

#### **Critical Incident – Turning Tragedy into Perpetual Legacy**

##### **Ms Hilary Johnston-Croke**

*Principal, Kincoppal-Rose Bay School*

The story of how our School Community coped with the tragic loss of a much loved Staff member and former Head of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Australia and New Zealand.

MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur disappeared from radar on 17 July 2014

The Malaysia Airlines plane crashed after being hit by a Russian-made Buk missile over eastern Ukraine. A total of 283 passengers, including 80 children, and 15 crew members were on board and all perished. One of the passengers was a much loved Staff member Sister Philomene Tiernan rscj. We heard the news mid-morning on July 17 2014.

This is the story of how we coped with the immediate aftermath of this major critical incident, dealt with the worldwide media attention and led our community through an intense period of grieving

We then looked at how we could develop the legacy of Sister Tiernan and use the tragedy positively to make a difference to the lives of students in the future at Kincoppal-Rose Bay. We have also preserved her legacy for future generations of students through our fundraising efforts to build her legacy. The Sister Philomene Tiernan rscj Learning Centre was opened in July 2015. Her remains were finally put to rest in August 2015 on our Campus overlooking Sydney Harbour.

#### **Cornerstone Program**

##### **Mr Michael Parker**

*Headmaster, Oxley College*

Oxley is now in the third year of running 'Cornerstone' - a big ideas and ethics course using discussions as its base.

The questions in the course are as big as Philosophy itself: 'Is what I see as red the same as what the person next to me sees as red', 'would I rather be smart or good' 'How do I know I am not in the middle of a dream right now' 'would I rather win five million dollars, or have me and my twenty neighbours all win one million dollars'. The topics range from the very local such as 'how to treat your family' to the very global such as 'when is it justified to start a war'. There are also topics devoted to the practice of critical and ethical thinking.

We run the programme as discussion style sessions from Year 7 to 10. Everyone sits in a circle, students choose each other, and the process of thinking is as important as what we are thinking about. Giving evidence, finding counterarguments, summarising, speculating (and taking turns!) are all modelled, practised and worked upon. Proper discussions allow for so much critical and creative thinking.

The course runs four periods a fortnight, from Year Seven to Ten. It is compulsory - a core subject in the timetable. There is no exam. Students are assessed on how well they contribute to the discussions and take in the lessons.

Philosophy/Ethics can be seen as the heart of a liberal education and certainly was its base in times gone by. It is more needed than ever in a twenty first century economy/society that prizes critical thinking, creativity and wisdom. Yet, inexplicably, Philosophy and Ethics have been almost entirely excluded from twenty first century schooling. Cornerstone puts them back in.

## Utilising SELT to Improve Student Learning Outcomes

### Dr Paul Anthony Hine

*Principal, St Ignatius College, Riverview*

SELT is an acronym that, in its cultural context at St Ignatius' College Riverview, refers to the Student Experience of Teaching and Learning. In essence, it is the way that students provide consistent and meaningful feedback to teachers about key elements of the teaching and learning process on a recurrent basis.

Research has clearly established that improving teacher effectiveness 'outweighs the impact of any other school education program or policy in improving student performance' [Hanushek et al (2005), Aaronson et al (2007), Rockoff (2004) Leigh and Ryan (2010), Grattan Institute (2014)]. Research has equally established that student feedback informs the educational process and improves student learning outcomes and school performance [Hay Group (2012), Jensen and Reichl (2011), Measures of Effective Teaching (2008)]. While there is a multiplicity of strategies that advance the cause of professional development and learning such as peer observation, peer mentoring, instructional rounds and self-assessment, that which engages students and produces structured, systematic, relevant and meaningful data that forms the basis of considered assessment by both the teacher and faculty enhances educational efficacy.

