

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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2012 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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**Damascus College Ballarat Inc.**

**1412 Geelong Road, Mt Clear VIC 3350**

**Principal: Mr Matthew Byrne**

REGISTERED SCHOOL NUMBER: 0265

**2012 Annual Report**  
TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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## Our College Vision

### MISSION and VISION STATEMENTS: 2009 - 2015

#### Our Mission

Damascus College Ballarat strives to live the spirit of Jesus as reflected in the Gospel, providing quality learning opportunities for all students in a Catholic co-educational community.

#### Our Vision

Damascus College Ballarat is a dynamic Christ-centred learning community which values each member. The College offers learning opportunities which inspire and challenge students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community.

#### Our Values

At Damascus College Ballarat we value:

- our founding traditions and Mercy heritage
- a quality learning environment which enables students to achieve success and enhance their wellbeing
- a community of compassion, justice, pastoral care and responsible stewardship of our environment
- collaborative leadership
- quality resources that meet the needs of our students
- partnerships with the wider Catholic community, the local Ballarat community and other educational institutions.

## College Overview

The ongoing Damascus tradition is a proud one. This is a tradition that recognises the Sisters of Mercy, the Christian Brothers and the Priests and Parishes of Ballarat. All of these people have been and continue to be, great educators in a Catholic context of the young men and women of Greater Ballarat.

2012 was an important year in the life of the College as the school consolidated its place as a Year 7-12 secondary provider on one campus. Following the 2011 year where the College operated for the first time from a single campus, 2012 allowed an opportunity for structures that had supported the transition to be reviewed, infrastructure to support the College on one site to be consolidated and for the sense of community to be grown. 2012 also enabled the school community to bring learning and teaching into focus as the core business of a secondary learning community.

Throughout 2012 a leadership structure review was completed, a new leadership model confirmed and positions advertised and appointed. The review of this structure was strategic in bringing about the move to increase the focus on learning while maintaining the high standard of pastoral care across the College.

In this 18<sup>th</sup> year of operation we celebrate that we are a contemporary Catholic educational community. Our College is set in a beautiful setting with remarkable views and 22 Hectare/52 acres of bushland to enable a great learning environment free from external distractions. Damascus' preparedness to embrace change, forming and transforming to meet the needs of the young people of this region, has been the hallmark of this College.

Damascus College is a secondary school where a family with children of both genders can be educated together. In Catholic education this was unprecedented in Ballarat and Damascus College has become a school where Christian family values are reinforced and developed, where hopefully, our young people come to know and appreciate our Loving God.

This school community is one that responds to the learning needs of the individual and has a record for looking out for those in need.

We commenced the 2012 College year with 1031 students and 130 staff. We welcomed 200 new Year 7's through to 155 Year 12's.

Students in the senior levels selected from 3 senior certificates, 30 VCE subjects, 135 students are undertaking courses from 20 different Vocational certificates and 6 students were involved in school based apprenticeships.

The Teacher Advisor Program was strategically supported to become more established within the College. This program is informed by Canadian practices and provides pastoral and learning support structures to facilitate effective learning and teaching. Students continue to be a part of the strong House system that recognises our foundations being a part of McAuley, O'Collins, Xavier or Rice Houses.

The investment in infrastructure continued throughout 2012 with the new facilities being funded by the sale of the Victoria Street campus and generously made available by the Bishop and parishes of Ballarat. Mid-year we commenced using our newest facility which included eight flexible purpose learning areas, a performing arts classroom, an outdoor amphitheatre, locker space, a music classroom and a chapel.

In Term 4 we commenced the refurbishment of the original classroom block to bring all classrooms up to the quality of these new facilities. We continue to look to further develop our recreational spaces around the campus and explore the possibility of trade training spaces.

Our learning and teaching is something to be proud of. Damascus students move into society into the careers of their choice, confident in their own abilities, and able to contribute to a better Australia. This is testament to the contemporary learning opportunities and the commitment of the staff team at the College. The staff has been forthright in looking at their own areas for professional growth in order to bring about better learning outcomes for students.

2012 has been a year of wonderful achievements across the College. The leadership team of Sr Marie Davey, Gerard Macklin, Rod Mathews, Karen Simpkin, Paul Jans, Tony Haintz, Nick Yandell and Corrina Dichiera have laid the foundations for the contemporary learning opportunities and excellent pastoral support that is Damascus today. It is important to recognise their leadership over a time of enormous change and their willingness to be architects of a different structure to support the future of the College. The young men and women of this community who were the students of our College brought the energy and life to the buildings classrooms and beautiful grounds. They are Damascus College and hopefully they move forward from 2012 knowing that their loving God goes with them in all that they do, that they are well prepared for the future and that they feel confident in approaching their life-long learning with their Damascus secondary education as a basis for success.

## 2012 College Theme

For 2012 a theme was selected to link the importance of learning for everyone at Damascus to our calling as a Christian community.

Our theme was;

*Be wise, learn and remember God's teaching.*

When we started to look at the theme for 2012 we knew that as a community we needed to be explicit about learning at Damascus. It is the core business of any secondary college but it is one that we wanted to celebrate. We were also keen to find a theme that helped us "honour" the privilege that it is to have the quality of education that is provided here in Australia and here at this College. When we are wise, when we learn and when we remember God's teachings, we work together and we act with respect for our neighbour and our world. Then we work for good.

The book of Proverbs which is the source of our theme was written between 1000 and 600 years before Jesus was born. It was written to help people understand God and to teach about wisdom, justice and equity. The importance of learning and love of God has been important to people for thousands of years and we brought that firmly into focus at Damascus in 2012.

Acknowledgement must go to Sr Anne McMillan for her contribution to the image that brought our theme to life throughout the year.



## Principal's Report

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present this report to the Annual General Meeting of the Damascus College Ballarat Inc Board.

I wish to open by thanking the Board and the Governors for your continued faith in me.

I would also like to thank Sr Berenice Kerr and Fr Adrian McInerney for their ongoing guidance and support. I want to recognise the Governors, the Board Chair, Mr Martin Ryan and Deputy Chair, Mr Joe Cahir for the spiritual guidance, leadership and educational support they have offered throughout 2012 and continue to offer today.

I thank all the members of the Board for the affirmation, presence at College events and encouragement offered in 2012. I am appreciative of the time and effort given to the College by you all both formally and informally.

I believe 2012 has been a year of significant achievement for the Damascus community. The consolidation of the College as a one campus school on the Mt Clear site is well and truly achieved and I believe that within the educational arena of greater Ballarat, Damascus is genuinely being considered as a College of first choice by a greater number of families. Personally, I feel that 2012 allowed us the opportunity to create a new community after the excitement and anxiety of the campus consolidation. Students settled quickly to their changed existence, staff who had operated in different ways for many years accepted that the actuality of the change was the new reality in 2012. They were incredibly hard working and overwhelmingly supportive of what they could see was ultimately in the best interests of the future of the College. The enormous effort that was focussed on such a big change to geography and structure has been able to be incrementally turned towards improved student outcomes in 2012. There have been many elements of achievement over this year that are recorded within this report but I wish to highlight some that I believe significantly reflect the achievements of the year.

The Teacher Advisor program has continued to grow statistically in the College. Families are accepting their partnership with the College more readily and attendance rates at interviews were overall improved in 2012. Staff are increasingly recognising the benefits of ongoing relationships with families and students as a means of community growth. It continues to be a challenge to ensure recognition of positive learning and teaching outcomes as good pastoral care, but increasingly this is being acknowledged as a benefit of the program.

Student engagement was an area of significant concern in the 2010 Insight SRC data. It has been pleasing to see a marked improvement in this data in 2012. It would be wrong to attribute a single action to the improvement in this data, but I believe that increased collaboration by teachers on preparation of learning resources and a greater team based approach to lesson preparation is significantly attributable. Domain Leaders and the Head of Learning and Teaching worked consistently to increase the conversations about learning around the College. The development of a shared understanding of learning and teaching through an exploration of what it means for the College to provide opportunities to challenge and inspire young people to reach their potential, placed an important focus on the importance of learning. This was supported by the College theme drawn from the wisdom texts of the book of Proverbs; "Be wise, learn and remember God's teachings". All these different elements were strategically intended to bring to the fore the important nature of the learning and teaching process.

2012 was also a significant year as we worked to increase the evangelising mission of our community. Student participation in College Masses and Liturgies was respectful and reflected engagement. This is a source of significant pride to staff to see how the student population has progressed in this area over recent years, despite a falling Catholic enrolment. Damascus students and graduates have been

represented in the RCIA programs around Ballarat and I think that reflects well on our school. The parental feedback from the school review which highlighted that Damascus students could pass through the school without setting foot in a parish church was acknowledged. The work of Tony Haintz and the Year 7 Religious Education teachers to provide the opportunity for all students to join a weekday Mass and visit the Mercy convent in Victoria Street was one of the achievements of 2012. It was an experience that was well received at all levels. It was appropriate that throughout the year we had the opportunity to acknowledge and farewell Bishop Peter Connors, as well as welcome Bishop Paul Bird.

