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AIS Function with NSW Premier

On Monday, 27th September 2010 the AIS hosted the NSW Premier, Kristina Keneally, at a small function in the AIS Conference Centre. The Premier took the opportunity to outline her views on education generally and the role and importance of independent schools in the NSW community. During her address the Premier made clear that she is a strong supporter of independent schooling and of choice for parents. In her comments she focused strongly on:

- support for students with a disability
- the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and the need for it to be at least equal in standard to the current NSW curriculum
- the importance of a level playing field for non-government schools with respect to school development and state planning regulations, and
- the need to ensure appropriate capital funding support for independent schools in light of expected population growth and the sector's role in catering for the increase in enrolments.

The Premier's address was very well received and the evening clearly demonstrated the good working relationship between the sector and the Keneally Government. I would like to thank those who attended the function and publicly express my appreciation to the Premier for taking the time out of her busy schedule to meet with representatives from the independent schools sector.

This year the AIS has hosted both the Premier and the NSW Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them between now and the NSW State Election in March 2011.

ISLC participants appointed as Principals

I would like to congratulate the Reverend Tim Bowden (St Andrew's Cathedral School) and Kristen Sharpe (St Mary Star of the Sea College) who have recently been appointed to principal positions for 2011. Tim has been appointed as principal at Inaburra School and Kristen at St Monica's College in Cairns.

Kristen was a participant in the 2009 Independent Schools Leadership Centre (ISLC) *Preparation for Principalship* program while Tim undertook the program this year. They join several of their ISLC program colleagues in being appointed to very senior roles in independent schools and we wish them both every success in their new leadership roles.

The 2011 ISLC calendar will be sent to all principals shortly and I encourage you to consider ISLC programs that may be of benefit in building leadership skills and leadership capacity among your staff. ISLC programs are tailored specifically for independent schools and are targeted directly at different levels of leadership within schools.

ISLC programs are available in both term time and non-term time and include two-hour Leading Insight presentations, whole-day Masterclasses and multi-day Foundation programs.

Financial Health Assessment Framework (FHAF)

I am very pleased to report that, following lengthy discussions and negotiations with DEEWR over the past two years or more, the Financial Health Assessment Framework has finally been discontinued by DEEWR. You will recall from previous communications that DEEWR sought to impose a 'financial viability' framework on all independent schools. This inappropriately assessed many schools as being financially vulnerable, with consequences for recurrent and program funding for those schools, as well as potential public disclosure that could harm a school's reputation.

While the initial framework was significantly altered to address many concerns of the independent sector about the process, the resulting framework remained flawed. Continued representations by the Independent Schools Council of Australia, with the support of the Associations of Independent Schools in each state and territory, finally resulted in senior officers of DEEWR agreeing to cease the FHAF process in its current form. Discussions will take place with the sector to ascertain appropriate methods of identifying schools that are truly financially unviable.

Schools that have been requested to provide information to DEEWR for the purposes of the FHAF are no longer required to do so. We are now seeking clarification from DEEWR as to whether the existing information collected will be destroyed and will keep schools informed of any further outcomes.

Australian Curriculum

On 23rd September the Chair of ACARA, Professor Barry McGaw, released a statement outlining the proposed implementation and publication of a range of Australian Curriculum matters. The main points included:

- The Australian Curriculum for Years K-10 for the learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history will be presented to the Council of Ministers of Education in December, instead of in October as originally planned.
- Once the curriculum is endorsed by Ministers it will be available for implementation by those jurisdictions and schools wanting to commence implementation in 2011. Ministers have agreed that the nature and timing of implementation is a matter for individual states/territories, as long as there is substantial implementation in all schools by the end of 2013.
- Along with the final curriculum content, in December ACARA will also publish the achievement standards, work samples and a range of information and curriculum planning resources to support schools in preparing for implementation.

In further clarifying the Australian Curriculum implementation arrangements in NSW, the Minister for Education, Verity Firth, and the Board of Studies recently stated that the curriculum will not be implemented in NSW until they are satisfied that the quality is at least equivalent to the current NSW curriculum. This reflects the concerns of many schools, principals and teachers' organisations and supports the view of the independent sector that any changes should only be made when the stakeholders are confident that there will be no adverse effect on the education of NSW students.

Schools MOU on computers

The AIS has entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding with the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Catholic Education Commission of NSW (CECNSW) for laptop returns between school systems and sectors.

