

St John's Lutheran School, Geelong
1617

2007 Annual Report to the
School Community



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School Overview

The School Council and Staff participated in a 5-year Strategic Planning exercise in June to focus our energies on student learning and improvement and to consider as a whole group the relationship with Geelong Lutheran College. The whole school planning was a very useful exercise and we have goals to strive toward in 9 different areas to take us through to 2011. The goals we are aiming to achieve are listed under the following areas:

Student Learning – we aim to improve Literacy and Numeracy standards and more effectively manage the crowded curriculum;

Information and communication Technology – improve student perceptions of ICT and integrate it more effectively across the curriculum;

Student Engagement & Wellbeing – to provide a high quality learning environment, attention and care for students (and staff);

Student Pathways and Transitions – improve transitions to the next year level and create a clear pathway at Year 7 to Geelong Lutheran College;

Church and Wider School Community – to maintain relationships with the Geelong Lutheran Churches and improve public awareness and perception of what it is to be Lutheran School;

Finance & Resources – to ensure adequate resourcing is provided;

Building & Facilities – to maintain attractive and effective facilities to support the educational programs;

Staffing – to foster and develop a strong staff climate at the school;

Marketing – to maintain current enrolment levels at St John's.

Literacy

During 2007 reading was the major literacy focus. The priority was to have children more fully understand the texts they were reading. This meant training teachers to be mindful of both reading accuracy and comprehension, when assessing whether children were ready to move onto a new level. Teachers were encouraged to move students more slowly through the reading levels.

At the beginning and the end of the year, children in Grades 3-6 undertook the TORCH reading test. This is a standardized test of comprehension. Classroom teachers administered the tests and collated results whilst Grade 1 and 2 children completed the Holborn Reading Test. Teachers did running records for all children from Prep to Grade 4 and other children as required. To assist teachers in Levels 1 and 2 Ruth Uebergang was employed for an additional 2.5 hours. This enabled teachers at these two levels to complete running records and benchmarking. Running records were taken at least 3 times for each student per term. Classroom teachers analyzed the data they collected and used this information to direct their teaching. Classroom teachers provided the EY Literacy Coordinator with an end of term instructional reading level for each student. The EY Literacy Coordinator provided classroom teachers with a graph of each student's progress and was able to identify students at risk.

All classroom teachers, as well as the Reading Recovery teacher, received a number of PDs which focused on how children learn to read, methods to scaffold students and on improving students' comprehension skills. This whole school approach to PD meant staff had a shared vision and were able to use the same terminology. Staff recognized the need to familiarize themselves with texts to ensure they had a specific focus and were able to support students in their learning. A number of new resources were purchased to assist teachers with shared and guided reading as well as many more take-home readers.

Take-home reading was identified as a necessary and important follow-up to practice reading skills. Whilst this had been successfully implemented at Level 1 and 2 for many years, the higher grades had perhaps not been promoting or reinforcing its existence. Teachers at Level 3 and 4 were assisted and

encouraged to develop mechanisms to promote take home reading at their levels as well. This is to continue in 2008.

Ruth Uebergang continued in her role as Reading Recovery teacher and worked with eight Grade 1 students during the year. Towards the end of Term 4 Ruth spent some time with a number of Prep students who required extra assistance and were likely Reading Recovery students for 2008.

Monitoring of students is vital. In the past it was difficult to clearly check student progress across their time at St Johns. Computer software was purchased during 2007 which will enable student assessment data to be entered and collated for their entire time at St Johns. Teachers spent time on the last day of school in 2007 entering all their assessment and reporting data for each child. This software also enables us to record specific programs which the students have been part of such as Reading Recovery.

Numeracy

During 2007 our key focus was on identifying children who had specific learning needs in the area of Numeracy, offering them extra assistance. In previous years we have offered Numeracy Intervention to children in Level 2 (Year 1 and 2) but this year, during Term 3 and 4 we implemented a similar program for children in Levels 3 and 4 (Year 3-6). Glenda Partridge was employed for 3 hours per week to work with the Level 2 children and Sally Wood was employed to work with the Level 3 and 4 students for 3 hours per week. The children included in both programs were identified by classroom teachers after students completed several assessments including the Early Years Numeracy Interview.

The major focus in both groups was in the area of Number and Place Value as these skills underpin all mathematics learning. Both Glenda and Sally focused on assisting students to identify and use strategies enable them to make efficient and accurate calculations. Through games and activities children participated in confidence building activities which were designed to enable them to transfer their knowledge and skills to be used in the wider application of mathematics.