The review of the Positions of Leadership required significant additional attention of the leadership of the College throughout this past year. With the support of the Consultative Committee, educational consultants Helen Goode and John Marks were appointed to review the leadership structure that had supported the College across two campuses and work with the College to determine a model of leadership to carry the College forward into the future. The consultants designed models and responded to feedback before arriving at a model that met the demands of the College Leadership and the Consultative Committee. It was a wonderful reflection on the character and commitment to the College of the Leadership Team of 2011/12; Gerard Macklin, Karen Simpkin, Rod Mathews, Nick Yandell, Tony Haintz, Corrina Dichiera, Paul Jans and Sr Marie Davey, that they did not let self-interest influence the ultimate outcome of the review and they were all most generous and gracious in their contribution to developing the new model and their subsequent part in formulating role descriptions. Positions were advertised for the start of July and the appointments were made progressively across Semester Two. The new leadership model has attracted some excellent staff to the College and has also affirmed the skill level of the existing staff in leadership positions.

The College Musical "Annie" was a high point for anyone in the College who was able to witness the performance in 2012. That student talent was highlighted through the skill and generosity of staff in this event was excellent. The camaraderie amongst the cast and crew was wonderful and it again highlighted the strength of the Damascus College Dramatic Arts program.

We have been working to improve both the profile and achievement of Damascus in sport. The appointment of Matthew Rea as Head of Sport has proved a very positive decision. Student participation is increased in many areas of representation and the College experienced greater success in a number of BAS competitions. Clay Target Shooting was introduced as a new opportunity for Damascus students and it was well taken up by students with some students progressing to State Championships. Damascus entered a team of girls in the Nationals Basketball Competition in late December, with representatives from Years 7, 11 and 12. The girls made it through to the final of this competition and were beaten narrowly. This is a competition that the College will continue to seek representation at in the future.

Corrina's work promoting the College has been a great asset to the community. The quality of College publications, the increased presence in the media and the general presentation of the College is testament to Corrina's hard work and recognises the efforts of the students and staff.

The breadth of extra-curricular opportunities available to support young people to achieve their potential are enormous; camps, retreats, the Timor Leste immersion, the French LOTE trip, debating, public speaking, EBT, DaVinci Decathlon, Drama club, Chess club, Book club and the Green Group are but examples. These are just a small part of the educational experience alongside the activities that run within the respective learning areas.

The College has continued to develop its facilities such that Damascus is positioned to have the greatest capacity for diverse educational provision arguably in regional Victoria. Paul Jans' contribution to the overall development of the College has been enormous. We commenced using the buildings that were the legacy of the parishes, funded by the sale of Victoria Street, late in Term 2. These contemporary learning spaces offer opportunities for current and future learning at the College that has

not previously existed. Refurbishment commenced in Term 4 on the original classrooms and this will see the removal of the majority of portable classrooms from the site. It has been an exciting time in the development of the College and the patience of students and teachers is beginning to pay dividends.

Academically, the focus on providing opportunities for students to reach their potential has been important for us. We have been working to try and raise the performance of students within the VCE as well as providing graduate students with a skill set that enables them to move confidently into life beyond school. The work within classrooms is the core business of the College. It was pleasing to note an overall increase in the VCE data for the Year 12 cohort with the results of the entire cohort being positively skewed. Anna Farrelly–Rosch was Dux with a score of 97 and there was a much better distribution of scores in the 80's than there has been in recent years. Teaching is a challenging profession and it is important that I acknowledge those who drive the core purpose of our College and thank the teaching staff for the wonderful work that they do. I also thank our wonderful team of support staff alongside the teaching staff who enable the College to run so smoothly.

In closing I must acknowledge the exceptional work of the College Leadership team in their work to bring the College to one campus and to architect a future leadership structure in which several of them do not have roles. Paul Jans as Business Manager worked tirelessly to ensure the College is in a good physical and financial state. Damascus has again finished 2012 in a very healthy financial position and Paul's leadership in this area is greatly appreciated. Tony Haintz, Nick Yandell, Karen Simpkin, Gerard Macklin, Corrina Dichiera and Rod Mathews have been the people who have given students, their families and staff the confidence to move into the unknown and take on new and challenging experiences. Sr Marie has been and continues to be a living witness to the work of Catherine McAuley in our community and we all benefit from her enormous contribution.

I thank 2012 Board Chair Martin Ryan for his wonderful work within the community and for the enormous support he has been to me in this role. I have found a new way to benefit from Martin's support and it is working very well. I also thank all Board members for the wonderful contribution you have made to the life and culture of Damascus College Ballarat.

I know I am in a privileged role and one that tests my capabilities every day, but it is a vocation that I love and I feel as a community in 2012 we achieved great things for the young people of this area in a faith filled environment.

Many thanks,

Matthew Byrne

## Damascus College Board Report- Mr Joseph Cahir

The Damascus College Board has in the past 12 months continued to work hard to support and guide the College in a direction that enables it to most fully reflect the Mission of the College. The goals of the Strategic Plan; Catholic School Culture, School Community, Leadership and Management, Student Wellbeing and Learning and Teaching, have all provided direction by which this Board and Sub-Committees have invested their energies over this last year.

I am most grateful to Mr Martin Ryan who was our Board Chair at the start of this year. Damascus College has been extremely fortunate to have had Martin serve a number of years on the Board, on Sub Committees and eventually as the Chair of the Damascus Board. At the beginning of 2013, Martin joined the Damascus College staff in a leadership role and whilst we lost a very competent and hardworking Board Chair, the College certainly gained a valuable employee in Martin. I thank Martin for his guidance and help as I made the transition into the Chair.

The position as Chair of the Damascus College Board is not easily done without the help of a number of people. I am very lucky to have such a wide variety of Board members to work with. I thank them for their contributions throughout the year, their wisdom in making decisions on behalf of the College community and their generous participation in Board meetings, Sub Committees and special meetings. We have been very fortunate to have a number of new Board members in 2013 and I welcome Stephen Carey and Marnie Cooper and Jane Collins.

I have also appreciated the support of our Co-Governors of Damascus College, Fr Adrian McInerney and Sr Berenice Kerr. Their leadership, advice and wise counsel have been much appreciated and they have led us with impeccable wisdom and compassion.

The Damascus College Board also thanks the many members of both the immediate school community and the wider school community who give of their time and expertise as members of the Sub-Committees. The Sub-Committees play an extremely important role in supporting the Board, particularly in the area of Policy formation. The representatives from parents, friends of the College and staff have helped in the College working together as one community to strengthen ties and form strategic community connections. We have a number of new community members and staff joining our Sub-Committees this year and I welcome them and hope that they enjoy their work with assisting the Board of Damascus College.

The work throughout the year of Mr Matthew Byrne as Principal of the College has once again been outstanding. Matt has been ably supported by his leadership team and particularly Sr Marie Davey. I have been involved with Damascus College for well over a decade and have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Sr Marie for many years in many capacities as both a parent of the school and as a member of the wider Ballarat community. I thank Sr Marie and other members of the College leadership team for their commitment, enormous work ethic and support of Matt and the school throughout the year.

I also acknowledge and thank the teaching staff who have provided an extensive range of learning experiences for all the students of Damascus College. The Board would like to congratulate them on their efforts to embrace change, strive for excellence and advocate for those who most need support. It would be remiss of me not to also thank our Business Manager, Mr Paul Jans and all the support staff at the College. There are at times staff at the College who go about their work with little acknowledgement but perform minor miracles and whom the Board (and the Chair) could not manage without. Tina Munro, as the Principal's Executive Assistant is the conduit for the Board to the College leadership team and staff. Anyone who has sat around the Board table would acknowledge the enormous work that Tina puts in to keep the Board up to date with information for meetings, keeps us all on time, countless other small jobs and all with good grace and humour.

As I step down from the Chair and hand over to Mr Vin Dillon, I would like to wish the new Damascus College Board the best of luck and I thank God for all that he has blessed us with and pray that the coming year will bring grace and further blessings on all of us at Damascus College.

Mr Joseph Cahir

## Catholic School Culture

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

***Goal 1.1: to foster relationships based on respect, responsibility, honesty, truth***

#### Actions

- Return of House Council as a Social Justice Initiative

#### Achievements

After a hiatus because of the first year of the College on one campus, the revamped idea of House Council returned for two sessions in Term Two and Three of 2012. The fact that the entire College was on one campus enabled the use of Assembly time to hold the Teacher Advisor Group, Council and the House Councils that followed. In the relatively safe and affirming environment of TA, students were invited to raise issues of justice for Damascus young people at local, national and global levels. After discussing these, students were asked to nominate the most pressing of the issues and to suggest possible solutions. If the TA was concerned enough and there was someone in the TA passionate enough, then the issue was taken directly to House Council. These House Meetings were conducted concurrently and resulted in recommendations that were made available to the College community for further discussion and action. The process was presented at the SRC induction days at the end of 2012 ready for ongoing implementation in 2013. The House Council process has been part of an ongoing commitment to social justice and is designed to continue to develop and make explicit students social justice awareness so that they can make the links between their lived faith and actions to help others.