The MOU eventuated due to the increasing use of laptops in schools as a result of the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund, and aims to facilitate the return of devices when a student moves between government, Catholic or independent schools. The AIS has entered into this agreement as independent schools are likely to benefit from having access to a means of retrieving equipment issued to students who leave the school. Schools are asked to do the following:

Relinquishing school

- Make reasonable attempts to retrieve the laptop from the student before he or she leaves the school,
- Make contact with the receiving school to request assistance in retrieving the laptop and the name of the contact in the new school to give to the parent,
- Agree on the method of return and reimbursement of associated costs, and
- On receipt of laptop arrange for timely reimbursement of costs.

Receiving school

- Agree to request and provide contact name,
- Inform the student that this process has been established to assist in the return of the laptop,
- Collect the laptop,
- Arrange for return and itemise costs,
- In the circumstance that the student refuses to return the laptop, inform the relinquishing school.

Compliance by independent schools with the terms of the MOU is voluntary but cooperation will be of great benefit to all schools. Queries about the MOU can be directed to Frank Brooks on (02) 9299 2845 or at fbrooks@aisnsw.edu.au

SenseAbility: mental health resource

The National Depression Initiative *beyondblue* will be releasing a program called *SenseAbility* in October 2010. *SenseAbility* is a strength-based resilience program, which is based on cognitive behavioural principles targeting 12-18 year old students. The kit consists of seven modules, a DVD, a CD containing copies of all resources and activities and a student journal.

The seven modules include the following:

1. Essential Skills - Helpful Thinking and Self Talk
2. Emotion Recognition and Regulation
3. Life Problem Solving
4. Communication
5. Planning
6. Time Management
7. Keeping Well

The modules focus on essential elements of positive mental health such as: self-worth; belonging; control; purpose; future; and humour.

The *SenseAbility* program is designed for teacher delivery and activities can be planned around 45 minute sessions. All secondary schools will be alerted to the release of the resource with an E-Postcard addressed to the Principal and wellbeing coordinator and will provide an email address for support in the delivery of the program. It is important to note that *SenseAbility* can be easily be used to complement the curriculum program in various KLAs such as English, HSIE, Drama, PDHPD, Religious Education and also within Pastoral Care programs.

For further information about the *SenseAbility* program, please contact Athena Vass, Program Manager-Secondary Schools at *beyondblue* on (02) 9810 6100.

Staff in Australia's Schools Survey

The Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) is conducting the *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey on behalf of the Commonwealth Government. Its focus is collecting information to improve teacher workforce planning and the survey has support from many key stakeholder groups including non-government school organisations such as ISCA and AHISA, other principals' associations, the Independent Education Union, teacher education institutions, and the ABS.

While ACER recognises that schools are asked to complete many surveys, this one is particularly important as it provides an opportunity for the views of principals and teachers to feed directly into planning the shape of the teacher workforce. To achieve this, the survey needs high response rates from the sampled schools and teachers to provide high quality, representative data. The survey is completed online, the data are confidential and no school or teacher will be identified.

Schools that have received a request from ACER are encouraged to participate in the survey, although participation is of course voluntary. The survey website is: www.acer.edu.au/sias

Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize

The Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize is presented each year to a student or students who have overcome significant hardship to attain academic excellence in their HSC. The award was established in 1993 by the Board of Studies in memory of Brother John Taylor, a distinguished member of the Board who made a significant contribution to education in NSW. To acknowledge his lifelong dedication to education and his commitment to the ideals of equity, the Memorial Prize recognises outstanding academic achievement by students despite disability or other disadvantage.

The prize comprises a cash grant, a trophy and a certificate recognising the award. Principals nominate students in December each year, and the prize is presented in February of the following year. While HSC results are not available until 15th December, teachers and principals are encouraged now to start considering students who may be eligible for the award. The prize comprises a cash grant, a trophy and a certificate recognising the award. There will also be a prize for nominated students. Inquiries should be directed to rebecca.lloyd@bos.nsw.edu.au

The closing date for nominations is 17th December 2010. For further information, guidelines and the nomination form, visit the BoS website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au and enter 'Brother John Taylor' into the 'Search' field.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO ADVISE THE AIS OF ANY CHANGES TO YOUR SCHOOL'S CONTACT DETAILS, INCLUDING CHANGE OF PRINCIPAL, BUSINESS MANAGER AND CHAIR OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL. CHANGES CAN BE EMAILED TO admin@aisnsw.edu.au

Dr Geoff Newcombe
Executive Director
1st October 2010