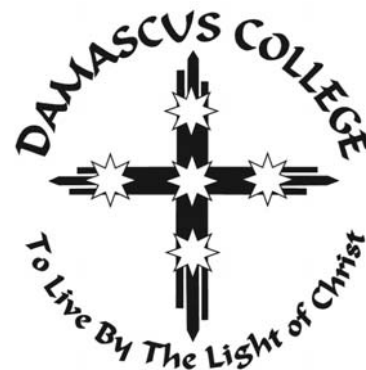


ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE SCHOOL
COMMUNITY

2016



DAMASCUS COLLEGE
1412 GEELONG ROAD, MT CLEAR



REGISTERED SCHOOL NUMBER: 0265

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Minimum Standards Attestation

I, Matthew Byrne , attest that Damascus College is compliant with:

- All of the requirements for the minimum standards and other requirements for the registration of schools as specified in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 (Vic), except where the school has been granted an exemption from any of these requirements by the VRQA
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2016 school year under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) and the Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)

17 May 2017

Our College Vision

Damascus College is a dynamic Christ-centred learning community that values each member, and is committed to inspiring and challenging students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community.

College Overview

Damascus College is Ballarat's only Catholic co-educational Secondary College providing education for the whole family. Damascus is co-sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy and the Parishes of Greater Ballarat to serve the community and surrounding areas.

Damascus College was established in 1995, from the amalgamation of its three predecessor Colleges; Sacred Heart College, St Martin's in the Pines and St Paul's College.

At Damascus our Catholic faith tradition is at the core of who we are and is reflected in our motto, 'To live by the light of Christ'. Our College has a strong and proud Mercy and parish heritage, and is co-governed by the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, as well as the Canonical Administrators of the Parishes of Ballarat and District.

Our school is a Christ-centred learning community committed to a culture of excellence that values each member. We are committed to inspiring and challenging our students to reach their potential and to contribute confidently to the world around them.

Damascus has a shared vision and values inspired by the Catholic tradition, and there are lots of opportunities to explore your faith, whatever that may be. We are proud of our Mercy heritage and traditions, and are mindful of our place in the global community, and we will continue our commitment to helping people less fortunate.

We offer progressive and innovative learning that maximises educational outcomes. Our students are inspired by high expectations to become self-directed and motivated global citizens. Our diverse curriculum caters for various post-secondary pathways, providing young people with a solid foundation on which to build their lives, by providing high quality, well rounded education that focuses on the development of the whole person.

Our students and staff enjoy modern facilities in an inspiring 20 hectare bush setting, only 7km from the Ballarat CBD and we are committed to providing a safe and sustainable environment, cared for by all.

The Damascus community is a strong and vibrant one, where the contribution of all is optimised. We genuinely nurture respectful relationships that value all members in an inclusive

and welcoming community. We have great commitment and pride in contributing to our College, and we celebrate diversity in a safe and supportive school.

Our parents are engaged in College life and they contribute confidently to the growth of the College, our students and the broader community.

We are confident of a bright future for all the young people of Damascus College and we will continue to inspire our Damascus community to reach our potential and place in the world.

Students graduate from Damascus with a clear sense of their own identity and worth, and an appreciation of Christianity in the Catholic tradition.

Learning & Teaching at Damascus

Damascus College strives to provide a learning environment for its students that is dynamic, engaging, challenging and supportive. We understand that each student has individual learning needs and we aim to provide classroom activities that differentiate the abilities and learning styles of our students.

At Damascus we encourage our young people to become flexible, creative and analytical thinkers. Our central goal is for students to reach their full academic, emotional and social potential and we do this by providing them with the tools and support they need to achieve this outcome.

Damascus College students progress to a wide range of postsecondary pathways and, as such, the curriculum opportunities offered reflect this diversity. Commencing in Years 7 and 8, the academic program exposes students to an extensive variety of subject matter. In these junior years, students will study Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Humanities, Health & Physical Education, Science and Languages (French or Indonesian) for the entire school year. They will also undertake a semester of Food Technology, Textiles, Wood, Metal, Art, Visual Communication, Drama and Music in both Years 7 and 8.

When students' progress to Years 9 and 10, they continue to follow the core subjects of Religious Education, English, Mathematics, Humanities, Science and Health & Physical Education alongside a range of pathway choices. In addition, students have the opportunity to enrol in vocational courses that link to and enhance employment opportunities.

In the senior year levels of 11 and 12, students can choose to complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in conjunction with Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) courses or School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).

Further details about the College's academic program can be found on the Damascus College website.

Principal's Report

As you walk around this beautiful campus you cannot help but be awed by the beauty of creation and filled with confidence for the future. The young men and women who walk these grounds daily are filled with character and hope. The role of Principal is a privileged one, as the role brings me into intimate contact with other people's lives on a daily basis and enables me to share the joys and challenges of nurturing emerging adults through a wonderful phase of their development.

God's Mercy endures forever! (Psalm 136) has been our theme for 2016 – How God's mercy is present or visible in our lives is something that the Damascus community focussed on throughout this year. In society, where celebrity is being forced upon us through all forms of media, our College has tried to capture the concepts of extending mercy or love to our neighbour. Internationally, 2016 has been a year of extraordinary jubilee – a year of Mercy. The focus on Mercy for Damascus has reinforced the traditions of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy in our school's story.

I am very fortunate to receive wise counsel for my role from some very experienced educational leaders. College Co-Governors; Sr Berenice Kerr of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea and Fr Adrian McInerney on behalf of the local parishes are exceptional in their vision for our College. This vision is enacted by the Damascus College Board and I thank current Board Chair, Joe Cahir and former Board Chair, Vin Dillon and Board directors; Jane Collins, Brett Bryant, Stephen Carey, Sr Liz Dowling, Lucy O'Beirne, Mark Amos, Michael Myers, Fr Peter Sherman, Paulene Barton, Amanda Western, Ray Wright, Bill Slatter and Brendan Maher for their incredibly generous voluntary contribution to the development of Damascus College as a vibrant learning community. The commitment of each of these individuals is genuinely outstanding.

For the Board, 2016 has seen the promulgation of the future Strategic Directions for the College. This has been a great process of gathering the insights of the community in order to establish our goals for the future and it will be my job over the coming years to give life to these important new directions.