***Goal 1.2: to encourage active participation in the life, prayer and ritual of the Catholic Church.***

#### Actions

- Identify ways of connecting College families more closely with the local parishes: Year 7 students exposure to a Parish Mass & Mercy Induction activity
- Create an environment of prayer and liturgy to allow the community to engage fully in the experience

#### Achievements

The decision to increase student exposure to parish life came from the school review data where parents said that students of Damascus College had very little experience of liturgy within a traditional Church setting. This led us to strategically address opportunities for students early in their time at Damascus to take part in a parish weekday Mass. In the first term of 2012 a discussion was held with Fr Adrian McInerney, Governor and Parish Priest at St Alipius Parish, and also with the Sisters of Mercy at Ballarat East to enable each Year 7 Religious Education class to participate in a new program. Students attended the 9:30am Parish Mass and visited the Sisters of Mercy convent in Victoria Street. When possible, Fr Adrian was able to explain some of the elements of the Church and liturgy to the students. At the Convent, students undertook a visit to the chapel and had explained to them some of the symbols present. The days were well received by the students, their parents, the parish and the sisters.

Throughout 2012, Room 2106 was set up as a reflective prayer space while the Chapel space was completed in the new building. The prayer space was regularly used on Thursday morning for staff

prayer and RE classes also made some use of the space throughout the year. Staff confidence leading whole class liturgies, prayer and reflections will be developed in the future.

The physical structure of the Chapel was completed late in Term 2 but it has not been used formally until appropriately furnished. The architect was engaged to commission liturgical furniture for a launch in 2013. The College leadership were not happy with the early concepts provided by the architect for the space and sought out an alternative liturgical space designer. This has carried into the 2013 year.

Throughout 2012 the prayer space was able to be booked through the SIMON administration system. As the chapel becomes available, this will also be the case for the chapel.

The position of Sacristan will be facilitated by the Assistant Principal of Catholic School Culture in 2013 with the support of the Liturgy Coordinator under the College's new leadership structure.

The Remembrance Garden has not developed significantly throughout 2012 but it has undergone some restoration and planting of four McAuley roses from the students of McAuley House. It has not been used significantly within reflective prayer services.

***Goal 1.3: To ensure that our College heritage and traditions are valued.***

**Actions**

- To establish a Naming Policy to assist with the telling of the Damascus story through our environment and in our opening and blessing ceremonies.
- Develop a deepened understanding of the Diocesan Awakenings Religious Education Curriculum, ensuring that it is both engaging and challenging for students by holding regular year level meetings within the Religious Education faculty.
- Make the Mercy Heritage explicit on the front page of the College website & focus on the Mercy of God in the life of the House founders
- To use the terms "Catholic", "Social Justice", "Compassion" and "Mercy" in key signage
- Develop the Induction of staff in Catholic identity using qualified personnel
- Consider adding "Catholic" to Damascus College name and signs

**Achievements**

The Catholic School Culture sub-committee of the Board developed a Naming Policy that was promulgated throughout the year to address the naming of events, physical resources, scholarships, awards, spaces and other titled entities at Damascus College. The policy can be viewed on the College website.

Gina Bernasconi worked with RE staff at the commencement of the 2012 year to increase teaching staff's confidence in the use of the Diocesan Planning Tool. Awakenings Year Level Planning meetings

were subsequently held in the early weeks of each term throughout 2012, confirming the Planning Tool process and Assessment Strategies for the work at each year level. Some classroom visits by the RE Coordinator, followed by personal professional meetings were held to assess the process. The evaluation at the end of 2012 showed that units were being prepared in the Planning Tool, but that resourcing of units continues to be an issue as they cannot be housed within the planning tool. In 2013 online resource availability is being investigated for use.

From the review the recognition of our Catholic identity was considered to be highly tangible in the Mercy traditions of the College. As such it was decided to capitalise on the Mercy heritage of the College as a means of reinforcing the rich faith tradition of the school. The College website has been redeveloped throughout 2012. While the immediate presence of Mercy heritage is not evident on the home page, the Damascus cross has been strongly used throughout the new site. The graphics and specific information throughout the site strongly represent the Mercy heritage of the College. Further to the website the heritage is regularly and strategically reinforced through House days and general House meetings. The story of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy are an important part of the induction of all who are new to the College or in leadership roles. The naming of refurbished buildings offers the opportunity to further reinforce in the future.

The strategic intent to use the terms “Catholic”, “Social Justice”, “Compassion” and “Mercy” in key signage was to increase the understandings of *Social Justice*, *Compassion and Mercy* as lived expressions of a Christian education in a Catholic community. The strategic focus here was in response to students not recognising many of their actions as being those of caring, Christian people from the Insight SRC data. Throughout the year leadership and staff have taken the opportunity to increase the use of this language with students and staff to educate young people. At the same time as improving student understanding of these values was the opportunity to increase student awareness. A sample design and material were sought through the architect using a perforated metal screen for the display area on the second floor of the courtyard. Initial costing came in at \$60,000 prior to fitting. This has meant that this action has been delayed beyond the 2012 year due to grounds and capital funding being allocated to the new building. The graph at the end of this section reflects that efforts to increase awareness with students has had a significant impact and has actually increased staff awareness slightly too.

To develop the growth of staff in Catholic identity using qualified personnel, the annual College staff development day took place on Monday 16th July. Throughout the day the staff explored the College theme; Be Wise, Learn and Remember God’s teachings. Dr Elizabeth Dowling RSM who is a member of the Damascus College Board led the staff through the day as we explored what it means to be wise. Elements of wisdom that Sr Liz opened up for the staff included the wisdom that comes from being in the right relationship with all of creation; Sr Liz drew heavily on the wisdom texts in the Old Testament. As members of a Christian community we were challenged to cry out against injustice, just as the prophets did in biblical times and to be a voice to those who are suffering in silent agony; refugees and the displaced peoples of the world, victims of abuse, the homeless and destitute, our environment and indigenous people. Sr Liz taught passionately about Jesus and his example as a source of wisdom and we were given the opportunity to look at scripture as a place to learn more about God and wisdom throughout the Christian tradition. Finally, the living example of Catherine McAuley as a woman who was wise in her time and provides inspiration and wisdom for our time was explored as part of our catholic Mercy heritage. The day was concluded with College Co-Governor – Fr Adrian McInerney, celebrating Mass

The Broken Bay Institute again provided an e-Conference that the College made available to staff members on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October. The conference title, Vatican II An Event of Grace, marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the most recent council of the Catholic Church. In 2012, the College has moved to appoint an Assistant Principal for Catholic School Culture for 2013 and beyond whose significant task will be to the development of Catholic identity with the staff.

Following the recommendations of the school review, the Principal developed a discussion paper on changing the name of the College in consultation with the leadership team and the Catholic School Culture Sub-committee of the Board. This was presented to the Governors. The final position resulting from this discussion is yet to be determined.

***Goal 1.4: To ensure policies and programs reflect Gospel values, especially social justice.***

### **Actions**

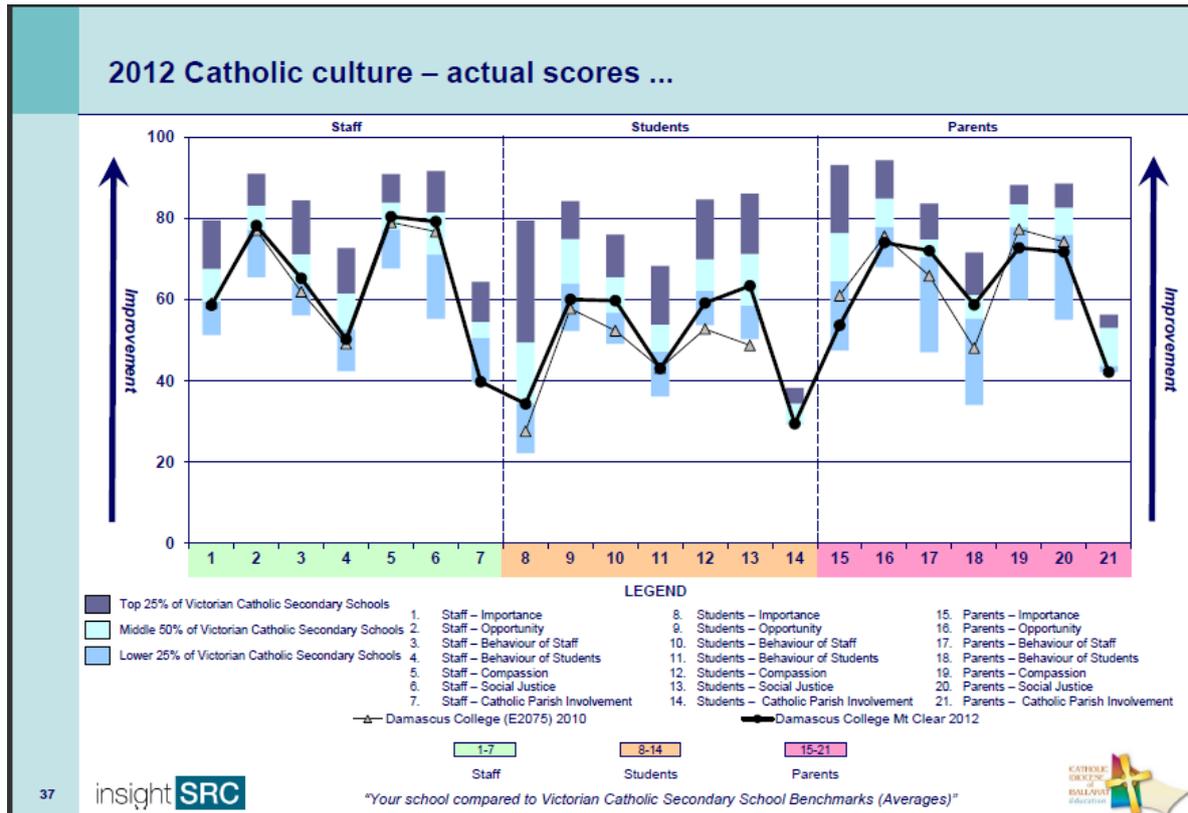
- Continue to develop and make explicit students' social justice awareness so students can make the links between Christian living and social justice
- To review the Social Justice Policy

### **Achievements**

Staff, and to a lesser extent, parents widely acknowledged in the 2011 school improvement feedback that the College provided excellent opportunities for growth in understanding of social justice issues and means for students to respond to this. Student responses to their education and understanding of social justice was however low. After exploring what may have contributed to this, it was determined that it was quite possibly the terminology that was used by adults, demonstrating their understanding of what it means to be socially just, where young people did not use the same language and so felt less confident when responding to these items.