SELTs have been used in universities for many years but are relatively new in the landscape of schools. Predicated upon specific psycho-social dimensions of learning and elements of the teaching process, SELTS can be applied with relative ease through the use of sophisticated technologies without exorbitant cost. And, with the efficient and aligned use of the scales on the instrument they not only provide accurate insights into the effectiveness of the learning experience for students but also robust, reliable and consistent evidence for the purposes of accreditation associated with the AITSL Teaching Standards.

One of the challenges in introducing SELTs is the need, through policy and proper consultation, to ensure that this form of teacher development is not linked to the industrial implications of performance management. It is squarely related to enhancing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process to improve educational outcomes.

## Explore strategies to build staff capacity for innovative practice

### Ms Tsae Wong

*Principal, Trinity Lutheran College*

Trinity Lutheran College embarked on the journey of building teachers' capacity to regenerate themselves as practitioners. With its strategic vision of becoming a globally connected and innovative learning community, it was incumbent on the staff to adopt a growth mindset and be deep learners ourselves. Through Independent Schools Queensland's Self-Improving School project, we engaged the whole staff at different levels to generate a teaching and learning framework that incorporates all the elements pertinent and important to develop 21st century learners in our staff and students.

This presentation aims to share our journey of self-discovery and resolution in developing a framework that encapsulates the vision, values and practice authentic to its context. This process strengthened the staff to engage in professional dialogues to flash out many different learning theories and find the essence of the college's unique identity and representation. This teaching and learning framework is the precursor to our journey into the flexible and innovative learning space whereby our teachers' teaching setting was disrupted in order to create a 21st century learning space so as to help our students to engage in learning and develop 21st century skills for their future of life and work.

## Establishing Global Connections

### Mr Tim Oughton

*Executive Principal, Kristin School*

In 2011 as Principal of Scotch College (Adelaide) Tim exchanged leadership roles with a good friend and colleague, Hugh Ouston, from Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen, Scotland. The exchange took considerable planning and had the full support of both Boards. Both Heads agreed it was the best Professional Learning they had ever undertaken and the benefits for both schools were considerable. As a result Tim and Hugh went on to establish a global alliance of like-minded schools that now encompasses 8 schools from China, India, North America, South America, South Africa, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand. The global alliance focuses on opportunities for staff and students to exchange

ideas, research best practice, meet annually for a student convention and Heads forum, and exchange staff and student positions where practicable.

Tim will outline the development of GAIL and the considerable benefits it is providing all schools at minimal cost.

## **Internationalism – Adding Value to Student Outcomes**

### **Ms Suzanne Bain**

*Principal, St John's Anglican College*

McKinsey's recent report "No Ordinary Disruption - The Four Forces breaking all the Trends" graphically illustrates the way in which the world will change rapidly in the next decade. Increasing urbanisation in emerging countries, accelerating technological change, increasing life expectancy and greater global connections are forces, which will send ripples into the education sector disrupting our traditional approaches. We need to "reset our intuition" to meet these challenges, and the way we offer international opportunities to our students.

Our traditional approaches to internationalisation are being left behind in the wake of rapid change; as cloud-based technology has accelerated the ability of any individual or company to compete, connect, exchange or collaborate globally. Information flows through social media for friends, renters, opinions, ecommerce, crowd funding, ideas and instant messages, peer to peer payments and credit, pictures, education, college courses, design tools, music and video, news, cloud based tools, and instant video ensures that staggering changes will be upon us in the next five years.

While our students might be savvy users of technology socially, our challenge is to provide global experiences to build their confidence and readiness for the global workplace.

This presentation looks briefly at the traditional ways we have approached Internationalism in our schools and suggests some new globally focused ways to provide our students with the edge in this very competitive world.