There have been many highlights to 2016. We began the year with 206 new Year 7 students to make up a total of 1042 students, 805 Families and 130 Staff. As I sit back and reflect on the year I recall the enormous diversity of student opportunity that exists across the College. Some examples that come to mind include; an amazing Damascus Day and SRC led activities and concert, the continued growth and success of our Energy Breakthrough Team (EBT), the fantastic VCE Visual Arts exhibition, Year level Masses, raising \$9,111.77 for Project Compassion, the Numeracy Week Games Day for primary schools, Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day liturgies and breakfasts, Shave for a Cure, the Science Careers Expo, the great activities

of Enviro week, the VCAL camp to Phillip Island, the Junior Social, the formals, Graduation Mass and Dinner, the Year Eight Runner excursions, the Ski trip, and extraordinary academic achievements - these are but a few of the very diverse opportunities that supported classroom learning throughout 2016.

Damascus Rowing really had heads turning in 2016 as our junior girls won each class in their division. The College fielded 14 crews in this year's Head of the Lake and competed strongly across all classes. I thank Tom Nash who left us at the end of Term 3 for his generous contribution to the leadership of Rowing over his time at Damascus. Up to the end of the year we had won 8 Ballarat Associated Schools (BAS) premierships and we had great results as the girls 3 on 3 basketball champions. Sports Coordinator Matt Rea has really supported Damascus students in raising the profile of sporting achievement over recent years and I thank him for his leadership. At the Anzac Day assembly it was announced that Rice were the house champions at the Athletics Carnival which completed a hat trick for Rice House. Rice was successful at the Swimming, Lap of the Lake and Athletics carnivals in 2016. Congratulations Rice!

International trips are an important part of our educational offerings. The East Timor immersion continues to provide a life changing experience of lived Christian action for our students of Year 11. The fundraising and social evening that is the Trivia Night was again an enormous success. In 2016 the Damascus community raised over \$20,000 to support the school community of Santa Maria in Ainaro, this was a wonderful achievement and the students and staff led by Gerard Macklin were great ambassadors for our College. Min Myers with the support of Sr Marie Davey and Stephanie Hoey led a group of 16 young people to experience life in France and Switzerland over a 3 week period. The experience of the homestay and attendance at school with French-speaking Swiss students in the first week of their trip appears to have been a real highlight. This was an amazing learning opportunity and an important part of the Damascus tradition. Damascus also hosted students from international schools from Angers in France and also from Reunion Island this year which was facilitated by Languages Leader, Alysoun Smalley and these were remarkably rich experiences for our student body.

As a College we strive to work with our parent body and the broader community in the provision of quality parenting support and the development of life skills for students. This year the College engaged Darren Pereira following student recommendations and he worked with all members of our community on developing strategies for teenage success. Darren was very popular with the student body whom he engaged using a DJ and then encouraged them to set goals for their personal achievement.

To support learning, personal devices were put in the hands of students from Years 7-10. We commenced an Early Start Program where students progressed to their next year level for the last two weeks of the year. Our reporting processes moved to continuous feedback on learning

tasks in real time to allow students and families to respond to teacher feedback as the year unfolded.

Each year we welcome and farewell a number of staff. I would like to acknowledge the retirement and acclaim the work of Tony Purcell who retired from the classroom at the end of 2016 following a teaching career that has spanned 28 years at St Martin's and then Damascus and a total of 40 years in Catholic education and 42 years teaching. Tony has inspired young men and women in their love of Language, Literature and Psychology and his presence will be missed. Greg Macallister also concluded a period of outstanding service to Damascus College after commencing at St Martin's in The Pines in 1987 and transitioning to Damascus in 1995. Greg has opened up the world of Mathematics and Technology for literally thousands of students on this campus for 30 years and we celebrate his contribution and wish him well for the future. Carmen Duxson retired throughout the year after commencing service to Catholic Education as a Librarian in 1976 before joining the St Martin's team in 1985 and progressing to Damascus in 1995. Carmen has finished her career as the College Archivist. Clare Gaynor finished up this year following 13 years as a valued member of the College's administrative team. Tony, Greg, Carmen and Clare's collective years of service to this school is a wonderful contribution and on behalf of the Damascus community I wish them blessings, health and happiness in the future. Bronwyn Strachan has taken leave in 2017 and her presence in the Visual Arts will be sorely missed. Rebecca Petrie moved on from Damascus at the end of the Year to continue her professional growth as a psychologist at St Patrick's College and I thank her for her support of students as teacher and counsellor over 9 years. I also thank Stephanie Tan-Kristanto, Thomas Breed, and Ash Constable who moved on after short but valuable contributions to the Damascus staff.

In 2016 we welcomed Stephanie Tan-Kristanto, Taneka Gardiner, Korina Hegert, Matthew Weightman, Natasha Adam, Nick Smerdon, Laura Goltz, Michael Bennett, Thomas Breed, Ash Constable, Ryan Docking, Sally Murphy, Stephanie Hoey, Allan Lepair, Kara Linayao, Shona Maxwell, Camille Milne, Maria Russell, and Sharon Waters to the staff team.

It was all Grease Lightning in the Performing Arts department this year. The giftedness of our students in performing this musical was an enormous credit to the team of Maria Russell, Andrew Seery, Nicole Burness, Vicki Rowe and Adrian Newman. The stars of the show were the cast and crew and they provided enormous joy to the sell-out season that they performed to.

I thank 2016 College Captains, Chiara Angeli and Kaine Burgess for their authentic student leadership and for their generosity in sharing their individual gifts in 2016. I extend my congratulations to those students who assumed formal leadership positions this year. The Year 12 class of 2016 has been an awesome group of young men and women, and I thank you all for your contribution and I hope you take life-long friendships and an appreciation of our

loving God and welcoming church from your secondary education. I thank those families who conclude their time with Damascus College for being a part of our community.

It was a great year and I thank staff, students and families for their part in the Damascus story in 2016!

Catholic School Culture

Goals & Achievements

Damascus College's ongoing commitment to the local Catholic Church and to personal spiritual development was ever evident in 2016, the year in which we adopted as our theme the College Motto based on the a verse from the Hebrew wisdom "For God's mercy endures forever." It is the response in Psalm 136. Our attention to the mercy of God was inspired by Pope Francis, who recalled that before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians. The Pope went on to declare 2016 to be The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, beginning on 8th December 2015 and ending on 20th November 2016, saying "the whole Church will find in this Jubilee the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God, with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time."