Strategically, it was determined to make more of an effort to educate students and the broader College community about our Christian calling to act in a socially just way and why this is such an important element of a Damascus education. Opportunities have been exploited during whole school assemblies to educate as to why causes such as Project Compassion, Mercy Works, St Vincent de Paul, Timor Leste and Shave for a Cure are examples of how Christian people within this school community can respond to the needs of others within the world. The newsletter has been used as a medium to try and raise this with families and to try and stimulate discussion at the family level. Tony Haintz worked with the RE team of teachers to raise their awareness as educators and improve how they use language in this area and the importance to linking good works back to our Catholic faith identity or other Christian faiths.

The strategic goal to review the Social Justice Policy was not fully achieved within 2012. The policy review commenced in Term 3 but will carry into 2013.



## Learning & Teaching

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

**Goal 5.1: to ensure that the Gospel values permeate all learning and teaching experiences.**

#### Actions

- Facilitate staff PD opportunities in current understanding of our Mercy Tradition

#### Achievements

Within the Catholic School Culture report the whole staff PD has been addressed in the area of Catholic Identity. Therese Sheedy, as an independent teacher educator worked with the Damascus staff team on Restorative Practices as a framework for right relationships in dealing with challenging behaviours. Restorative practices draws on the tradition of reconciliation as a means of resolving conflict, it also helps teachers see that each young person needs a framework of care and support as they go about their learning. This was the focus of the staff meeting on April 16 and Therese also presented a training session for 2013 House leaders and selected other staff in November 2012. Planning is in place for training for Assistant House leaders in early 2013. The staff Faith Development day held on July 16 was led by Sr Elizabeth Dowling on the role of "Wisdom" in the Catholic Tradition. Sr Elizabeth is a Sister of Mercy and she provided concrete examples of how as people of Mercy members of the Damascus community could live the Gospel values.

***Goal 5.2: to create independent thinkers with enthusiasm for learning.*****Actions**

- Build team planning and shared teacher preparation to improve student engagement within the classroom
- Work on improving VCE outcomes
- Review inter-disciplinary strand of VELs in light of AusVELs

**Achievements**

Domain Leaders were acutely aware of the relatively low levels of student engagement in the junior school and were determined to have an increased emphasis on collegial planning in 2012. This was facilitated through arranged release time for teams of teachers to work collaboratively on unit review and development. The Maths Domain sought for all of the Year 9 Mathematics classes to be blocked within the timetable to enable greater team delivery and student ownership of the curriculum. English teachers worked hard to review their learning in light of the National Curriculum and they delivered a two week program in Year 9 related to one of their texts where students rotated between different classrooms and student engagement and satisfaction was increased. Given the overall awareness of this as an issue it is pleasing to see the student data in the graph at the end of this section universally improved.

In 2012 the College built on the experience of 2011 and again conducted formal practice exams during the Term 3 holiday. All Unit 3/ 4 students were expected to sit papers in all their subject areas, both to ensure that they had an appreciation of the amount of preparation they still needed to do, and to allow them to experience exam conditions. An official VCE supervisor was employed and teachers volunteered their time to assist with supervision. There was an increase in the number of students who attended these exams compared with 2011. Our 2012 Year 12 results were positively skewed and generally showed an improvement on 2011.

Although no definitive standards in regards to the inter-disciplinary strand of VELs have been provided by the VCAA at the time of writing, Damascus College has a set of planning templates for subjects making the transition to the National Curriculum and these have been used during curriculum writing for 2013. These templates are being used for planning in History, Science, Maths and English. They include reference to the General Capabilities as defined by ACARA.

***Goal 5.3: to contribute to the development of the student as a whole person*****Actions**

- Review the College camp program to look at the overall plan, progression of skills and links to the curriculum

**Achievements**

There has been some initial discussion of how curriculum can be linked into the College camp program. A future direction could be to explicitly link the General Capabilities from AusVELs into the program and how to report on it through the camp program. In addition the possibility of moving the Year 8 camp to one week, rather than being run over two weeks, is still under investigation but has been deferred for possible implementation for 2014. The camp review will form part of the 2013 strategic plan.

***Goal 5.4: to work collaboratively with individuals, families and the wider community to enhance learning outcomes***

**Actions**

- This was not a targeted area for development in 2012

***Goal 5.5: to challenge staff and students to strive for excellence***

**Actions**

- Staff work together using the school vision to develop a shared understanding of Learning and Teaching
- Using the shared vision of Learning and Teaching to develop engaging and differentiated curriculum
- Work on improving VCE outcomes

**Achievements**

Over the first semester of 2012, Learning and Teaching Coordinator, Nick Yandell worked with the Domain Leaders to develop a shared understanding for Learning and Teaching across the teaching staff. The leaders used the school vision statement as a key reference point and focussed on the word “potential” to gain a common understanding of the phrase “the College offers learning opportunities which inspire and challenge students to reach their potential.” Initially, Domain Leaders met to establish a common understanding of the word “Potential”. This was further explored with the whole staff at a meeting. From this six different elements of potential were determined by the Domain Leaders; Intellectual, Social, Creative, Physical, Spiritual, Emotional potential. Over the next six months a document was worked on across all domains to gain a greater understanding of learners and their potential. The ensuing document that was launched with the staff in second semester and is intended to be used as a reference point when curriculum writing to ensure that young people have the full opportunity to develop their potential as they mature at Damascus College. This was a significant task by Domain Leaders throughout 2012 and a real factor in raising the awareness of different learning in the classroom to assist student engagement.

Building on the work done by Domain Leaders the staff in Maths, Science, English and History have used planning guidelines linked to AusVELS and our Shared Vision of Learning and Teaching to evaluate existing curriculum and design new units for 2013. These units have been necessary as Damascus has begun to use the AusVELS in 2013.

Following data analysis over recent years Damascus students appear to have performed below expected levels in the VCE English subjects that they have undertaken. This was further reinforced by school reviewer Pam Burton who asked why Damascus students undertook VCE English Language as a subject. Following much discussion within the English Domain and with the College Leadership Team the strategic decision for all Year 11 students to undertake VCE English in Unit 1 and 2 has been made compulsory for all students. This has been introduced to ensure the ongoing strength of the English program, where students are attempting only a single English study, to ensure that they are competing against peers of a more comparable ability rather than against those who are studying multiple English

studies. Damascus students are encouraged to undertake the more challenging subjects of Literature and English Language as multiple studies of English in 2013.

### ***Goal 5.6: to facilitate individual pathways that enable student success***

#### **Actions**

- To begin to implement the objectives of Local Solutions Year 12 Retention Fund
- To utilise the TA program across the school to help students make better informed subject choices
- To improve information available to students about the study options available to them
- Revise processes for exiting students

