

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

According to Webster's Universal Dictionary (my version was printed 1968), the definition of school is as follows:

School borrowed from Latin *schola*, *scola* from Greek *skhole*, meaning 'leisure, spare time, ease; employment of leisure; that in which leisure is employed, learned, also *skholdzein*, 'to be at leisure, to have a rest or respite from something'

Further down the definition it changes to: philosophical discussion, disputation; a lecture, study, learning; place of discussion and learning;'

When and where did the true meaning of 'school' change, from ease and the pursuit of leisure (hopefully leading to relaxation and happiness **for all**) to study, lectures, disputation, and more recently to tests, accountability, compliance, tests, tests, tests, comparability and reports – generally leading to stress, failure and misery **for many?**

Wouldn't it be good to have more of the former definition?

2006

In April 2006, I found myself agreeing to taking on the role of Chairperson of the Governing Body of Woodbury Boston Primary School when Lisa Smith decided it was too much for her, given that she had three children under 6.

It has been a bumpy journey and I have learnt heaps. There were a few difficulties with which we, the Governing Body, had to cope. In Term 2, Jamie replaced Rex in the Senior Room when Rex took a term's leave without pay. Grace managed the Junior Room with Sarah and Robyn. With Linda, Ree and Elaine assisting Jamie we felt things would go well. However recurring ill health left Jamie unable to complete the term and Denise Skipper stepped in, assisting us through the reporting interviews and so to the end of the first semester. Phew!

The spectre of re-registration raised its head in Term 3. All the 'schooley' things such as curriculum, teaching, professional development etc. had been fine – we just had to comply with some safety issues such as hand rails for all flights of steps, signs indicating uneven steps, and the removal of the student-built 'tree cubbies' which had nails sticking out! Blessed relief came in the form of a re-registration certificate to the end of 2011. Double Phew! High five!! We could now focus totally on the kids.

At the end of Term 3 we said goodbye to Sarah who wished to concentrate on a new business, home-schooling her children and study. Grace resigned at the end of Term 4, choosing to accept an offer at a larger school which she felt would offer her more scope. We were sorry to lose their care and dedication, but wished them well in their future endeavours.

November saw us hosting an opening ceremony for a new deck between the classrooms, a stairway and refurbishment of the senior room. A generous grant of \$110,000 from the Federal Government under the "Investing in our Schools" programme, permitted comprehensive upgrading of the classroom; expertly accomplished by Charlie Lemann and his team under the project managership of Evan Holmes (both fathers of past students). The Hon. Wilson Tuckey opened the completed redevelopment and had very

complimentary comments regarding the cost-effectiveness implemented by the granting of the tender to past parents and close community members. He wished more government-funded projects could be similarly undertaken. We are much indebted to Charlie for a good job done and to Evan for the generous donation of his time and management expertise.

Our ailing and long-neglected website finally received the TLC it so desperately needed. Geoff Prince and Kay Stott most magnanimously gave of their talents and expertise and together with Whitney, spent many hours performing first, second and third aid to the structure and content of the website. In these 'e-controlled' times, websites are a vital part of the image and promotion of any business, and a school is, fortunately or unfortunately, a business. www.woodburyboston.wa.edu.au is now an updated and polished 'e-front door' for our school.

A school is, and has, many things. It is buildings and gardens. It has equipment, furniture, image and reputation. Most importantly, (and unlike Jim Hacker's hospitals) it has people.

I wish to conclude this report with a rather extensive list of thanks to all those wonderful people who make the whole thing work. This list is not in any particular order as I could not even start to rank most important to least important.

The Students – thank you for your lively minds and attitudes, your friendship, your sense of fun and your forgiveness (when we adults do boring things).

Rex - for your willingness to accept and incorporate in all that you do that elusive thing we call the 'ethos' of the school; for your skills, talents and experience in the education field, for your interests in outdoor pursuits you so enthusiastically share with the students and for your patience and tact as you tip-toe through the minefield which is the 'Governing Body/parents/staff/students' mix.

Ree – for your continued focus and dedication to giving of your best in all that you do. Thank you for organising Out & About days and helping the students with conducting Parliament. Your honesty and unwavering support of the school is much appreciated.

Linda – for incredible budgeting and planning for camps, for your insistence of staying with the ethos of the school when things come unstuck and for your rock solid support for our school

Robyn – we really appreciate how well you have fitted in with the ethos of our school. Your kindness, care, gentleness and the strong dependability you demonstrate are a comfort to all.

Elaine – your amazing generosity and willingness to give of your time and skills, the enthusiasm and dedication with which you tackle tasks which come your way and all that you accomplish are greatly valued.

Matthew – we very much appreciate the all the tasks you take on. Thank you so much for your skills, your reliability and for your open willingness to accept the many and varied jobs around a school like ours.