As a school in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy established by Venerable Catherine McAuley in Dublin in the nineteenth century, Damascus College joined in the Sisters in the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP). The Year of Mercy commenced for Damascus College staff on 7th December 2015 with a visit to the College of Sr. Veronica Lawson RSM and the reception of her text, *The Blessing of Mercy*. Each member of the College staff was gifted a copy of the book. The College also received a gift. A large portrait photograph print of a statue of Catherine McAuley was passed to Principal Matthew Byrne to mark the commencement of the Year of Mercy by Sr. Veronica Lawson on behalf of Sr. Berenice Kerr, College Governor and Leader of Community South B of the Sisters. Sr. Veronica would return twice more to address staff concerning MIRP. The process would see the College engage in a major way with the needs of the earth and the needs of the poor. After collecting stories about issues of concern from parents, staff and students a discernment process established a College focus: Consumerism: The injustice to the living and non-living of our planet in order to sustain an existence based upon greed and wealth, impacting: Global Warming; Poverty; Deforestation; Pollution. Students considered this in all aspects of the curriculum and are working toward deciding on a community action that is liberating and sustainable and unwavering – the fruit of the Year of Mercy.

The year formally began Friday 12th February with Mass in the John Shannon Centre celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird. In 2016 the Catholic school ethos team was led by Tony Haintz acting as the Assistant Principal for Catholic School Culture. The team included Mr Adrian Newman acting as Liturgy and Retreats Coordinator, and Mr Martin Ryan as the Religious Education Learning Area Leader. This group made a difference in many areas of Catholic school life.

This was a year of the reception of the College review that has provided directions for the College for 2016-2020. The Catholic school ethos team reported regularly at the Damascus College Board Sub-committee for Catholic School Culture. This sub-committee, with Mrs Lucy O'Beirne in the Chair, worked on the realignment of policies of the Damascus College Board Inc. to the new strategic direction. The new direction statement reads;

At Damascus College we are committed to a shared vision and values inspired by biblical and Damascus College traditions, demonstrated by -

- providing leadership-in-faith opportunities for students, staff and the broader community;
- ensuring that the Gospel and Catholic traditions are understood as guidance and support for life;
- personal and community responses to God's call in today's world expressed as social justice.

These directions offer a way forward in our staples of prayer, social justice and catholic ethos.

The Our Lady of Mercy Chapel creates an environment of prayer and liturgy, which is central to our lives at the college. In semester one each year level prepared a celebration in the Eucharist in the Chapel. In addition morning Mass was celebrated for both Mother's Day and Father's Day. Both events were followed by breakfast and were very well attended. Weekly staff prayer continued to the Chapel space using the Lectio Divina process. Year 7 students ventured to the Sisters of Mercy Convent to learn about Catherine McAuley and her foundation before attending Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral. Year 8 students attended an informative session with the St Vincent de Paul Society before attending Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral. Our gospel at Damascus Day Mass was a dramatic retelling of the story of the son who took his inheritance and wasted it in a binge of consumerism. The story is often called the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) but may be better named Consumerism-Finding a Way Back. Consumerism had negative effects on the relationships of this son in a story set in ancient times. In modern times consumerism is having a global effect on both the human and other-than-human relationships of our world. How we can be merciful in our relationships with the earth?

The commitment to social justice continued to be a major focus of the College in 2016. The sixth Timor Leste Immersion group visited our sister school in Ainaro in June after a highly successful fundraising process. The College supported Project Compassion (Caritas), the St Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic Mission in significant ways through the Justice Action Group. A review of the Christian Personal Development Award Melbourne Experience through the lens of Catholic Teaching on social justice led to another positive refinement of the day. In 2016 links were made with the Big Issue, which supports homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people, were further developed. This link has heightened the Social Justice Education outcomes for this experience.

Ongoing staff formation is critical to our Catholic heritage. Fr Richard Leonard SJ led the staff Religious Education Day on Monday 15th August. His topic was challenging and his presentation was very engaging for staff: A Survival Guide to Sane Spirituality in Catholic

Education. It focused on an essential Christian understanding of Jesus as the revelation of God, a process for discernment based on St Ignatius' writing and a call to mission. Christianity is not a private feel-good collective. We are sent out to live and proclaim our spirituality. In addition key staff members attend Mercy Ethos Inductions Programs including the Dublin Pilgrimage and the Mercy Story in Lancefield. Two staff members concluded their studies toward a Graduate Certificate of Religious Education through the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) Program enabling further leadership development in our Catholic School. Other opportunities for Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School were made available for staff.

Damascus College has a vision to be a Christ-centred learning community. In many ways in 2016 the College continued to be faithful to that ideal. We have now been walking for twenty-two years in the Light of Christ.

Systemic Data Sources

Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project (ECSIP)

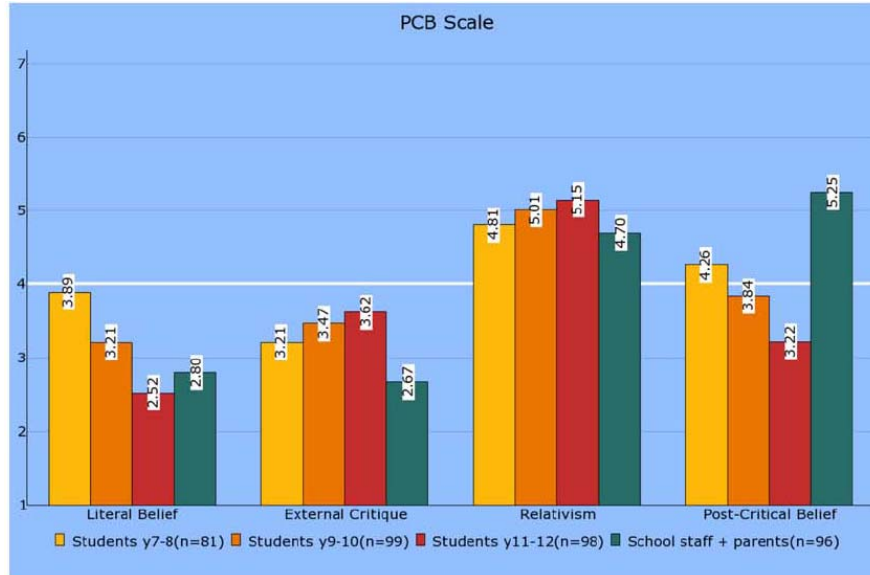
ECSIP gives an empirical basis to our understanding about the Catholicity of our school and a common language with which to discuss it. It offers direction in which key sectors of the community wish to take the school and provides criteria for the school renewal process. ECSIP will have implications for many area of college life including: employment of staff; professional learning of staff; teacher training; school resourcing; school-parish relationships. There are four scales in the survey