#### **Achievements**

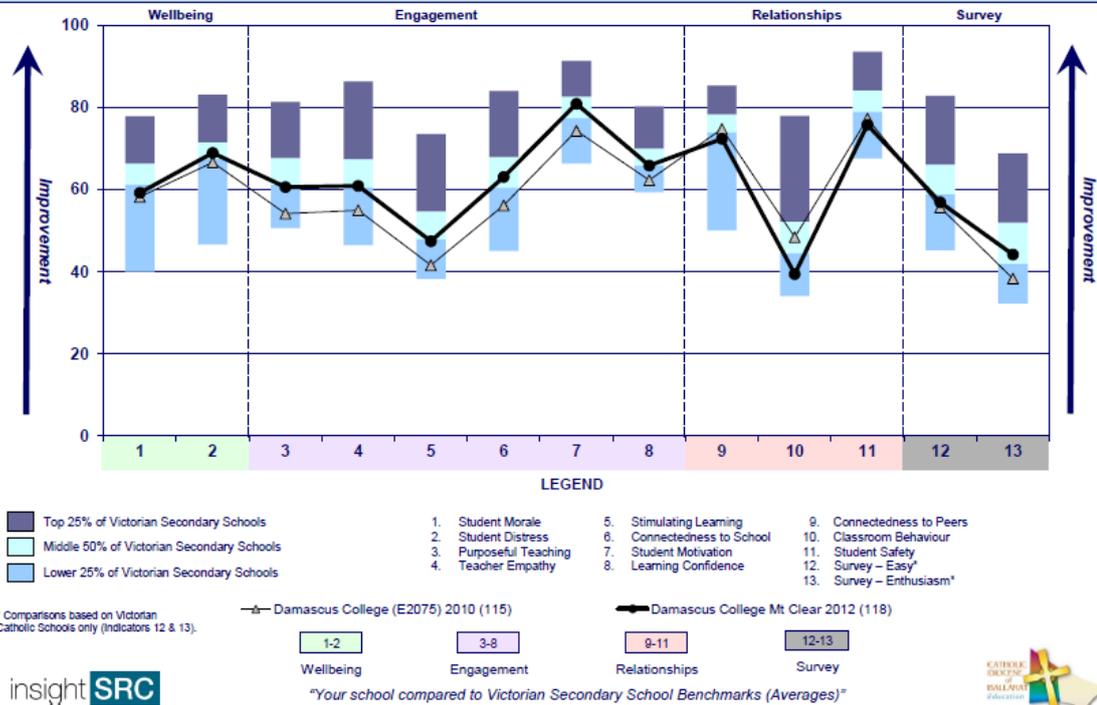
Following the successful application for funding, an appointment was made for a project officer in the area of student retention for 2012/2013. Initially, much of the effort of the Local Solutions Year 12 Retention Fund project has been focussed on the VCAL program and developing a more functional environment for these students. One of the objectives of the program was to develop a more engaging Applied Learning Space – this was partially completed for the commencement of 2013. Ground work has been done on establishing flourishing partnerships with five businesses over the first semester of 2013. Significant work was achieved in support of the Careers Coordinator with making the Career Voyager software available to Humanities students in Year 10 to increase their understanding of available pathways beyond secondary school. Significant work was also undertaken by the project officer to support Structured Workplace Learning. This project will continue in 2013.

In 2012 the fourth TA interview had a change in focus to future planning by focussing on student pathways and required subject selections. This was highlighted as the focus of the Term 3 interview. Generally, this interview which focussed on subject selection was well received by the families of students in Years 8 – 11, but more needs to be done to ensure that it is also valuable for families with students in Year 7 and in Year 12. Staff also felt that they needed further education and preparation for this round of interviews. Relative to the other interviews throughout the year this was the most poorly attended and this was attributed to low relevance for the year levels identified. In 2013 the fourth TA interview will again have the same focus, however there will be greater and more specific preparation for students in Year 7 and Year 12.

In conjunction with the TA interviews, the first Year 9 “Taster Day” ran in July, with all Year 9 students offered a short experience of the range of subjects for Year 10 and the pathways they create. It was a successful day, with students responding well and generally feeling better informed as a result of their experience. Plans are in place to increase this to Year 9 and 10 “Taster Day” for 2013. A Parent/Student information evening followed the Taster Day with formal information given to parents of Year 9 and Years 10 & 11 and informal information available to all levels through staff discussion.

Building on the work of the school review it was determined that the College needed to have a better understanding of students that exited the College, their destinations and what learning was available for school practices from their experience of Damascus. A revised exit form and processes was developed by the Pathways Team in line with DEECD requirements and College needs. The structures and procedures have been developed for implementation in 2013.

### 2012 student attitudes to school – actual scores ...



35

insight SRC



Changes in the minimum Standards or Minimum Standards-NAPLAN	2010	2011	2012
YEAR 7 READING	97.6%	97.9%	95.7%
YEAR 7 WRITING	93.6%	87%	91%
YEAR 7 SPELLING	94.2%	93.8%	90.4%
YEAR 7 GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION	89%	95.8%	97.3%
YEAR 7 NUMERACY	97%	97.3%	96.8%
YEAR 9 READING	95.3%	96.7%	90.8%
YEAR 9 WRITING	94.7%	80.6%	80.1%
YEAR 9 SPELLING	89.9%	89.9%	87.6%
YEAR 9 GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION	93.5%	93.5%	92.5%
YEAR 9 NUMERACY	93.2%	93.2%	98.6%

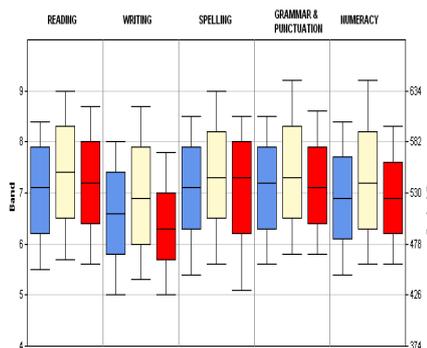
YEARS 9-12 STUDENT RETENTION RATE

75 %

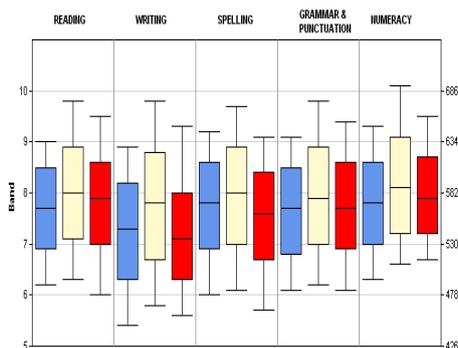
MEDIAN NAPLAN RESULTS FOR YEAR 9	
YEAR 9 READING	5.21
YEAR 9 WRITING	0
YEAR 9 SPELLING	4.49
YEAR 9 GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION	4.63
YEAR 9 NUMERACY	4.6

Students in Year 7 and 9 completed NAPLAN tests during 2010-2012

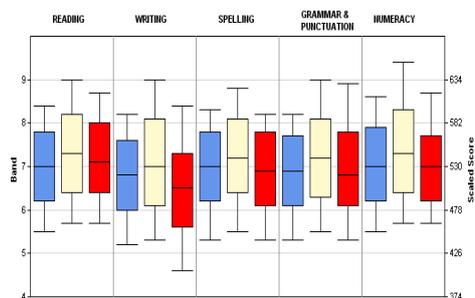
Year 7 2012



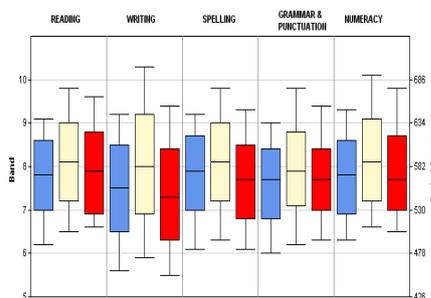
Year 9 2012



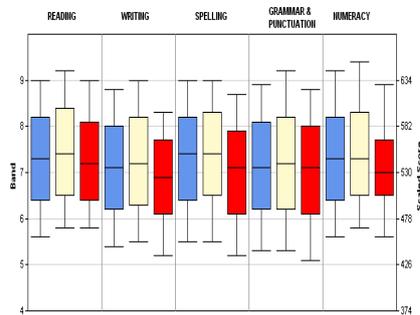
Year 7 2011



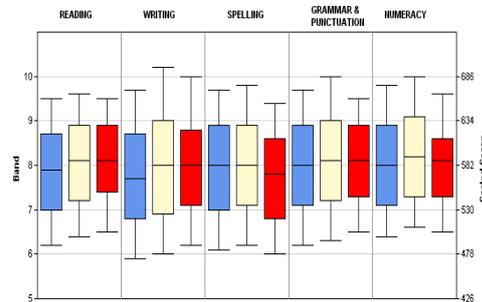
Year 9 2011



Year 7 2010



Year 9 2010



SENIOR SECONDARY OUTCOMES

VCE MEDIAN SCORE	27
VCE COMPLETION RATE	98 %
VCAL COMPLETION RATE	89.29 %

POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

TERTIARY STUDY	40%
TAFE / VET	11%
APPRENTICESHIP / TRAINEESHIP	8%
DEFERRED	13%
EMPLOYMENT	23%

## Student Wellbeing

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

***Goal 4.1: to provide a pastoral care system at Damascus College that will be well-resourced, responsive to student need and built on a model of Mercy and Restorative Justice.***

#### Actions

- Develop and implement a whole school approach to Restorative Practices
- Develop teacher protocols for student management based on inclusivity, respect and cooperation

#### Achievements

Restorative Practices has been the foundation of the approach to Behaviour Management at Damascus College for some years. It was determined for 2013 that while this approach continued to serve the College well, it needed to be reinvigorated as there had been significant staff turnover and only elements of the framework were being utilised. In order to achieve the goal of a whole school approach to restorative practices, independent teacher educator, Therese Sheedy was engaged to deliver an informative presentation on Restorative Practices for the staff. Due to various forms of staff leave, there was only 85% staff attendance; at this seminar several staff have further inducted in 2013.

The introduction of the principles of Restorative Practice to students was postponed until a core team (2013 Wellbeing Team) was trained. This training occurred in Term 4. "Behaviour Made Easy", a way of implementing Restorative Practice as a reflective approach for students was introduced to these key staff. Principles of Restorative Practice were added to the Parent Information handbook for 2013 as a means of informing parents of the benefits of this framework and how it is used by the college. Further discussion in regards to the analysis of Behavioural Tracking reduction needs to take place as to its appropriateness as a measure of success of Restorative Practices.