*Pre Reading References: "No Ordinary Disruption: The Four Forces Breaking all the Trends" - YouTube and LinkedIn SlideShare: Manyika, J., Woetzel, J., and Dobbs, R., McKinsey Global Institute, May 2015. "Thank you for being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations 2016", Friedman, Thomas L*

## **GROUP 2**

### **How do we manage our personal wellbeing as leaders in order to become a resilient optimal leader?**

#### **Mrs Donna Anderson**

*Head of College, Canterbury College*

Teaching is an occupation where there are high level of Psychological injuries resulting from the workplace. Strategic organization prevention approaches can substantially reduce the incidence of workplace psychological harm of staff and need to be much more widely implemented.

Canterbury College received a grant from WorkCover Queensland to develop a training/mentoring operational psychology program for its managers including the Senior Leadership Team, Year Level and Curriculum Coordinators.

The focus was to develop a clear understanding of resilience, its impact on psychological wellbeing, and its relevance to one personally and for people management. The aim was to develop tools and strategies to build resilience over time in themselves and in their direct reports including the development of key leadership strategies to better manage and engage teachers.

In providing this program to management there is a belief that not only will it prevent incidents of psychological trauma at that level but by being better managers there will be a reduction in psychological incidents in our broader teaching and administrative staff.

### **What really matters in education: a perspective from an analytical head!**

#### **Dr Maree Matthews**

*Principal, Blue Gum Montessori School*

We have all heard the notion of horses for courses; but what matters is an education needs to be worthy for our children ...our students. What is learned, needs to be well-meaning and well-intentioned. As Heads, we move from one year to the next with a view of wanting to make a difference in the lives of our students and wider learning community. Generally, the centre of our work as Heads, is to build a more sustainable and harmonious future for our

students and communities where by our students become. Become what, one may ask? Our Montessori curriculum pursues the intellect of all children with a strong belief that all students have an undeniable capacity to learn. By using small data, we create significant steps in learning for both students and teachers. The key is making the data real. Collecting and analysing data means you can join the dots to the learning profile.

The data is the real elements of what makes the learner who they are. We celebrate individual learning and recognise one size doesn't fit all. But in reality, is this truly what happens in your school? With the analysis of small data, students are profiled and identified for their specific learning needs and next steps. All students are referred to specialists to complement their learning continua. Every child's learning is mapped via student learning analysis and referenced to samples of learning. This data is placed on a data wall for further team analysis. The analysis is not the end of the process, but the beginning of more questions, research, adapted instruction and planning for individual student learning and overall curriculum development. This is implemented and reviewed at a class, student & parent, team and wider executive level. As a Head, I know individual learning is at the very core of our school. We have many roles and responsibilities. When in the strategic, innovation and leadership space, we still need to have a finger on our core product, which is student learning. Let's envision the opportunities for our learning communities and let them do the rest!

### **Making Pedagogy Central**

#### **Mr Simon Lamb**

*Principal, King's College*

In times of competing demands a school's need to focus on the process of teaching and learning is more important than ever.

Simon will present how he has ensured that the craft of teaching and learning is fully committed to through the development and implementation of the shared pedagogical vision. This process has been applied to two schools under his leadership, one a New Zealand state sector school and the other an independent school. He articulates that, in making the vision of the school and its belief in teaching and learning inseparable, the impact of such belief ensures that pedagogy can be enabled to flourish.

In turn, he shows that schools characterised by strong traditions and values can uphold such history and, concurrently, successfully fulfil an obligation to preparing students for a very unknown and dynamic future.

### **Co-Curriculum Entrepreneurial Studies**

#### **Ms Teresa Deshon**

*Principal, Moama Anglican Grammar*

A new co-curricular program called "Entrepreneurial Studies" has been introduced in the secondary school for students in Years 10-12. Students individually or in groups propose an adult education short course or school holiday program that they research, design, develop, cost, investigate and address legal and other requirements and project manage. They present their proposal to a panel of school and community members for approval and once approved market, deliver and evaluate the impact and success.

This program is self-selecting and all aspects rely on the students' initiative and drive. It develops entrepreneurial spirit so that students are able to demonstrate a true passion for building something great from nothing and being willing to push themselves to the limits to achieve big goals.