Bruce: Thank you for the interesting music lessons, guitar lessons and help for Jamie while Rex was on leave, and later when Jamie was on sick leave.

Jan – We are privileged to have you as part of the team: We so admire your strength and courage in dealing with all that your current illness is presenting to you. Your skills in your work and the attention to detail so evident in what you do are vital to the continued success of the school. Thank you for being such an admirable role model and a good friend to us all. We wish you a speedy and total recovery of your health.

Whitney – thank you for being such a ‘rock’ for the school. Your quick mind and ability to keep so much essential information at your fingertips means that the administration of the school is strong and positive. We love the way you promote the school so comprehensively in your dealings with prospective parents as well as the general community.

Deanne – Even though this is a report about 2006, it would be remiss of me not to mention the incredible job Deanne is doing as newly appointed teacher in the junior room. For a new graduate, Deanne is accomplishing great things over the wide span of ages – Kindy to Year 3 – range of abilities of students and extensive coverage of curriculum requirements. Thank you for your meticulous preparation for each day’s activities and your unwavering dedication to our young students.

Bev Harris. Thank you for your commitment to keeping Woodbury Boston Primary School treading the straight and narrow path of financial viability and accountability for so many years. Your generosity of time (undercharged) and talents in understanding school finances (prodigious) are invaluable to our small school.

Lisa Smith – Sincere thanks for taking on the job of Chairperson and filling the position so well. Your organisational skills and clear-sightedness of the big picture were instrumental in assisting the school management to jump through many hoops.

Ken Hall – We very much appreciate the time and expertise you devoted to the marketing sub-committee and for ‘hanging in there’ as a Governing Body member even when your work commitments were huge. Thank you for seeing us through to the end of 2006.

Annie – wall-painter extraordinaire, chef’s assistant and overall good person. Thank you for the massive job of painting both classrooms and the office; all completed during holidays and to such a high standard of finish. Canteen days have been welcomed and relished by all students and we have all loved your warmth and open friendliness.

Mark – with no apparent fuss or bother you have fed (and over-fed) our lovely kids with a stunning variety of yummy food on canteen days. Second and third helpings were always the order of the day and for a mere \$2.50. Your judicious shopping forays, consistently healthy menus and unfailing good humour have been nuggets of gold for our kids.

Mike and Joni – for being kind, considerate and supportive bus drivers. This is a vital, but thankless task; one that is in no way easy. We appreciate your dedication and consistent care of our children while they travel to and from school.

Diane – a stalwart of the Governing Body and totally committed to the success of the school. Thank you for your generosity, talents and diligence in the financial arena.

Tony – thank you for the countless hours devoted to the massive task of keeping the computer network up and functioning well – an incredibly demanding and frustrating job – accomplished with calm aplomb. Grateful thanks, also, for taking on, with grace and skill, the onerous minute-taking task at Governing Body meetings.

Claudia - I am so grateful to have access to your totally new and different experience. It may be being Swiss that generates your unique approach. Thank you for your clear vision and concise, solution-oriented input at Governing Body meetings.

Kaye – co-opted Governing Body member and volunteer spring-roll wrapper. Thank you for so kindly joining our community and involving in our school even though you don't have any children attending. We hope you stay for a long time

Jeni , Joe and Michelle – thank you for being willingly co-opted into the Governing Body early in 2007. Your energy, ideas and vision promise good times ahead. We hope you will want to stay involved for many years. Thank you, Michelle, for relieving Tony of the job of minute-taker. I am sure he will be delighted to hand that one over! Jeni, your fund-raising sale of bulbs is a hit and has raised a tidy sum. Thank you.

AISWA – has been a strongly supportive body for many years. Their expertise, knowledge and readily offered assistance have been essential for successfully dealing with problems in all areas of school management.

Thank you to all the parents, friends and relatives who have helped in so many ways over the past twelve months; Mandy, and now Tracey for managing the book club, Heather(Elaine's Mum) for being there to help with cooking, tidying, re-organising etc. etc. Schools never run out of things that need doing!

Future Wish List

We will always need the help and involvement of parents and staff. It is a goal of the Governing Body to have increased enrolments to enable a third classroom; it would also be good to have a hall owned by the school. To ensure a secure future, the school would need to buy the land on which the school stands - it is leased at present. Do you have ideas, energy and commitment to the school and its future?

If you appreciate what Woodbury Boston does for your child, spread the word. We hope to see our school continue for many, many more years; for children not even born yet.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to a very special person – **John Woodbury**. Without his vision, love of children, compassion for the struggles of each and every person and his absolute commitment to making life a little easier for everyone, this school would not have come into existence. His steely, uncompromising stance and downright stubbornness has meant that the school continues to exist and has done for the past 27 years. John has been indefatigable in his pursuit of what he sees as 'the best for children'. I hope we can continue to keep his ideas and beliefs alive.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Staff Attendance:

Staff attendance in 2006 was excellent. Their dedication was evident by the many hours spent working long after the students had left for the day. Much professional development was done after hours and during weekends.

