Year 7 2014 Orientation

Saturday November 16 saw incoming Year 7 students and their parents visit the xsel office in Dubbo. Thanks need to be extended to the staff who travelled for the day to be present as well – Ms Jo Ryan, Ms Gemma Padroth, Ms Emmeline Smith, and Mr Dimitri Anikin. Bouquets to Mrs Virginia Cluff who guided new students, the student mentors in xsel Year 7-10 and staff through a day of fun. Once again we note the thorough preparation for the digital age being conducted by our primary school colleagues. xsel’s new cohort are very comfortable in the digital space.

Our student mentors presented an accomplished face to the new students. Without notice, they were asked questions by new students or their parents and without fail the students stood to address the questions with quiet confidence, humility and honesty. These values are not explicitly taught in schools, but developed through a positive school culture. This culture has been built by staff and students over the last four years and is a credit to all involved. We look forward to working with our new students (and our current ones!) in 2014.

Barbara Bannister
I count myself among the luckiest of people this term: not only have I enjoyed a thoroughly enjoyable long break but have returned to find xsel humming along without a hitch. My very sincere thanks to Barbara Bannister who has acted in my role over what is a very demanding period and to Virginia Cluff who stepped up from her xsel science teaching role to take over Barb’s duties. They have done a brilliant job in conjunction with our teachers, our indefatigable office manager, Bev Winters and Alison Kensit from Dunedoo Central School. Let me also acknowledge the contribution of Peter Campbell and Dunedoo Central School for supporting Alison and Virginia’s release.

By all accounts the Term 4 residential school was a great success and the celebration of Year 10’s time in xsel aptly captured the fun and excitement of the best xsel learning experiences. The Year 7 2014 Orientation Day I am told was also accomplished to everyone’s great satisfaction. Warm congratulations to the executive team, the teachers and our wonderful student mentors who gave up their Saturday to participate. Let me also welcome all our new 2014 parents and students.

Teaching, Learning and Technology

I am back in my usual chair and need to thank Virginia Cluff for her hard work over the last six weeks. We will start Semester 2 reports soon, and this is always a busy time for staff. In addition to delivering lessons and planning for 2014, staff will complete comprehensive reports on the progress of each student. At this stage results look very pleasing with the vast majority of students having demonstrated fabulous growth throughout the year.

2014 will see the introduction of a new syllabus in years 7 & 9 in English, mathematics and science. xsel teachers have been preparing since about May this year with an in-depth investigation of the necessary changes. For many of our topics, the changes are small. Having adopted a “concept” approach for some time now, our programming allows the broadest possible look at a particular theme within a subject. Our continuing challenge is to find more opportunities for cross-KLA (more than one subject) learning opportunities to ensure that all learning is in context and authentic links to a real life situation can be shown. In this way a deep understanding may be developed, leading to the capacity to provide some sensational extended responses.

Throughout this newsletter you will find samples of student work. We see at this time of year, when assessment is finished and learning is for pure pleasure, some of the most outstanding work from students. It is facilitated by our dedicated teachers who willingly share their passion for learning with their students. Some of the poetry is very moving.

Year 8 report that their ESSA experience went without a hitch. Results will not be known until March 2014. We have had some exciting results in the past.

On a final note we will finalise staff for 2014 in the last few weeks of this term. We will see some staff return to mainstream classes full time, some staff retire and will welcome new staff to all KLA’s. These new people will be introduced to our learning community towards the end of this year.

Pauline Freeburn

Recently many of you will have heard the Education Minister Adrian Piccoli talking about the newly-released document *Remote and Rural education: A blueprint for action* by which the NSW DEC outlines its plans for public education in our part of the world. For the xsel community, of particular interest is the stated goal for the future that “gifted and talented rural and remote students have the same curriculum opportunities as students in metropolitan areas.” The nature and operations of a new virtual school will develop through 2014 and I will share with you further information as it becomes available.

It is with much pride and not a little sadness that I congratulate Ms Judith Bertolin (xsel science) on her appointment as 2014 Deputy Principal Quality Teaching at Canobolas Rural Technology High School. Her success means of course that she must leave xsel to concentrate on her new duties. Ms Bertolin has made an extraordinary contribution to xsel and will be sorely missed.

Barbara Bannister
Year 10 English

Year 10 English are currently doing a unit on Kenneth Slessor’s poems. After analysing William Street, the students were asked to write a poem about their street or road.

Painting A Picture
I am painting a picture of my town,  
The main street is where the buzz is all about.  
Cracks and crevices wherever you look down,  
Traffic and conversations are piercing without a doubt.

Old, worn and rough concrete scratch your ungloved hand,  
The sun sets and brings about change.  
The moon illuminates the street like sand,  
Causing a spectacle of unlimited range.

The cringing smell of the canola mill reigns.  
And trucks from the flour mill are as variable as literature.  
This street stretches beyond its drains,  
Perfect canvas, to paint my picture

Lachlan Campbell

My William Street—Carrington Avenue

The tall, green shrubbery causes divides  
The wide, black, pitted road bounds up and down  
Quarter-acre blocks lay off to the sides  
You think it’s awful, I think it’s peaceful

Fresh, fun and fantastic, flowers and food  
The smell of mulched up wood wafts over head  
Down-to-earth, clear, crisp nature is imbued  
You think it’s awful, I think it’s peaceful

The substance—abusers stumble around  
The intoxicated hide in the dark  
Only the teetotallers are to be found  
You think it’s awful, I think it’s peaceful

Josie Schmitz

Wye’s Road

Red dirt  
Green trees  
Brown grass  
Welcome to Wye’s Road

The roar of trucks  
The hum of cars  
The drum of motorbikes  
The whine of sheep  
The cry of cows  
These are the sounds of Wye’s Road.

Winton  
Bogan Park  
Yetambah  
This is us  
Living on Wye’s Road

The chicane in the middle  
The culvert at the end  
The ramp that’s only cars can go through  
This is the drive along Wye’s Road.

The morning rush to the bus  
The odd trek to town  
The evening drive home  
This is a day on Wye’s Road

Luke Wye

The orange glow of the sunset, the paddocks brown  
The flowing river and the distant mirages  
So close in appearance, yet only one can drown  
You find this ugly, I find it lovely.

Swaying branches, like the legs of hung men  
Scarred with birds, crouching wing by wing  
The menacing magpie on the bend  
You find this ugly, I find it lovely

The bellow of its horn as the crossing it nears,  
Sounds of the train, chugging in the distance,  
Rattle, rattle, screech, deafening to the ears  
You find this ugly, I find it lovely

Lewis Goodsell
Important dates for your xsel diary

Wednesday 18 December 2013  
Semester 2 reports issued  
Final day of synopps

Thursday 19 & Friday 20 December  
Staff Development Days

Tuesday 28 January 2014  
School resumes for Eastern Division Schools

Tuesday 4 February 2014  
School resumes for Western Division Schools

2014 xsel Residential Schools

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2014 NSW Government School Holidays

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School development days occur at the beginning of Terms 1, 2 and 3 and the last two days of the school year. Check with your local school, as schools may vary some of these dates.

Guide to technology tools

The holidays are traditionally the time for the big gifts that kids have been begging for all year. Here’s what to watch out for when choosing technology toys for your kids.