

Media Release

May 2006

Re-imagining Special Education through Arts Education and Arts Therapy

A vision for, and a determination to, achieve quality learning outcomes for special needs students is the hallmark of Port Phillip Specialist School (PPSS). PPSS caters for children aged 2 to 18 with a wide range of disabilities. Their needs are such that it does not make sense to merely duplicate the curriculum that is offered in mainstream schools. These children are different. The aim of PPSS is to do whatever they can to enable their children to have a rich and rewarding life during their years of school and beyond.

From a base of practical experience and educational research, PPSS has made a commitment to approaching all teaching and learning experiences through the arts and arts therapy – dance, drama, music and visual art.

Art experiences are essentially non-verbal and this is an important consideration for students at PPSS. Through the medium of THE ARTS, children – all children – can express themselves in ways that are not possible in words. PPSS has designed a curriculum in which the arts are explored and used educationally, instrumentally and therapeutically to maximise sensory experience, development and learning across all curriculum areas. PPSS has developed an innovative arts-based curriculum which is implemented in a state-of-the-art Visual and Performing Arts Centre, which has been built with the support of community contribution, philanthropic trusts and Government.

Foundational to the achievement of a major curriculum innovation, supported by outstanding resources, is the development of a culture which has “shared beliefs and understandings.” To this end PPSS has been committed to the notion of a collaborative school which values diversity and the capacity to access a diversity of ideas to address complex problems.

...2...

The PPSS community recognises that it has much to learn to appropriately cater for the diverse community. Supported by DE&T, Qantas and Equity Trustees, a team from PPSS attended the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education in Portugal 6-9 March 2006. From this learning and sharing experience, the team has garnered a range of ideas and potential speakers to contribute to the inaugural international symposium ***Re-imagining Special Education through Arts Education and Arts Therapy***, which will be held in Melbourne in July 2008.

This Symposium will provide opportunities for participants to explore and discover the processes and programming required to RE-IMAGINE special education. Presentations of papers, workshops and panel discussions will explore: arts education, creative arts therapy and special education. The Symposium will be of relevance to special education teachers and teachers who cater for special needs students, therapists, policy makers, health providers, principals, administrators and school governors.

For additional information about Port Phillip Specialist School and the 2008 Symposium, refer to www.portphillip.vic.edu.au or contact the school on phone + 61 3 96460855 or email irlicht.bella.b@edumail.vic.gov.au