In order to achieve protocols for teachers a number of activities took place throughout 2012. Rod Mathews worked with staff to achieve a set of protocols regarding how to appropriately record behaviours using the levels within Behavioural Tracking. Further to this the work done with the whole staff to become familiar with Restorative Practices was designed to enrich the protocols based on inclusivity, respect and cooperation. The ongoing efforts to gain Mind Matters accreditation were sustained to ensure the college continued to look out for students' emotional and physical wellbeing. A MindMatters survey was completed during Term 2 which gathered data from students, staff and parents. Following the survey a report was prepared during Term 3. The wellbeing team finalised this report late in 2013 and the final report and submission to MindMatters was to be completed in Weeks 1-3 of 2013 to enable Damascus College to become a fully accredited MindMatters school.

***Goal 4.2: to develop student leadership and participation at all levels.***

#### Actions

- Review the student leadership model currently used

## Achievements

The College Leadership Team initiated some discussion on this review but did not action it in 2012.

### ***Goal 4.3: to provide a safe and welcoming physical environment.***

## Actions

- Create a contemporary classroom environment to support engaging learning within the College
- Create additional specialist facilities for Performing Arts
- To continue to develop the grounds to improve the college amenity

## Achievements

Throughout 2010 and into 2011 the College worked with Law's Architects to develop the stage three buildings to support the College learning program. Eight General Purpose Learning Areas (GPLA) were designed that are flexible in their use. These rooms provide breakout opportunities and have the scope for team teaching. They maintain a strong visual connection and allow for improved group work and support student engagement. The rooms are light, climate controlled and invigorating.

This facility is built adjacent to Building 3 which houses the existing Performing Arts program and auditorium. The new facility incorporates a large music classroom space, instrumental rooms, recording studio and drama studio that provides scope for dance into the future. An undercover lunch and recess area is also available recreationally for students, as well as an outdoor amphitheatre. These excellent facilities became available to the College during Term 2 of 2012.

Pam Burton was brought back to the College to work on furnishing and using flexible learning spaces.

Planning and preparation was completed for the refurbishment of the original Damascus classrooms to provide an additional 14 GPLA that are flexible and contemporary to house predominately the classes of students in Years 7 and 8. These works commenced in Term 4 of 2012.

Works to improve the College grounds continue with the surface of the outdoor courts being undertaken over the Summer break of 2012/13 to provide an all-weather surface. The scope of the refurbishment of Building 4 was extended to include refurbished toilets and new change rooms for boys and girls. The new girls' toilets and change rooms were available for the commencement of the 2013 school year. Significant works were undertaken to establish the Horticulture facility. Road works and bus shelters were completed and roads were sealed and edged in the vicinity of the new Year 9 classrooms.

### ***Goal 4.4: to provide opportunities for participation in activities that support family and student wellbeing.***

## Actions

- Source appropriate wellbeing speakers to provide support for families and students
- Student Harassment and Bullying Policy reviewed and launched

## Achievements

The Leadership Team worked with the Wellbeing and School Community sub-committees of the Board to determine appropriate speakers to support students and their families. In 2012, the College Counsellor, Fran McCarty organised a Guest Speaker from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Mr Greg Gebhart for November 2012 to give a presentation to parents and staff. Greg worked with Students of Years 7 and 8 to ensure that they are safe when using ICT. Greg also worked with parents on strategies to keep children safe online and to prevent ICT becoming a problem within the family home. Greg has been booked to return again to the College in 2013 to work with all students and Damascus families. Preparation was also undertaken in 2012 for a major presentation by educational speaker and parenting expert, Michael Grose for a presentation to be held in March 2013.

Throughout 2012 the Student Wellbeing sub-committee of the Board reviewed the Student Harassment and Bullying Policy. It was determined that to have the policy and not bring it appropriately to students' attention would be a missed educational opportunity. The Wellbeing team engaged a guest presenter Lucy Thomas, of a group called Project Rokit to re-launch the policy at a whole school assembly. The focus of the assembly was about saying no to bullying and empowering young people to stand against it.

AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL	%
Year 7	94.62
Year 8	94.40
Year 9	92.16
Year 10	91.00
Overall average attendance	93.05

- Damascus has continually promoted the importance of attendance in optimizing student achievement. A daily process for communication with families is used where notification is not made of student absence. Where students have displayed regular non-attendance attempts are made to liaise with the family and determine the cause of non-attendance. In extreme cases where truancy issues cannot be resolved by the school the CEO and the DEECD are notified and the designated guidelines for students with regular non-attendance are adhered to.*

## STUDENT SATISFACTION

On page 17 of the report is the table of data from the student responses to their attitudes to the school. It is pleasing to note that the data for both well-being and engagement are significantly improved and now fall into the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of all schools. That there has been a decline in the relational elements is disappointing, particularly behaviour in the classroom. Anecdotally we would feel that this is improved on 2 years ago. Discussion at a leadership level has reflected that increased expectation of higher levels of student conduct also draws greater awareness to incidents of inappropriate conduct. This is something that we will continue to monitor in 2013.

Year 12 students were surveyed on their reflection of their final years and the feedback was largely positive. Additionally Year 7 parents were surveyed with very positive feedback on their children's learning experience.

## Leadership & Management

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

***Goal 3.1: to encourage all staff to share leadership in a supportive and transparent educational environment.***

### Actions

- Identify forms of staff professional development related to current understandings of leadership
- To improve role clarity and communication throughout the College
- To investigate an appropriate appraisal model for evaluation and development

### Achievements

Professional learning opportunities are regularly identified and offered to staff in leadership roles. These included shared readings and discussions, as well as external PD. Professional development opportunities of significance included a number of staff (including those in senior leadership positions) undertaking induction into the Mercy story run by Carmel Crawford at Apollo Bay. Post Graduate qualifications supported by the College and completed in 2012 include; the Principal, Matthew Byrne completing post graduate certificate in Religious Education through ACU; Librarian, Loretta Kaval completing her Masters in Theology through ACU; House Leader, Sallie Burke-Muller completing her Masters in Student Wellbeing through the University of Melbourne. Nick Yandell as Learning and Teaching Coordinator and appointed to the Assistant Principal of Learning and Teaching in 2013 commenced the Aspirant Principal program run by Atkinson Consulting. Learning Area Leaders for 2013 in Humanities, English, Science and Humanities attended a two day conference in Adelaide on preparation for the National Curriculum. School Coordinators and House Leaders attended multiple Wellbeing seminars and conferences throughout 2012 targeted at their leadership of staff and wellbeing of students. Staff appointed to 2013 Leadership positions were asked to identify their professional development needs for the coming year as part of their individual performance plan.

External reviewers were employed to review the leadership structure of the College with a view to redevelopment of the 2013 – 2015 Position of Leadership (POL) structure. With the development of the new leadership structure, role descriptions for all Positions of Leadership have been written and used for the selection of individuals who have been appointed to these roles. Lines of accountability have been included in these roles as well as Key Performance Indicators. All are designed to improve the clarity of the role and make clear who has what responsibility and accountability across the College. This was a major undertaking throughout 2012.

One of the significant elements of the restructure of the Positions of Leadership (POLs) across the College was an emphasis on the development of teachers as a key mechanism for improving student outcomes. The introduction of a Professional Practice team was determined to be a means of achieving improved teacher development. The Professional Practice Team has been appointed for 2013. External funding has been sought and awarded to enable the involvement of an external consultant and some opportunities to visit other sites to explore models of appraisal and development. It is hoped that an appropriate and staff supported model will begin to develop a pilot.

***Goal 3.2: to ensure that leadership at all levels in the College is active and supportive.***

### **Actions**

- Review the Positions of Leadership across the college and appoint to those positions for the 2013 school year
- Develop appropriate protocol for written communication in the college ensuring staff are familiar with the protocol
  - Establish a Clear communication plan
  - Ensure open and ongoing communication between staff and leadership

### **Achievements**

A full and thorough investigation of possible leadership structures to support Damascus as a College on a single campus was the brief given to consultants Helen Goode and John Marks of Goode Consulting. They began a process in Term 4 of 2011 to collect information on the existing structure and future possibilities by conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders. They presented their preliminary findings prior to the completion of the 2011 year. Preliminary models were developed and these were refined over the first semester of 2012 and the final model and role descriptions were presented to the Consultative Committee where they were ratified. Positions were advertised nationally for short listing and appointing in Term 3. The process attracted a broad field of candidates and attracted some very capable leaders to several of the middle management positions. Damascus staff were also affirmed in their skill set by being appointed to significant positions within the College.

Streamlined processes and protocols for staff to communicate to leadership and for leadership to feed back to staff were developed and implemented through 2012 this is further expanded on in the School Community Report.

***Goal 3.3: to provide programs that promotes and affirms staff and student achievement***

### **Actions**

- Create formal processes which affirm staff/student achievements

### **Achievements**

In late 2011, a committee was formed to review the existing awards and achievement structure at Damascus College. The Awards Review Committee met regularly during Terms 1 and 2 in 2012 to discuss awards and achievement recognition at the College and formed a new structure to be implemented in 2012 and beyond. A document outlining the revised awards and achievement structure for Damascus College was prepared and reviewed following the changed format. It was determined to run the Awards and Achievement evening in 2012 at the Wendouree Performing Arts Centre. The changed awards process recognises five main streams of awards and achievement:

1. Class Awards
2. After School Sporting Awards
3. General Awards
4. Academic, Endeavour and Sporting Awards
5. Scholarships and other Special Awards

Throughout 2012, the College was awarded \$53,500 under the Empowering Local Schools initiative. The focus areas were to

- establish new and/or improved Staff Review and Appraisal mechanisms
- providing professional learning opportunities to support better understanding of student and school performance data analysis

Throughout 2012, planning was put in place to develop the College's professional practice team who will lead the rollout of the other aspects of the funding in 2013.