One observation that has been made is that most of the children identified as low and at risk in upper grades had previously had Reading Recovery and Numeracy Intervention in Level 2. As a means of ensuring children are making progress and meeting appropriate growth points these children should be monitored more closely as they move on after these intervention programs.

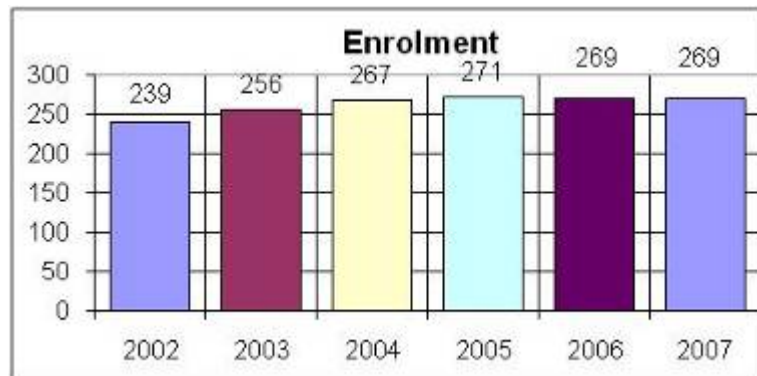
At the end of 2007 we applied for Numeracy funding through AISV with the intention of continuing this program throughout the school. We approached Cassandra Abram to take both groups for a total of 6 hours per week. She will also attend specific training for this role through a course being offered over 6 days at ACU Melbourne.

Recommendations for 2008

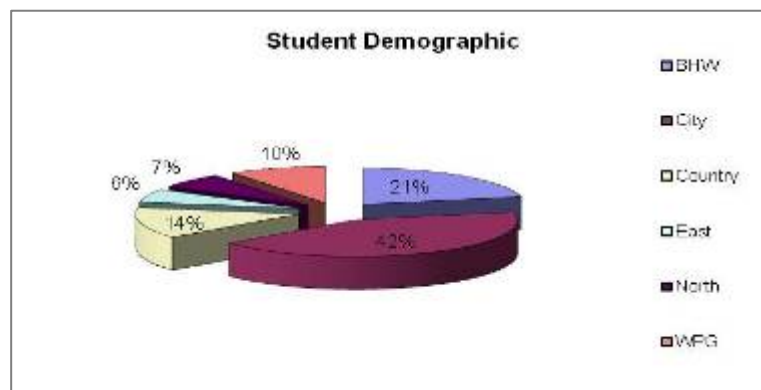
- The critically low children receive a greater amount of time in a small group setting, which will support, encourage and develop confidence.
- The Numeracy Intervention Teacher will liaise closely with classroom teachers and offer support by taking small groups in the classroom setting if appropriate.
- That teachers be encouraged to continue to teach and use effective mathematical strategies with all students as they progress through the school. Teachers will be encouraged to attend ongoing Professional Development in the area of Mathematics and sharing sessions will be organized for all classroom teachers to attend to build on their knowledge of teaching mathematics.

Demographics

The number of children enrolled at St John's in 2007 was 269. There were also 59 children enrolled across the three kindergarten groups making a total of 328 children enrolled at St John's during the year. St John's is in a comfortable and secure position with strong enrolment at all levels throughout the school. The Kindergarten is an effective 'feeder' to the school.



As you can easily see by the following graph, a large percentage (42%) of our children continue to come from local areas i.e. Newtown, Geelong West, Geelong, East Geelong, Herne Hill, Hamlyn Heights, & Manifold Heights. 21% are from Belmont, Highton and Wandana Heights, 14% from country areas e.g. Bannockburn, Teesdale, Batesford, Inverleigh, & Lara. 10% from Grovedale, Marshall and Waurm Ponds. 7% from the North (North Geelong, Bell Post Hill, Bell Park, Corio & North Shore with the remaining 6% from East Geelong (Leopold, Moolap, Newcomb, Whittington).



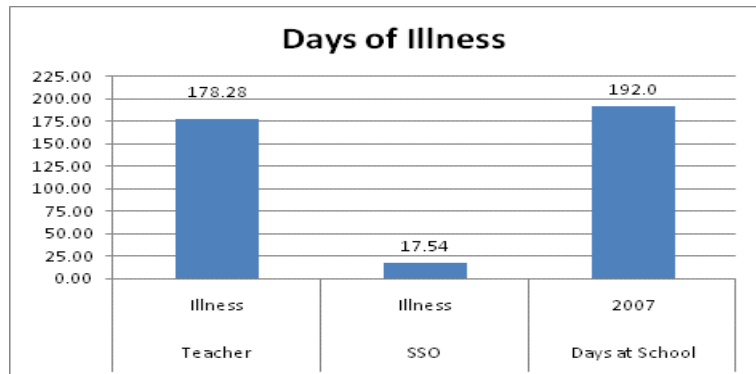
A large number of our families use the family car to get to and from school. Enrolment targets have been met and maintained.