- Melbourne Scale
- Post-critical belief (PCB) scale
- Victoria Scale
- Doyle Questionnaire

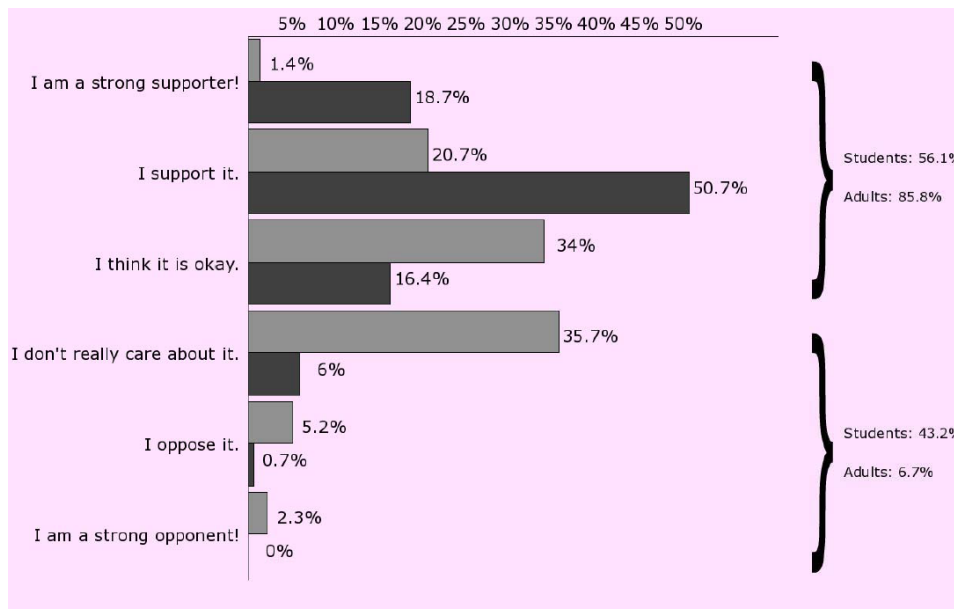
The Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project (ECSIP) Data is in its first iteration based on surveys conducted in 2014. The results of this survey instrument were shared with the Damascus College Board and Religious Education Faculties in 2015 and the Religious Education Faculty discussions of the results led by Martin Ryan were fruitful in 2016. This data needs further exploration in the local context and its usefulness in goal-setting in this area may be a little premature. The Post-Critical Belief Scale (PCB); the Victoria Scale and the Melbourne Scale all offer insights into the Catholic Identity of the College and include preferred options on each of the scales, but the data is elusive.

The PCB scale is based on two dimensions: Symbolic verses Literal and Belief verses Disbelief. The survey instrument places respondents and cohorts into four quadrants: Relativity (Symbolic Disbelief); External Critique (Literal Disbelief); Literal Belief and Post-Critical Belief (Symbolic Belief). The preferred option is in the Post-Critical Belief quadrant. The data from the PCB

indicates that while literal belief is rightly waning across the secondary years, the movement is to Disbelief (Literal and Relative) more than to Post-Critical Belief. While staff members have a tendency to religious faith that is symbolic, our students tend toward unbelief that is relative.

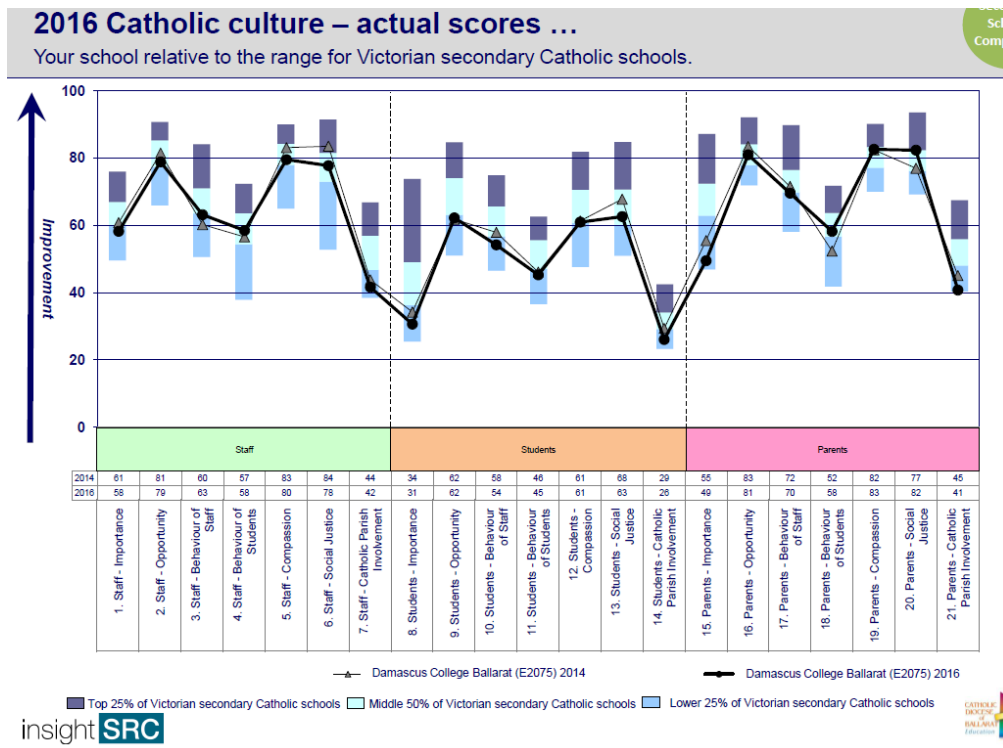


The Doyle Questionnaire from the same suite of surveys also gives attitudinal ratings about adults and student perceptions of the importance of Catholic Identity and may be of use in determining longer term statistical goals.