This co-curricular program plays a vital role in mentoring our students to be the future technologists, entrepreneur's and business and other leaders, as it grows the mindset that is needed for the future; one that embraces critical questioning, innovation, service and continuous improvement.

### **Aligning Leadership with Educational Vision – the Fusion of Wellbeing with Academic Learning**

#### **Ms Peggy Mahy**

*Principal, The Scots School Albury*

Faced with an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the School's organisational structure in 2014 due to a period of declining enrolments and resulting business imperatives, I re-shaped the school organisational structure and leadership to focus exclusively on student outcomes – both wellbeing and academic.

All traditional peripheral roles were shed, and others re-designed to privilege learning, engagement and care of students. Heads of Department roles were replaced by Learning Area Leaders who had responsibility for several faculty areas and conceptual learning, Year Level Coordinators were replaced by Stage Coordinators, focusing on age appropriate learning, tailored programs and wellbeing and teams were created such as the LET – Learning Engagement Team with the deliverable goals of collaboration, mutual focus on learning and wellbeing and the sharing of resources, ideas and expertise.

Added to this, roles for coaching and mentoring have been introduced to lift staff teaching skills and confidence and a role designed to ‘navigate’ the most advantageous pathways for learning, using data and student profiling through a Student Learning and Development role.

Overall the process of change has been iterative and responsive to feedback and data with the team and individuals now employing SCRUM (as in IT Project Development) methodology to plan, develop and implement ideas.

The School’s academic outcomes have improved markedly in a short time and satisfaction survey data from parents, staff and students show impressive gains in all key areas.

## **Inspiring Teachers and Students in the 21st Century. The Power of Self-reflection and Meaningful Feedback.**

### **Mr Phillip Heath**

*Head, Barker College*

As 21st Century Learners, it is important to use evidence to inform practice and understanding, whether engaging with students or staff. Emerging research (Hattie, 2012) highlights the importance of feedback within the learning process, whether through self-assessment or via self-reflection. This process impacts on the individual sense of efficacy individuals develop about their own capacity.

This presentation will draw on three key initiatives within the school’s newly established vision for the future.

1. The College of Teachers which uses a growth model and collaborative feedback to enhance staff practice,
2. The NELP (National Emerging Leaders Program) that develops leadership and partnerships across schools through coaching and reflection, and
3. The Extended Stay Residential Program, where students experience living away from their families outside the normal classroom program. Through the increased emphasis on reflection, students learn from their experience in new environments and partnerships.

Drawing on various data samples (interviews, surveys and anecdotal observations) from each project outlined, the changes in student and staff perceptions will be highlighted and discussed. Importantly, the key dimensions of self-reflection and feedback will be unpacked to highlight the power they can have upon staff and students as they engage in learning that challenges them to reflect continuously.

## **GROUP 3**

### **For Goodness Sake, Love Yourself Too**

#### **Dr David Mulford (in conjunction with Rev David Williams)**

*Headmaster, Newington College*

Most of us who are Heads of schools have many of the features of the classic “workaholic”. The last person we look out for is us!

Features such as self-sacrifice, absolute passion, determination, and the challenge of a hugely challenging role, all combine together, often, as a recipe for disaster in terms of our own health, our family’s well-being, and our effectiveness as Heads.

This short input session is about aspects of self-survival that will ensure you are nurtured and cared for, along with the community you are called to serve and lead.

We will cover five vital areas of looking after yourself in the demanding role as a Head of School:

- I. Life-balance (work, family, self)
- II. Regular healthy exercise (physical well-being)
- III. Medical transparency, with your own valued professional/s

- IV. Collegial support and confidential sharing
- V. Spiritual nourishment through reflection, reading, altruism and meditation

This input session will include humour and interaction – and will definitely not be boring. Each of the above areas will be elaborated on and practical examples from “life at the coal face” will be cited.