Professional Engagement

1. Staff Attendance

St John's has on average a better attendance rate than the State Benchmark which was 6.73 days of absence per teacher in 2006. Our absence level of 3.88 days per teacher in 2007 compared to 6.81 in 2006 was a marked improvement. Our 5 year average for teacher absence sits at 5.55 days. We had 192 days of school in 2007 with 178.28 days of total teacher absence.

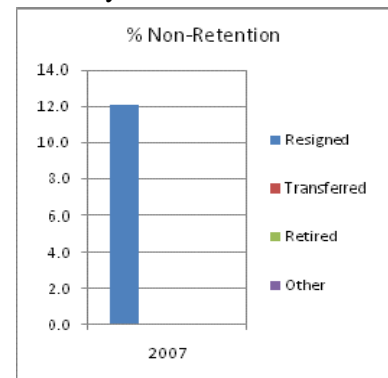
The State mean for SSO absence (Non-teaching Staff) is 5.22 for 2007 and St John's school SSO absence was 9.92 for last year. This was impacted by a significant absence of one person and can be explained as a 'one off' significant absence event. The trend over 5 years for SSOs at the school is 5.13 against a 5-year state average of 5.46. Total SSO absence was 17.54 days.



2. Staff Retention

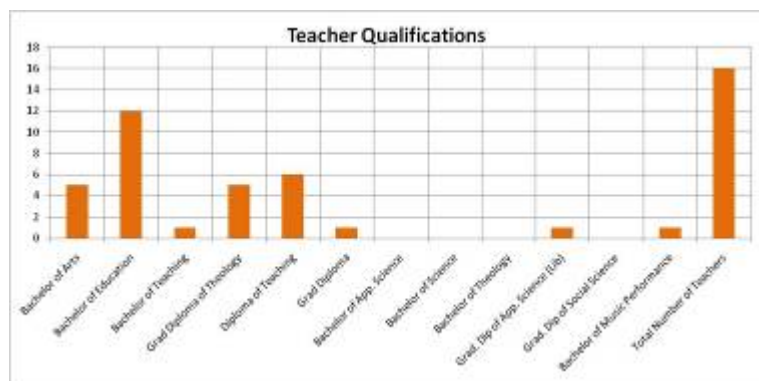
During 2007 two staff members decided to resign. One teacher took this option after the birth of her second child and the subsequent movement to Gippsland with her family. Our Pastoral Care Coordinator returned to the USA after 18 months in Australia. Both teachers had enjoyed their work at St John's and were only prompted to leave through family decisions.

Three of our teachers were on Leave Without Pay for the whole of 2007 after having children and electing to remain at home with their family for the extra year. All these teachers intend to return to the workforce in the next 12 months. Two teachers took Long Service leave; one teacher took 10 weeks LWP for an extended holiday with her husband and one was on Long Service Leave for 2 weeks.

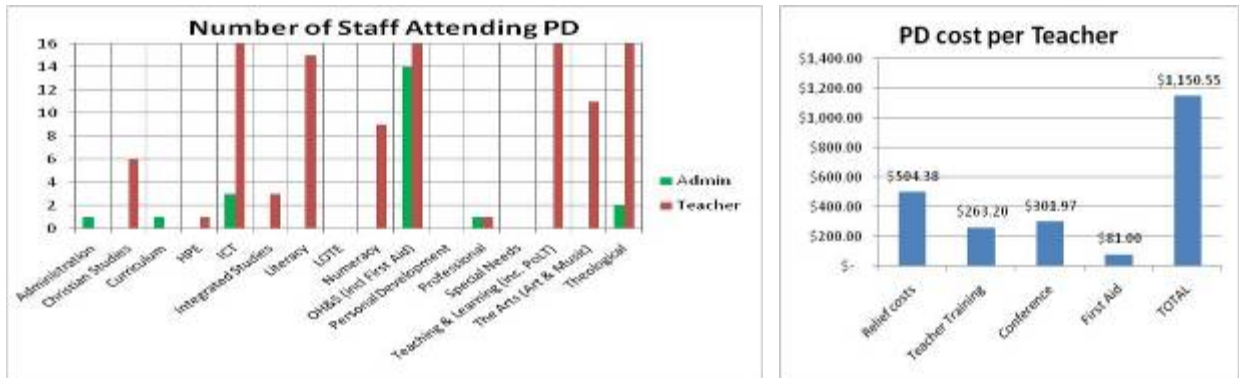


3. Teacher Qualifications

All teachers except one hold a tertiary qualification at degree level or higher. Of the 16 teachers employed at the school, 15 hold at least one bachelor degree and 6 hold qualifications in Lutheran Theology. All teachers at St John's Lutheran School are appropriately qualified and hold registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.