School Improvement Framework (SIF) Data

The SIF data in the area of Catholic School Identity data is reported from the staff, student and parent surveys conducted every second year. The data is grouped into sections that identify Opportunity and Importance to experience Catholic School Culture as it is identified by student, parents and teachers. This data set has been used as a goal setting process in one school review process in the past. Student perceptions of opportunities (Student-Opportunities) to experience Catholic School Culture was identified as a target area in the 2011 review of Damascus College and reported on favourably in the 2015 review. It is noteworthy that all values other than this student perception of opportunity slumped slightly in the 2016 figures. The most recent data became available in mid-2016. The longitudinal nature of the SIF data allows the College to notice trends in the data that can allow for some hard data goal setting. Which of these best measures “leadership-in-faith”?



Intended Outcomes and Locally Collected Data

In the area of Catholic Identity the Strategic Directions of the College 2016-2020 state that:

At Damascus College we are committed to a shared vision and values inspired by biblical and Damascus College traditions, demonstrated by -

- providing leadership-in-faith opportunities for students, staff and the broader community;
- ensuring that the Gospel and Catholic traditions are understood as guidance and support for life;
- personal and community responses to God’s call in today’s world expressed as social justice.

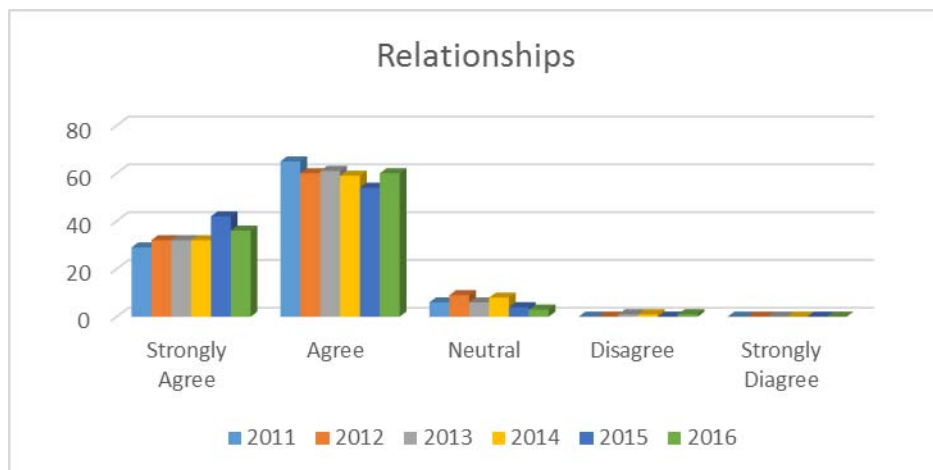
The statistical information that is available has been ordered under these headings which have been numbered for ease of access. The data project grew out of the previous strategic plan and statistics have been marshalled into the new headings using the principle of best fit. With the advent of the new strategic directions there is a need to re-evaluate the type and quality of data that is collected in this field.

1. Shared Vision and Values inspired by biblical and Damascus College traditions

The vision of the College and the values that underpin it are critical to the life of the College and need to be named, proclaimed, understood and strategically worked toward. The evaluation of this is not easy. Some of the system wide tools already spoken of may offer the best way forward in this process.

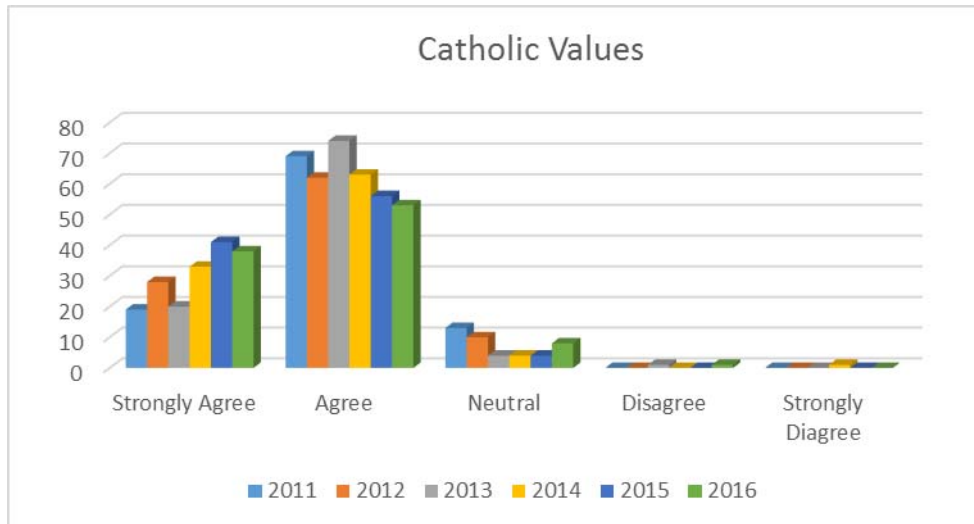
Fostering Relationships

Our data from the Year 7 Parent Survey continues to be positive in relation to the core values of the college. Parents are asked to rate the College on how well it fosters relationships based on respect, responsibility, honesty, truth and inclusion.



Authentic In Teaching of Catholic Values.

The Year 7 Parents are able to acknowledge that Damascus College is authentic in its teaching of Catholic values.



2. Providing Leadership-in-Faith Opportunities for Students, Staff and the Broader Community

This statement immediately raises a number of questions: What does this mean to offer opportunities in “leadership-in-faith” to anyone? What does “leadership-in-faith” call us to do? What does “leadership-in-faith” call us to be? How could we know if the College is successful in offering opportunities in “leadership-in-faith”? An approach to this challenge is being developed for community consultation in 2017.

Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic Prayer experiences

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel was blessed by Bishop Paul Bird at the conclusion of the opening Mass on Friday 14th February 2014 and since then the chapel has become a focus for significant liturgy and prayer experiences. This includes Staff prayer on Thursday mornings in the chapel using the Lectio Divina prayer form based on the gospel reading for the following Sunday. This saw growth in attendance in 2016. More staff were involved in Year Level Mass experiences in 2016 but there is more that might be done in this area.

Morning Mass was celebrated for both Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Both events were followed by breakfast saw increased support in 2016. A full Liturgical Calendar for 2016 is included as an appendix.