***Goal 3.4: to develop a mentor and modelling program for leadership in the College.***

**Actions**

- Build a culture of staff accountability to ensure student progress is improved, understood, tracked and evaluated.

**Achievements**

The introduction of the Professional Practice Team through the revised leadership structure is framed to provide support and accountability for teachers and leaders in their respective roles. In 2012 significant time was spent on the best strategies to implement such a culture and it was determined that a team approach would be most effective. Within that team a mixture of teaching experience across the different year levels, a competency with learning technologies and a record of exceptional classroom practice were all key criteria in appointing to that team. This is further expanded in other areas of this report.

***Goal 3.5: to develop appropriate management and Governance structures***

**Actions**

- Liaise with the Board in its review of Board structures – evaluation of the implementation of Board Sub-committees

**Achievements**

Throughout 2012 the Board looked at the composition of the sub-committees and developed an information document to assist prospective members of the sub-committees in making a decision to be involved. General board meeting organisation was reviewed and a structure that required all items to be addressed through the course of the meeting to be 'starred' was introduced. This was done to expedite meetings and to allow appropriate time for listed items of General Business. Board members sought a review of the constitution, which is to be followed through in 2013. Membership of the subcommittees was reviewed and recruitment planned for in 2013. Board and Leadership Team representation on the sub-committees was required to be reviewed in light of the changes school structures and changing Board personnel.

TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE	91.69%
STAFF RETENTION RATE	86.9 %

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
DOCTORATE	0 %
MASTERS	18%
GRADUATE	42%
CERTIFICATE GRADUATE	2%
DEGREE BACHELOR	27%
DIPLOMA ADVANCED	8%
NO QUALIFICATIONS LISTED	3%

### EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

#### DESCRIPTION OF PL UNDERTAKEN IN 2012

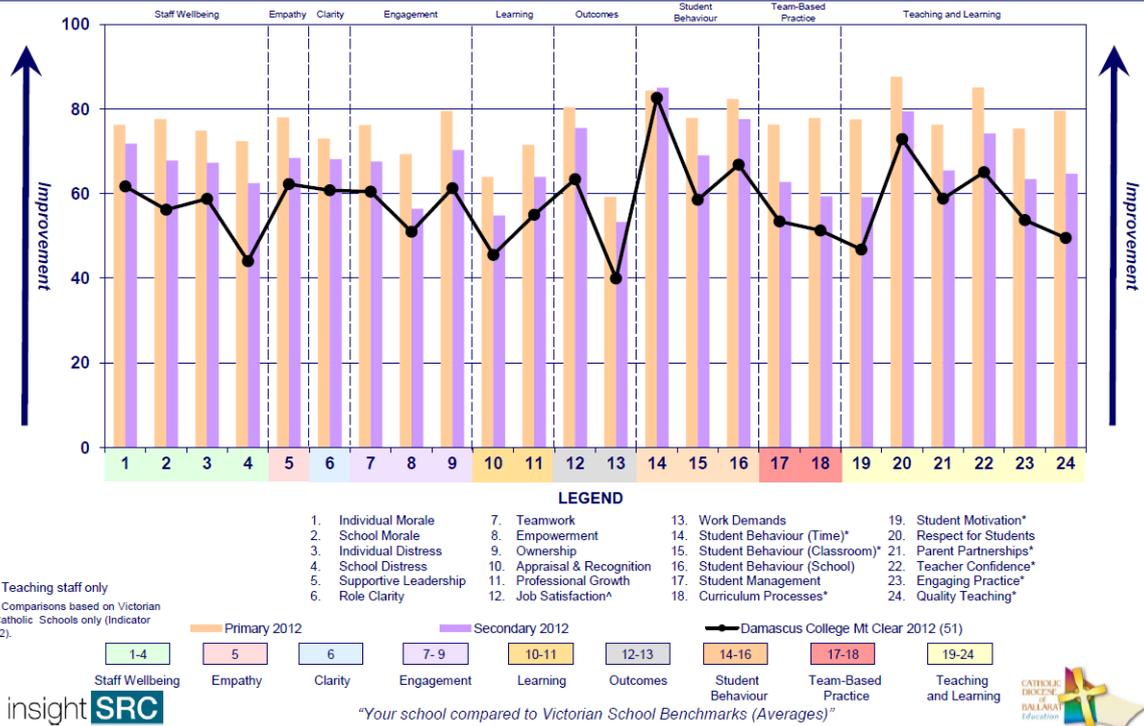
Extensive professional learning opportunities exist for staff across the College. Greater detail is provided about Catholic School Culture professional learning on pages 9-13 and on higher level qualifications on page 22 of this report.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PL	89
AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER TEACHER FOR PL	\$2124.95

### STAFF COMPOSITION

PRINCIPAL CLASS	2
TEACHING STAFF (HEAD COUNT)	89
FTE TEACHING STAFF	77.38
NON-TEACHING STAFF (HEAD COUNT)	42
FTE NON-TEACHING STAFF	32.31
INDIGENOUS TEACHING STAFF	0

### 2012 staff climate – actual scores ...



### TEACHER SATISFACTION

It is disappointing that while the strategic intent has been to increase student engagement, the consequence of these improved outcomes, has been decreased staff satisfaction. Some factors may be, increased accountability which is pleasingly, reflected in improved team planning and collaborative preparation. Anecdotally, the uncertainty of impending leadership appointments and the changed leadership structure may have contributed to the increased levels of distress experienced by staff at the time data was collected. In 2012 there was also a much lower rate of return of staff data due to inaccurate distribution of Insight SRC and a level of autonomy given to staff to complete the survey which was not effective.

## School Community

### Goals & Intended Outcomes

***Goal 2.1: to promote the mission of the Church through building closer links between the College and parishes and parish schools.***

#### Actions

- Complete Catholic primary school visits, commenced in 2011
- Develop and implement a College Communication and Marketing Plan
- Offer transition visits to all local Catholic Primary Schools annually
- Ensure all parish priests and Sisters of Mercy are invited to College Masses
- Develop program for interaction between parish schools and the College above and beyond the existing transition program

#### Achievements

The Principal and Development Officer commenced visits to the Catholic feeder primary school principals in 2011 and completed these visits in 2012 (St Michael's Daylesford was the only school not visited due to time constraints). In 2012 the College also hosted a Catholic primary school principal's network meeting during the year. This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase Damascus College to primary principals.

In 2012 Damascus College also introduced a number of initiatives to increase interaction between local parish primary schools and the College. In 2012, Damascus offered transition visits to all local Catholic Primary School Grade 5 students. Previously, transitions visits were only offered every second year. This offer was taken up by 12 primary schools and will be offered to all schools again in 2013. Damascus also introduced a one page newsletter known as "Damascus In Touch" which was sent out to local Catholic primary schools as well as Black Hill, Buninyong and Mt. Clear Primary Schools twice in 2012. This newsletter gave current news about Damascus. As a College we have also regularly extended invitations to the Sisters of Mercy and the parish priests of Ballarat and district to attend College events. Lastly, Damascus has developed a Communications Strategy which sets out a program of communication between the College and students, parents, past students, local primary schools, the parishes and the Ballarat community.

***Goal 2.2: to become an environmentally sustainable College***

#### Actions

- Formation of Sustainability Committee
- Develop procedures document based on Sustainability Policy
- Implement a recycling program
- Undertake an energy and water audit

- Implement other procedures to improve environmental sustainability

## Achievements

In 2012, Damascus College introduced a time release allocation of 3 periods per fortnight for Sustainability Co-ordinator. This was in line with the requirements of the policy which was ratified in 2011. This staff member formed a Sustainability Committee comprising teachers and a Green Group comprising interested students. Damascus College also signed up to the SETS (School Environment Tracking System) program in Term 1 2012 and has been working towards the Core Module and the Waste Module of this program. Damascus signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Highlands Regional Waste Management Group in Term 1 for a trained facilitator to assist Damascus with these two modules of the Resource Smart AuSSi Vic Program.

During 2012 the Sustainability Co-ordinator compiled a Strategic Environment Management Plan which sets out a strategic action plan and procedures for the College. An Energy Audit was also undertaken in December 2011/January 2012; noting actions the College can take to reduce energy consumption. A report on "Sustainability in the Damascus Curriculum" was submitted to Resource Smart AuSSi Vic in Term 2. This document outlines the current and potential ways in which sustainability is and can be incorporated across the curriculum. A 10 kilowatt solar system was also installed at the College in June 2012, funded by the Federal Government. A paper recycling program was trialled in Term 4 2012 and will be implemented across the College in 2013, followed by an expanded program to include glass, plastic, aluminium and food waste later in 2013. Damascus also joined up to the Schools Water Efficiency Program (SWEP) and can now monitor its water consumption via a data logger, which alerts the school promptly to any spikes in water consumption.