One staff member became seriously ill and took extended sick leave in Term 3 and 4, and changed from full-time to part time work. Another staff member had leave without pay for Term 2 and one staff member requested 5 weeks family leave without pay. This included two weeks of the July vacation.

Staff Retention

Given the size of the school and its staff, it is not helpful to comment on this topic in percentages. Our Junior room teacher resigned at the end of 2006 and we had a part time Teacher Assistant from the Junior room resign at the end of Term 3. The part-time teacher resigned in Term 4 due to illness.

Teacher Qualifications

Rex Davies

Registered with WA College of Teaching
B.Ed. Admin (partially completed) – (Northern Territory University)
Bush and Mountain Leadership Certificate
Certificate of Student Counselling (Victorian Education Department)
Diploma of Education – (State College of Victoria)
Diploma of Fine Arts – (Deakin University)

Deanne Lowrie

Provisional Registration with WA College of Teaching
B.Ed (Primary) – (Edith Cowan University)

Professional Development

During the year staff members experienced a total of 266 Professional Development hours. The courses covered varied topics: i.e. Accountability, Literacy and Numeracy, Dealing with children with health problems e.g. Diabetes, Non-Violent Communication, Data Informed Teaching, Curriculum related workshops and New Government Policy Information workshops. Some were held in Perth, others in Albany and some at the school with visiting speakers and consultants. It is impossible to present this topic in dollar terms due to the varied presentations and venues.

Value Added Education

I believe that all aspects of Woodbury Boston education could be described as value added.

The relationship built between staff and student is one of mutual respect, friendship and dignity. Teachers are known by their first names and this immediately changes the traditional teacher/child relationship.

All attempts are made to negotiate disagreements and difficulties without resorting to punishments.

The playground provides students with the opportunities of interacting with their physical environment in a natural and normal way. Tree climbing, building cubbies, access to a creek and the evidence of the natural processes in vegetation of seeding, growth and eventual decay all contribute to the child's understanding of the earth.

Collaborative and co-operative learning is promoted. Use of competition in any learning activity is discouraged. Eco-friendly and sports such as surfing, sailing, canoeing, swimming and bush-walking are the preferred physical activities available to the students.

Parliament is designed to empower students to recognise their own rights as well as the rights of others. It gives them the opportunity to discuss, negotiate and generally hone their conflict-resolution skills.

The publication and circulation of staff telephone numbers enables better communication and accessibility between parents and staff. Parents are welcome at the school at any time without appointments or permission.

Staff are encouraged to get to know the whole family of a student. This too enables better understanding and communication, particularly in times of difficulty and discord.

Camps, Out and About Day and other activities which allow family participation enhance and provide opportunities for integrated curriculum presentation.

In the Senior room the extensive computer network allows for a ratio of one computer to two students.

Students are permitted to use the telephone to contact their parents, if necessary, during the day. Students also use video and digital cameras, facsimile machines, photocopiers and other electronic aids in the presentation of their assignments and investigations for project work.

**Forrest Woodbury
Governing Body Chair
4 April 2007**

TEACHER-IN-CHARGE REPORT

Welcome

Due to the requirements of the previous federal minister of education the school had to sign an agreement to secure its funding for the four year term (Quadrennium) leading to this years report.

Part of this agreement is we need to report on several parts of the school's 'performance' to the school community. These areas include staff attendance and retention (as reported in Forrest's report), student attendance, and the students' results in the Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (WALNA). The WALNA Tests are delivered to all students in grades 3, 5 and 7, and in high schools to year 9. This school has administered these tests since they were introduced several years ago, and although we have found them of little benefit to the school, it has proven to the staff, and reassured parents, that students at this school perform very well academically, in the narrow slice of information tested, with our results hovering around, and many times above, the state averages; and now historical records are providing some long term views of performance.

The 2006 results -

- in reading a total of 17 out of 19 students reached or were above the benchmark
- In writing 16 out of 18 above benchmark, with one absentee
- In spelling 15 out of 18 above benchmark
- Maths 15 out of 19 above benchmark, with one absentee.

We do find that, especially for a small school, there are inherent flaws with this type of assessment, as detailed below.