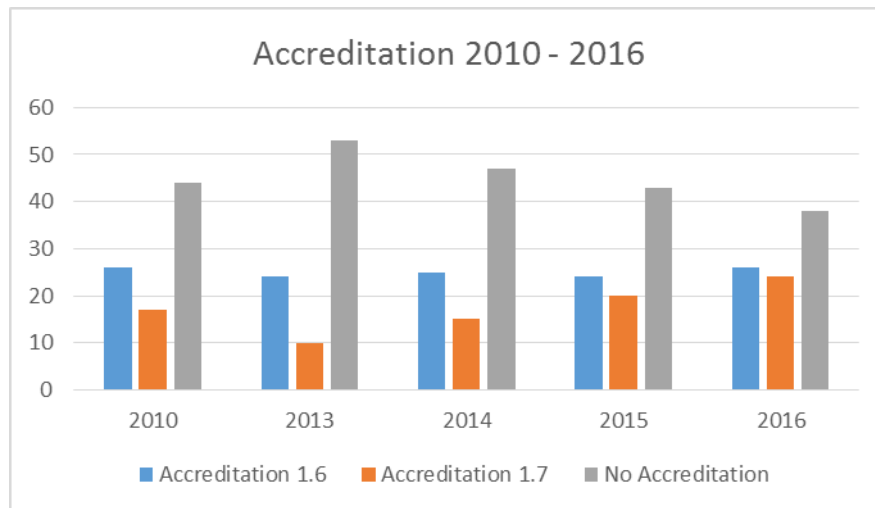
Mercy Ethos

The numbers of staff preparing for Mercy experiences in Dublin and attending Mercy ethos continued to grow in 2016. The induction of new staff and the induction of new POL holders into a fuller understanding of our Catholic Heritage and traditions is an ongoing project for 2017 and beyond.

Accreditation

While the offering of in-house opportunities for teaching staff members to receive hours toward their Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School (Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) Policy 1.6) had been somewhat successful in an after school format since the second half of 2013, there was still a need to offer a more flexible possibility for staff. The Broken Bay Institute (North Sydney) was offering online course options for Adult Faith Development that it was hoped might be able to be accessed by staff for accreditation purposes. A new protocol was established for 2016 but the uptake by staff was not strong. A return to more fruitful models seems warranted.

Accreditation to Teach Religious Education (Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) Policy 1.7) saw another two current staff members join the ranks through the Religious Education Accreditation Program (REAP) program.



In a period where teaching staff number have remained constant, our statistics show a steady movement toward greater levels of accreditation at the College with around half of the College teaching staff having one of the types of accreditation. It is anticipated that the numbers achieving accreditation will be greater in 2017 as a result of the work in the past three years.

3. Ensuring That the Gospel and Catholic Traditions Are Understood As Guidance and Support for Life

Mercy International Reflection Process 2016

As a Catholic College in the Mercy tradition we were challenged by Pope Francis writing and invited by the Sister of Mercy to become engaged in Mercy International Reflection Process. The process invited our community to consider the ways in which the environment, our planet and its human and other-than-human inhabitants are truly in need of mercy.

At Damascus College we launched the Mercy International Reflection Process around the time of Earth Day in late April. There were activities in TA, in Religious Education Classes and in the newsletter for parents.

As part of the process a website was developed to keep the community informed about the progress of the reflection. You are looking at images from that website now. The Pope's encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that humankind is rendering to the environment and his fellow humans. The process gave us a way of considering this in our circumstances.

Using the ecological footprint calculator in Teacher Advisor Groups gave our community an insight into the unsustainable habits of the developed world before we headed into the collections of our stories about ecological injustice and unsustainable practices. The online survey was live on 10th May and the stories rolled in. They were published soon after on the Website on the stories tab.

On Friday 27th May a group including teachers, students and parents gathered in the Mercy Administration Block Board Room to engage with the data from the MIRP survey. That meeting established a Damascus College focus for remainder of the reflection process. The focus would become: CONSUMERISM: The injustice to the living and non-living of our planet in order to sustain an existence based upon greed and wealth; impacting Global Warming, Poverty, Deforestation, Pollution.

Now we were ready for stage two. This stage was about exploring the ideas associated with the focus, Consumerism. This became a classroom effort in all learning areas. It was boosted by the ongoing work of the Damascus College Green Group in its preparations for Enviro Week in the last week of this term three. As a whole College were learning about how simple actions make a huge difference to our environment. A chart of our efforts was published on the web for all to see.

The third stage was about touching base the wisdom and theological traditions that underpin our thinking about consumerism. In religious education classes students created hands of mercy, an acknowledgement of the Year of Mercy. Our gospel at Damascus Day Mass was the story of the son who took his inheritance and waisted it in a binge of consumerism. The story

from Luke’s Gospel is often called the Prodigal Son but may be better named Consumerism-Finding a Way Back. Consumerism had negative effects on the relationships of this son in a story set in ancient times. In modern times consumerism is having a global effect on both the human and other-than-human relationships of our world.

Throughout the middle of 2016, the whole school theme of consumerism enlivened our concern about the injustice to the living and non-living of our planet. But how could we be people of mercy in the face of consumerism?

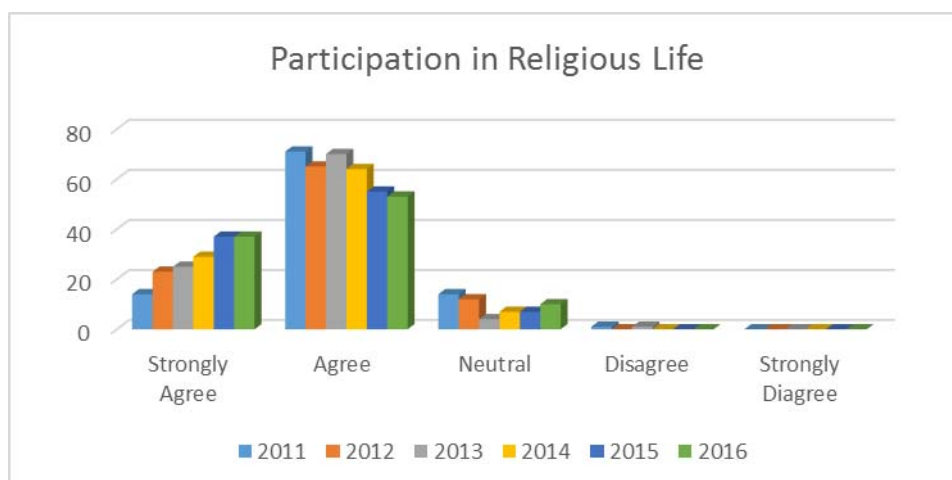
The final stage of the process is action. Pope Francis is right: our hope lies in the mercy of God and we are called to be that mercy. Mercy is a verb; it is action; it must be concrete. After the Seeds of Justice Experience at Anglesea, many Justice Action Group members came to believe that we needed to act on Fair Trade. The global fair trade movement seeks to challenge conventional trade by placing fairness in prices and wages and the capacity to compete, and the alleviation of poverty at the core of international trade practices, both in Pacific region, and beyond.