### ***Goal 2.3: to actively engage parents in the College community***

#### **Actions**

- Volunteer Policy to be reviewed by Sub-Committee and procedures subsequently developed
- Group to be formed to develop procedures relating to implementation of Parental Engagement Policy
- Formation of Parents and Friends Committee. Committee given a fundraising target each year
- Arrange 1 x guest speaker to speak on current and relevant topics to whole of school community (see Student Wellbeing)
- TA and subject teacher interviews
- The Road to be distributed to all current families as well as past students. The Road to include more current news about the College

#### **Achievements**

In 2012, Damascus reviewed its Volunteers Policy and developed a Parental Engagement Policy. Both have been drafted and are pending Board approval. Flowing on from these policies and to facilitate parental involvement in the life of the College, the Volunteer Application Form was revised. Whilst the

formation of a traditional Parents and Friends committee was not supported by the Leadership Team, it is hoped that smaller interest based parent groups will be formed in lieu of the traditional P&F model.

In an effort to engage with parents, the College also organised a Guest Speaker from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in November 2012 to give a presentation to parents and staff. Educational Speaker Michael Grose was also booked for a parent and staff presentation to be held in March 2013.

Attendance at TA interviews rose by 4.2% from the previous year when averaged across the five TA interview opportunities. Attendance at Parent Teacher Student Interview 1 fell by 5% from the previous year but rose by nearly 14% for Interview 2. This is a key strategy in connecting the college with families, so it is good to see family support for the programme continue to grow.

In order to better connect the past student and current student communities, "The Road" is now published twice per year and includes more articles relating to the current school community as well as Alumni news and events. "The Road" is now distributed in hard copy to approximately 5000 Damascus community members twice per year.

***Goal 2.4: to build a College community which gives a voice to all its members and is welcoming to visitors***

### **Actions**

- Parents
  - Set up an "info@damascus.vic.edu.au" email address
  - Further improve means of communication for parents
- Students
  - Set up an "src@damascus.vic.edu.au" email address and possibly a generic form for students to submit comments
  - Reintroduce House Council system to students at House meetings and reiterated at TA groups
  - Set up regular meetings between Principal and School Captains
- Staff
  - One staff forum held per term around the middle of the term where staff submit topics in advance that they wish to be discussed
  - Streamline process for staff to request items to be discussed by Leadership Team at both Nitty Gritty and Strategic Planning meetings.
- Welcoming to Visitors
  - Review Office functioning to ensure visitors are appropriately welcomed to the College
  - Increase number of visitor parking bays

### **Achievements**

To build a College community which gives a voice to all its members, specific email addresses have been introduced to allow for efficient and effective communication. A general enquiry email address was set up in January 2012 and publicised on the College website and newsletter. This has been well utilised since its introduction. A Damascus *Facebook* page was established to assist in communication

of school news and events and text messages were used more often in 2012 to notify parents about College events.

An SRC email address was also set up in January 2012 to facilitate communication between the student body and their SRC representative. The SRC also commenced providing updates of SRC news and decisions on the College newsletter at least once per term. The House Council system was reinvigorated in 2012 and two House Councils were held, whereby a number of issues were raised by students and addressed by the Leadership Team. Regular meetings were conducted between the College Captains and leaders of the SRC throughout 2012.

Staff forums were introduced to allow staff to raise issues of concern and these were held in Terms 1 and 2. The process by which staff put forward requests and ideas to the Leadership Team was streamlined in 2012 as was the process for the Leadership Team to respond to staff requests. This process replaced ad hoc emails to the Leadership Team which were inefficient and ineffective. "Damascus in the Loop" was also introduced in January 2012. This is a staff newsletter aimed at improving communication with staff which is put out at the start of each term. A Development Workshop with staff was held in December 2011 to consider ways in which the College can develop and improve. A list of ideas and action items was then circulated to staff responsible in January 2012.

In order to build a College community which is welcoming to visitors, a lunch break roster was created amongst administrative staff to ensure that there are two people in the front office over the lunch break period. An Office Manager was also introduced in Term 2 2012. This position is aimed at assisting with administrative support to staff as well as improved office management and efficiency for students and visitors. The student drop off/pick up area was reiterated to parents via the newsletter and designated visitor parking bays were enhanced to ameliorate visitor access.

### ***Goal 2.5: to increase commitment to and participation in College community events***

#### **Actions**

- Regularly communicate with community members particular events within the life of the college
- Follow up families who do not support whole school events

#### **Achievements**

In 2012, a concerted effort was made to invite parents and other Damascus community members to College masses, assemblies and sporting events. Invitations to Opening Mass were sent to all Board members and Sub-Committee members, Parish Priests, Sisters of Mercy and Catholic School Principals. SMS invites were also sent to parents in the lead up to Mass, the Swimming Carnival, the Athletics Carnival, the Year 7 Meet the Teachers Evening and other events during the year. Invitations for all major College events were also placed on newsletter. Quick Reference Calendars were circulated to all families 4 times per year at the start of each term. Use of the SMS function to send reminders to families of events was regularly used. This was aimed at creating an increased awareness of all College events throughout the year.

In order to reiterate the importance of participation in College events, letters were sent home to those families where student absence was unexplained following the College Swimming Carnival and Athletics Carnival. This letter reiterated the correlation between participation in sport, college life and academic achievement. This message was also reiterated on the College newsletter.

**Goal 2.6: to promote Damascus College in the wider community as the school of 'first choice'**

### Actions

- Undertake a College Branding exercise - identify our "Unique Selling Points" and confirm our "identity"
- Develop and implement a College Marketing Plan

### Achievements

In 2012 the College Leadership Team undertook a "Branding" workshop to better understand the College's unique selling points, which have informed the College Marketing Plan. As a part of this exercise an update of the College website has been put into place. The new website was launched at the start of 2013. The College's Communication and Marketing Plan, developed in 2012, documents the ways and means by which the College will be marketed to the wider Ballarat and district community.

#### VALUE ADDED

*Across the five areas of school improvement, Damascus has significantly value added to the educational experience of the students and their families within this community throughout the 2012 year.*

Student engagement across the College was significantly higher in almost all areas when compared to the previous 2010 data collected through the Insight SRC tool.

Damascus students continue to feel safe at school which reflects the strong emphasis placed on building a community of care which is focused on learning

As a Catholic secondary school with a high number of enrolments of other Christian denominations and faiths we have begun to explore our rich Catholic identity as a school imbued with Mercy values and called to act in a socially just way as we strive to follow the example set by Jesus. The Insight SRC data reflects that the emphasis on education in social justice as a Christian calling has been picked up by students.

Strategic support of team based practice by the teaching staff has been recognised as improved by the teaching staff. This has also been reflected in improved student engagement. The initiatives of the Mathematics and English domains in trialing differed models of curriculum delivery were affirmed by students and data throughout the year.

The continued improvement of facilities across the College continues to be a strength of the education at Damascus.

The review of the leadership structures and subsequent staffing appointments provide a framework for future strategic leadership the college that value added on previous roles

## PARENT SATISFACTION

Data collected through the Insight SRC data and Year 7 parent surveys generally reflect a high level of satisfaction with the College. Parents are very affirming of the pastoral care of the College. Their understanding of the learning programme is generally interpreted through and reflective of, student perception. Parents continue to seek greater consistency by the College in follow up of uniform matters and seek greater availability and information about academic extension opportunities for young people. Parents consistently affirm the TA programme, reflected in improved attendance rates and the College's commitment to Christian social justice.

## Financial Performance

<b>REPORTING FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Recurrent income</b>	<b>Tuition</b>
School fees	\$3,682,166.00
Other fee income	\$24,683.00
Private income	\$246,073.00
State government recurrent grants	\$2,157,927.00
Australian government recurrent grants	\$7,792,155.00
<b>Total recurrent income</b>	<b>\$13,903,004.00</b>
<b>Recurrent Expenditure</b>	<b>Tuition</b>
Salaries; allowances and related expenses	\$9,092,702.00
Non salary expenses	\$3,979,075.00
<b>Total recurrent expenditure</b>	<b>\$13,071,777.00</b>
<b>Capital income and expenditure</b>	<b>Tuition</b>
Government capital grants	
Capital fees and levies	\$327,722.00
Other capital income	\$43,839.00
<b>Total capital income</b>	<b>\$371,561.00</b>
<b>Total capital expenditure</b>	<b>\$3,763,810.00</b>
Loans (includes refundable enrolment deposits and recurrent, capital and bridging loans)	
<b>Total opening balance</b>	<b>\$4,946,532.00</b>
<b>Total closing balance</b>	<b>\$4,433,178.00</b>

*Note that the information provided above does not include the following items:*

System levies charged to individual schools, intra-systemic transfers and diocesan supplementary capital fund (SCF) supported borrowings for primary schools. The information provided is not comparable with other educational sectors. This VRQA template is not comparable to the ACARA school-level income reporting requirements which are to be reported on the MySchool website. ACARA school level reporting requirements will require system level income from Government grants and some private income to be allocated by school. This will be a small adjustment in relation to the total level of school resources. At this stage, recurrent income from Government sources, school generated income and capital expenditure are to be reported by schools. Additionally when assessing the private income of the school include both recurrent and capital school fees.