These assessments track students' performance across a linear continuum. This means that they pick say 5 different outcomes in maths and ask 3 questions about each, each question representing a different level. Say we look at 1 item to be assessed; students may answer the first 2 correctly and the last 1 incorrectly. The 1st question is at level 1, next at level 2, the last at level 3. This puts them in a value of level 2 according to the WALNA. There are over 30 outcomes in each level of maths at each level that are required to be taught annually, these includes major strands and sub strands. Within these sub strands there are method, facts and tables to be learnt. This means, for those who are interested, only a thin slice of chosen items is assessed, to represent a broad statistic.

There are many ways students should be assessed and different individuals respond in different ways to written questions in a test environment. Some thrive in this environment, some might, for example, just feel sick, but may have produced above average results all year. Some schools may represent particular demographic, say ESL new arrivals or attract more challenged students. This is a one-size-fits-all test from a particular viewpoint.

The statistic is also flawed in how we are to respond to it. We are asked to respond in percentages. This is unfair to a small school like ours for many reasons. If we have, say 6 students in say year 3. Should one of these children have enrolled the day before the test, whether they perform exceptionally well or badly they are not a reflection of the school's teaching, yet they then represent 15% of the total cohort. Say one more student is weak in the subject, in this scenario we may find ourselves having 2 out of 6 or 30% below the

benchmark, a serious problem in a class of 30 year 3's, a skewed number in a class of 6 students. We had one year 7 in 2004, regardless of how they performed; the school would be represented with 100% above or below the benchmark.

There are ethical problems with reporting with such low numbers in the represented group. If the percentages were public in our situation it would not take long for students and some interested parents to work out who failed to perform. Hypothetically, if 50% out of 2 students did not make the benchmark there would be odd one out either way. To be fair the minister has recognised this, and made tacit provision in the information provided to schools. While we may seem to be doing reasonable well the test is designed to provide a wide national and state view. In addition it is potentially unethical within our school ethos - we are a school which avoids competition amongst students and we do not openly test or place students under test conditions as part of our day to day activities. We want learning to be challenging but not stressful.

There are some benefits to the school when the statistics are reviewed over time making small groups of figures larger and interpretations more usable.

Also students who are falling through the net now attract special funding from Canberra allowing those selected students to access individual tutoring. We have one student currently eligible.

The federal government is trying to make these tests fit school performance targets; it is too narrow in scope, and too particular in its target statically and ethically flawed for a small school. These stats will be useful for the state and federal governments but has minimal value at this stage.

Student attendance in 2006 was 85%

The School Curriculum

We are asked also to report on our value adding to the curriculum. The school has many supports to our curriculum. The Out 'n' About days, school camps and excursions are as much as possible chosen to complement the chosen themes that we have chosen. We rarely if ever apply an outcome dubiously to something that was a good idea, and then try to justify it. The staff are happy to plan long term and work towards matching the education outcomes to possible hands on experiences.

These experiences provide real relationships between the requirements of the academic world and tactile knowledge. For example a cemetery is real history, seeing and observing bird's plants and animals reinforces what students learn about them, being by the sea drawing it and describing it helps with writing about it. Our physical activities are non-competitive and give students options for exciting future life style options like surfing, hiking, canoeing and sailing.

Our computers have just been upgraded; our student computer ratio in the bobtails' class is two to one. The computers are put to good use for research and publication of students' writing. Student writing covers science reports, personal study projects, creative writing and recounts. They are also used for keyboard skills, music and maths and other educational games. Thanks to Tony Evers and Scott Parsons for the extraordinary effort

they have put in, not just keeping the old ones going but the supplying and installing the new, at a much discounted rate.

The students this year are turning out to be wonderful company. It's usual to have problems amongst individuals, after all they're kids, that's their job, however the ambience in the yard and the class room has changed and the adults really appreciate it.

What does the future hold for curriculum?

The school curriculum is strong and successful; however we sometimes find ourselves outside of the government's scope of obligations and have to compromise our values as mention in the example earlier regarding non-competitive reporting. We work to the National Outcomes within the state curriculum and have found little difficulty meeting most of the obligations that we are required to undertake to obtain the commonwealth per-capita funding. These conditions are not negotiable.

However the talk around the traps is a bit ominous. In 1988 we had the Hobart declaration which bonded the states to a common approach to education; in 1998 we had the formation of a new alliance and a more pro-active national agenda including the flying of flags and new school values as propagated by the federal minister.

Every four years there is a funding period that we need to sign off on. The federal government from both sides are promising more federal controls over what is taught and more accountability from the schools. We will know more about this after the next election and it will be fairly fast because the next quadrennium starts in 2009.

There are interesting times for schools ahead.

As a school I believe we are now entering a turning point again. I believe the school is strong and improving however while the school is in the position it finds itself we need to start thinking into the long term future. Five and ten year plans are needed we need leaders and dreamers now, and some strong hearts to get the job done.

Thank you.

Rex Davies
Teacher-In- Charge
4 April 2007