Damascus College has decided to investigate becoming a Fair Trade School Community. Our journey into this area is just beginning and we hope to form an interest group to understand this commitment more, which could lead to a more sustainable way of life at Damascus College. Not a full stop ... another beginning.

Internationally, we are the only Mercy school to take a whole school approach to this process.

Participation in the life, prayer and ritual of the Catholic Church

Our Year 7 parents continue to be certain that Damascus College provides sufficient opportunities for participation in the life, prayer and ritual of the Catholic Church



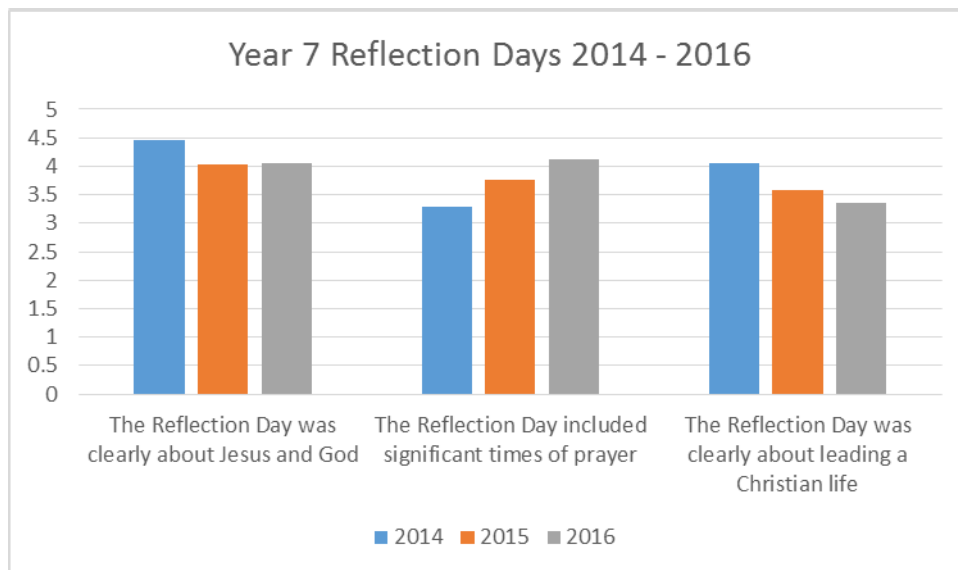
Retreat / Reflection Day program

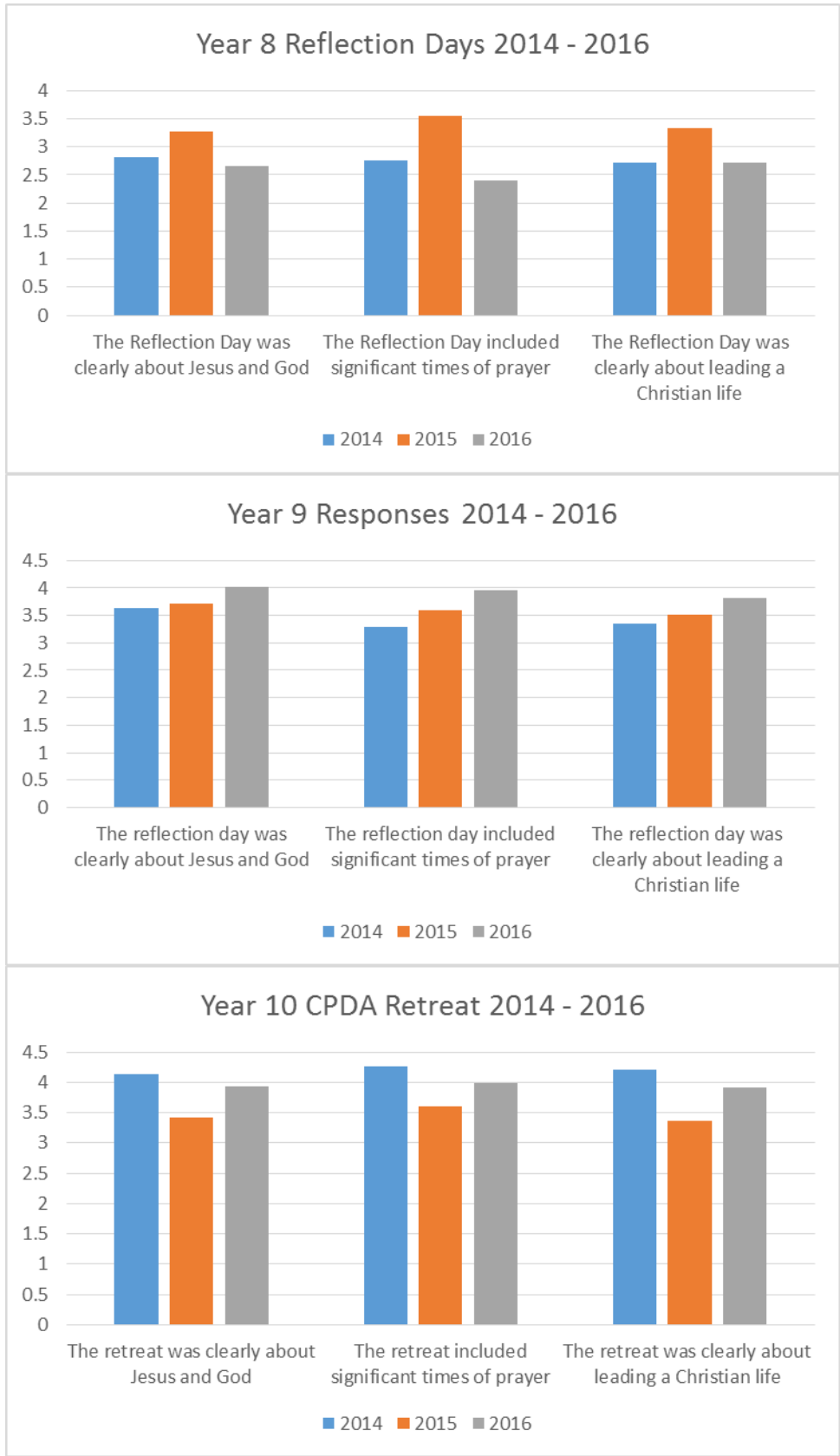
From early in 2014 student attitudes to the retreats and reflection days began to be evaluated using an online survey instrument. Along with some general questions about venue, process, outcomes and the presenter three key content statements were put to students in each survey with a ranking system. Responses were sought on a five point scale.

