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For immediate release:

Port Phillip Specialist School RiSE to the Challenge



To really affect change in the field of special education Port Phillip Specialist School is hosting the inaugural **2008 International Symposium: Re-imagining Special Education (RiSE) through Arts Education and Arts Therapy** to be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre from 26-29 July 2008.

The RiSE Symposium will explore the following questions:

- What is the nexus between The Arts, Arts Therapy and Special Education?
- How can we shift understanding at a community and/or policy level to advocate for the importance of The Arts and Arts Therapy in Special Education?
- How can teachers develop skills and understandings to use The Arts and Arts Therapy to address the needs of children in Special Education?

Traditionally special education has provided a modified mainstream experience for students with special needs. Recent research and exemplars of good practice illustrate the importance of a paradigm shift in the delivery of special education. There is a growing national and international awareness of the need to develop new strategies. Special education through the Arts delivers a sensory approach to learning assisting students to move from the non-verbal to the verbal, from being an observer to a participant and to fully awaken student potential. These changes have been realised through the power of the Arts intertwined with Arts Therapy.

Modelling that nexus, Port Phillip Specialist School has developed an innovative approach to delivery of curriculum that employs the power of the arts as a vehicle to engage students with learning in Literacy, Numeracy and Living Skills.

This model is called the Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum which uses Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts as a means to engage special needs students in learning skills that will ensure they reach their potential and are able to function as independently as possible.

As well as employing the arts, a key component of this curriculum is the integration of therapy services. A wide array of therapists such as, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapist, Speech Pathologists, Art Therapist, Drama Therapist, and Music Therapist work closely with class teachers and specialist subject teachers to plan and deliver programs to students.

Shirley Brice Heath, Professor at Large at Brown University and Margery Bailey Professor of English and Dramatic Literature, Emerita, at Stanford University is a Keynote Speaker at the International RiSE Symposium. She has researched the experience of children in arts-based immersion programmes and found that they exhibited an intensity of certain characteristics, including motivation, persistence, critical analysis, and planning. "It's true that when kids get into the arts there's a certain transformation in things that happen," she says, adding the caveat: Don't forget there also is "art for arts sake." At Port Phillip Specialist School art for art's sake creates a vibrant, collaborative community invested with social and intellectual capital.

To attend this exciting Symposium register via the Symposium web site:
<http://symposium.portphillip.vic.edu.au>

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