4. Expenditure & Teacher Participation in Professional Learning

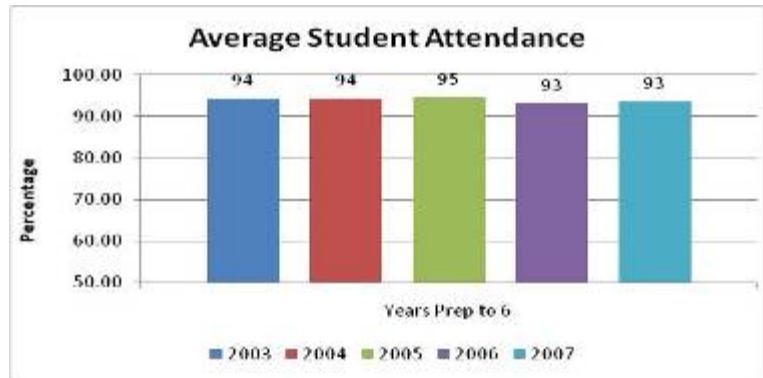


All staff at the school attended Safe Place Training at the beginning of the year to ensure compliance with the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) requirements of workers within the Church. They were briefed on OH&S requirements at the same time. A great deal of the cost incurred for professional development is used to pay relieving teachers. The total expenditure on Professional Development for the year was \$1150.55 per teacher. PD focussed during 2007 on the Principles of Learning and Teaching, theological training to gain accreditation to teach in Lutheran Schools, First Aid training, Literacy and ICT.

Key Student Outcomes

5. Student Attendance

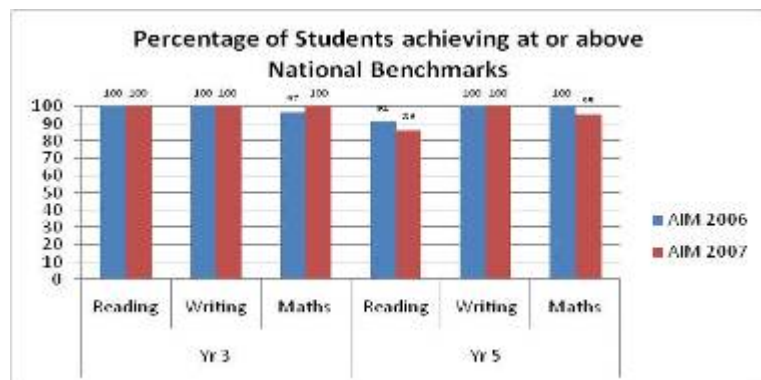
The State benchmark for attendance at school is 93.3% with St John's students slightly better and attending school 93.5% of the time. The only level in the school to have lower attendance than the State mean was Level 2 with 93.02% attendance. All other levels were well above the state with highest attendance in Level 3 and 4 with children attending school 93.7% of the time.



6. Percentage of Students Achieving at or Above the National Benchmarks

Year 3 children performed well in 2007 with 100% of children achieving the benchmark or better in Reading, Writing and Maths.

Results for Year 5 were strong however 6 children were just below the benchmark in Reading and 2 children were below the benchmark in Maths. These children will be monitored and supported during 2008.



7. Changes in Benchmark Results from the Previous Year

Year 3 children maintained their high level of performance in Reading and Writing and actually improved marginally in Maths. This is a great performance by Year 3 children.