## **Bolstering Student Wellbeing**

### **Dr Heather Schnagl AM**

*Principal, Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School*

Over several years, Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School has developed a range of initiatives designed to enhance the wellbeing of our students (girls from ELC to Year 12).

Three years ago our Pastoral Care team developed the concept of Wellness Week, which has been extended to include regular pop-up wellness events with student teams trained as 'Wellness Warriors'. During the biennial Wellness Weeks every staff member integrates wellness activities into each lesson, while there are also a range of outside class activities associated with a daily theme, such as *Thankful Thursday*.

Dr Christiane Kehoe from The University of Melbourne and our Head of Counselling Dr Bridget McPherson have developed and piloted a whole school approach to the Tuning in to Teens™ education program. The program is focused on helping young people develop their emotional intelligence by supporting parents, teachers and the students themselves in the development of emotional competence. In the parent and teacher programs the adults are taught to refrain from directly problem solving on behalf of the young person, thereby enabling the young person to develop her own techniques and strategies for solving problems and managing emotions such as disappointment and distress. During their Tuning in to Teens sessions, girls developed an increased awareness of their emotional states and engaged in activities that enabled them to learn that all emotions are acceptable, purposeful and useful when managed positively.

To extend our effectiveness in supporting the wellbeing of our students, we are increasing staff capacity in Holding, Modelling and Mentoring their students. Holding is about students' sense of emotional security, where they are understood in a non-judgmental manner, well regarded and accepted for who they are. Modelling is about teachers as positive role models, doing what we say we will do and setting the tone, while establishing and maintaining clear and consistent boundaries. Mentoring is about leading students' learning in the broadest sense and supporting the development of a growth mindset.

Our students appreciate the caring and innovative approach to cultivating their well-being, while our staff members recognise and embrace the vital importance of their role in supporting student wellness.

## **Collaborative Action Research as Part of a School Improvement Effort: Improving the Classroom Learning Environment and Student Self-Efficacy**

### **Mr Paul Rijken**

*Principal, Cardjin College*

Research into school effectiveness and improvement is reliant on a policy which gives priority to investing in teacher professional development, especially in teacher quality. Any attempt to improve schools, needs to begin with an understanding of what happens in the classroom. A school culture focused on continuous improvement of student outcomes needs to be underpinned by individual teacher initiatives in improving their classroom learning environment. The use of action research as a tool for improving classroom learning has highlighted the benefits of teachers as researchers focusing on teacher practices and skills in their own classrooms. Teachers' involvement in action research in a collaborative school environment often have a measurable and direct impact on the classroom learning environment, especially in the areas of student achievement, behaviour and equity. In addition, teachers involved in action research could positively influence the performance of their colleagues and school leaders.

Using a coeducational secondary school in South Australia as a case study, this presentation aims to provide insights into effective strategies for improving learning environments based on teacher professional development. This study involved a three-year whole-school teacher action research project with 2673 students in 171 classes. The collection of quantitative data involved a pretest survey and posttest survey administered each year. The survey instrument measured students' perceptions their classroom learning environment and students' self-efficacy using an actual and preferred form. During the intervening period, teachers developed innovative interventions in their classroom to address the findings from the survey.

Professional development and teacher collaboration was designed in response to the whole school survey. As a mixed-methods approach, the quantitative data from scales of the Constructivist Oriented Learning Environment Survey (COLES) and one scale, self-efficacy, from the Students' Adaptive Learning Engagement in Science (SALES) questionnaire were coupled with qualitative classroom observations and feedback from teacher learning groups.

Analysis of the data indicated statistically-significant improvements in students' perceptions of the learning environment and their self-efficacy over a three-year period. Qualitative data from classroom observations and discussion groups supported and embellished the quantitative findings.