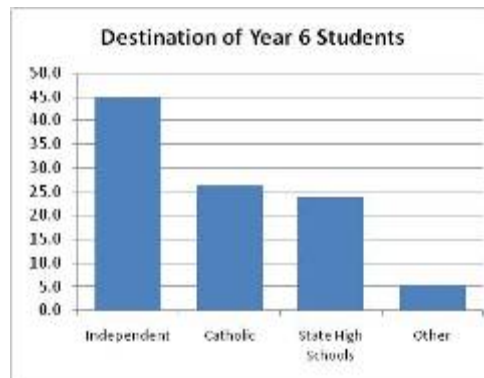
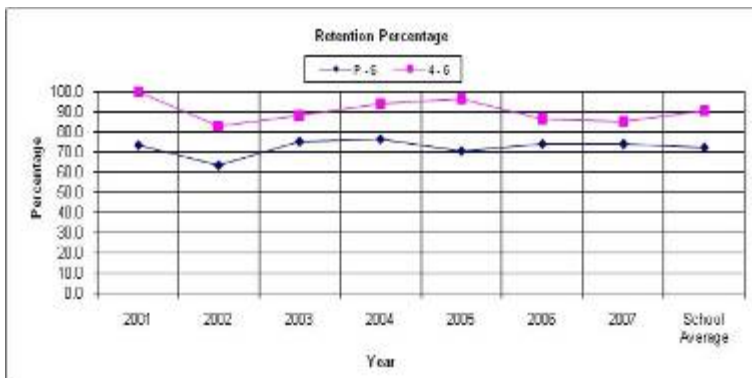
Year 5 children maintained performance in Writing at 100%, however, 3 more children didn't reach the benchmark in 2007 compared to 2006 and performance in maths dropped from 100% in 2006 to 95% in 2007. Although all changes are minor, teachers at these Levels will continue to monitor and work with children who have not reached the benchmark.

8. Value Added

- St John's Lutheran school adds Value to children's education through:
- A focus on building positive relationships that is based on mutual respect and trust between the teachers and each of their students.

- Emphasis on the development of the whole child. Students are encouraged, through positive role modelling and consistent Christian guidance, to take initiative, to take responsibility and to be accountable.
- Concentration on positive pastoral care. All students are aware that their teachers are concerned about their individual experiences and needs. Each child is encouraged to share his troubles and joys with his teacher. The school's commitment to providing a 0.6 Pastoral Care staff member during the last few years has enabled us to improve our general and specific care markedly.
- Consistent involvement and communication with parents. By actively encouraging parents into the school, greater understanding and appreciation of the schools aims and procedures is promoted. When the parents feel happy about their school, their children also feel good about where they go and what they do each day.
- St John's also adds value to children's school through the following special programs and foci:
 - THRASS program
 - Leadership program
 - Debating
 - Tournament of Minds
 - Geelong College Challenge
 - Reading Recovery
 - Numeracy Intervention
 - Kahootz Club
 - ICT Skills
 - Pastoral Care Coordinator
 - You Can Do It Education Program

9. Post-School Destinations



Seventy-five percent of our year 6 children moved into private education at the end of 2007. 45% of these enrolled in Independent Schools in Geelong, 25% in Catholic Education, 23.7% in State Secondary Colleges in Geelong and the other 5% left the Geelong region and enrolled in Independent Schools. One of these went on to a Lutheran School in the Adelaide hills.

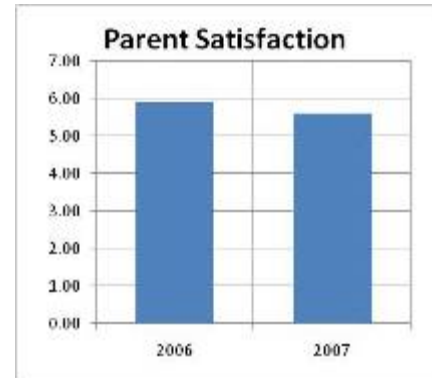
Our Prep to Year 6 retention was consistent with last year at 73.7% and the Year 4 to Year 6 retention down marginally by 1.1 to 85%.

Satisfaction

10. Parent, Student & Teacher Satisfaction

Parent Opinion

St John's parent's satisfaction with St John's is at 5.6 on a scale of 1 to 7. Although this is slightly lower than last year's result of 5.9 it is still encouraging considering the huge changes that occurred to our school as the new Geelong Lutheran College start-up affected governance and leadership of the school. The strongest areas of satisfaction reported on the Parent survey were 'Parent Input', 'Learning Focus' and 'Transitions'. Unfortunately the number of parents responding to the survey was considerably less than last year. A greater number of returns would give us more reliable data.



Staff Opinion

Employees at St John's have a high morale and a high congruence of purpose and direction in their work. They are very satisfied with their 'job' and teach children that are generally well-behaved and motivated to do well. They professionally interact effectively and work well together in developing curriculum and learning opportunities for children.

Student Opinion

Students at St John's have high morale and find St John's a comfortable place to learn and grow. They are connected to their school and are highly motivated to do well and have healthy opinions of their teachers and their peers. St John's students feel very safe at school.

School Contact Information

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