## **Leading School Wide Improvement**

### **Mrs Jann Robinson**

*Principal, St Luke's Grammar School*

In 2014 the school undertook the implementation of a whole school learning framework designed to empower students to own their learning and to build student achievement beyond marks to being ready for the changing world caused by digital disruption. The challenge was to ensure this happened every classroom from Kindergarten to Year 12 and all teachers were able to work in a new way. There have been many challenges but by using a new model for teacher learning it has resulted in an open learning environment with greater collaboration between staff. It has been an exciting and challenging change as it has seen a fundamental shift in the cultural of the school. As the Principal I have learnt that leading change requires a focus that prioritises learning above all the other tasks that are a Principal's responsibility.

## **Performing Arts (Co-curricular)**

### **Mr Terry Muldoon**

*Principal, St Columba Anglican School*

SCAS has a deserved reputation for attracting, nurturing and guiding excellent performers. Currently over 680 students at the school are involved in the program.

- The schools vocal program ranges from massed choirs of over 60 to select male and female and groups, chamber choirs etc. Senior groups are mentored by Rachel Hore from The Idea of North and Steven Tabener from the Spooky Men's Chorale
- Ten years ago its senior Dance cohort numbered two. It now runs cocurricular dance from pre-school to HSC on campus and via distance education. The school regularly wins at the Sydney Dance Eisteddfod and has won the prestigious dance of champions
- Drama has grown from a boutique subject at SCAS to one that has achieved local and HSC (OnStage) recognition for innovative and high quality performances

The growth enthusiasm and expertise exhibited in the co-curricular program has led SCAS being the "school of choice" for students who want to combine artistic development with academic excellence in a supportive environment. This has channeled into the school's curriculum with performing arts student regularly featuring in the lists for best of performances in the HSC and places in a range of tertiary options from ballet schools, conservatoria, circus schools and gaining place as gap year students in prestigious overseas schools whose focus is on the performing arts.

## **Strategic Development and Professional Standards for Teachers**

### **Ms Robyn Anderson**

*Principal, Lourdes Hill College*

Lourdes Hill College (LHC), an independent Catholic secondary school for girls in Brisbane, Queensland, is demonstrating its commitment to fostering a culture of contemporary teaching excellence through its newly-established Centre for Innovation, Teaching Excellence and Leadership (CiTEL). In this workshop, Robyn Anderson will outline the development of CiTEL and explore the possibilities for its future.

CiTEL comprises custom-designed, state-of-the-art spaces with leading edge technology where staff can collaborate, research and share practice on campus at the College. The vision for CiTEL is to provide a physical and a virtual presence where educators can meet and collaborate towards advancing teaching excellence. CiTEL's focus on external engagement and developing partnerships with other schools, institutions and universities is also important to extending the educational network beyond the boundaries of the College.

The key objectives of CiTEL are to:

- Support the strategic directions of the College towards achieving teaching excellence.
- Establish the College as a leader in innovative staff professional learning experiences and demonstrated teaching excellence.
- Create a safe, respectful and supportive learning environment to enrich the professional lives of staff.
- Develop and facilitate an integrated professional learning program that prepares staff for the changing demands of teaching and learning into the future.
- Provide comfortable, welcoming, fit-for-purpose spaces for developing and sharing professional practice.
- Develop a virtual presence to support the professional learning program and to enhance the functions and connections of the physical CiTEL.
- Establish a culture of research and evidence-based practice.
- Support the development and enactment of the College's newly established LHC Learning Framework.

Prior to the official launch of CiTEL as a physical space in February 2017, the Centre, led by Director, Dr Janet Buchan, conducted its first major project, known as the LHC Learning Futures Project, in 2016. Through consultation and engagement with a wide range of areas of the College community and beyond, this research-based project's primary purpose was to answer "the big question": What will/should/can learning and teaching look like in LHC classrooms and the broader learning environment in the future? The findings from this ground breaking study have been used to inform strategic direction for the College, which has resulted in the development of the new LHC Learning Framework.