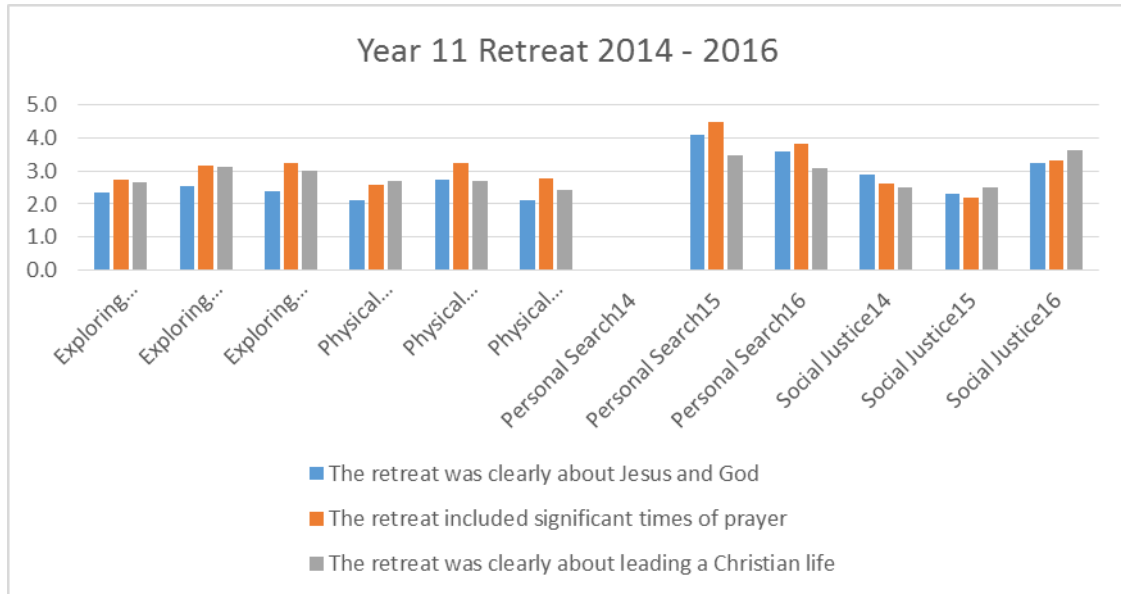
- The retreat/reflection day was clearly about Jesus and God
- the retreat/reflection day included significant times of prayer
- the retreat/reflection day was clearly about leading a Christian life

It is hoped that this baseline data will provide a greater sense of the value of the programs from the point of view of these intended outcomes. It is intended that the evaluations be ongoing and that longitudinal data will show a positive return in these intentions that are so central of the retreat and reflection day process.

The statistics are given to the year level teams as part of the planning process so that they can consider the possibilities that are at their disposal to make specific and explicit these intended outcomes of the day.







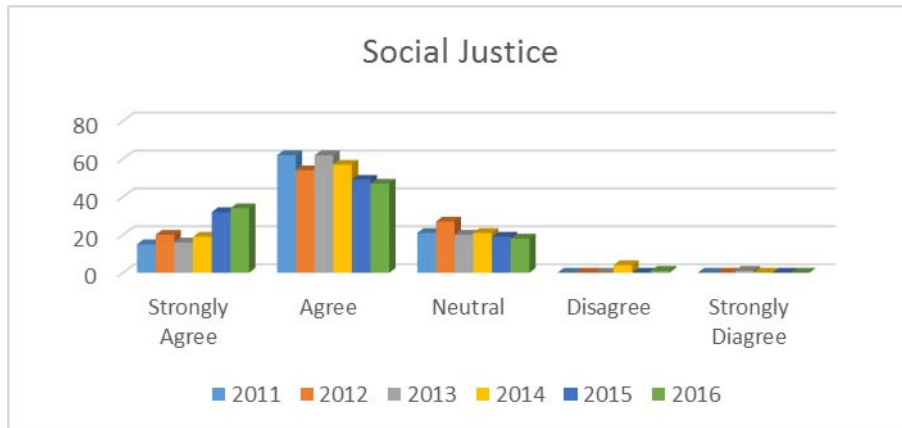
4. Personal And Community Responses to God’s Call in Today’s World Expressed as Social Justice.

The Damascus Day Mass

For 21 years the College has held this major event that is a primary expression of our heritage. Under the significant leadership of Mr Adrian Newman and with the College theme “For God’s mercy endures forever” well at the fore, this was the most significant liturgy of the year. Engagement of a drama troupe gathered from across the College for an enactment of the well-known Lukan Gospel parable of the Lost Son provided an excellent focus for the celebration of God’s mercy.

College’s Commitment to Social Justice

Similarly, Year 7 Parents are very clear about the College’s commitment to social justice and when asked if the College’s program is effective, they have a strong sense that this is a positive aspect of College life.



*Year 7 Mercy and Eucharist Program
Year 8 Justice and Eucharist Program*

Following the success of the Year 7 Mercy and Eucharist Program and the Justice and Eucharist Program at Year 8 Level in association with St Vincent de Paul Society. The programs take year 7 and 8 religious education classes respectively to the Sisters of Mercy and to the St Vincent de Paul Service Centre in the Cathedral Precinct on a day that the centre was not open to the public. Students learn about the founder of the sisters of Mercy and about the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society before the students attending the 12:05 Mass at St Patrick’s Cathedral. Investigations are underway for a similar Year 9 Program.

Supporting our friends and neighbours in Timor-Leste

Over the past eleven years, Damascus has been building and nurturing a relationship with the people of Timor-Leste and in particular with the people of Ainaro, a small town located 115km from the capital Dili.

The district of Ainaro, to which the town of Ainaro belongs, shares a special relationship with the Ballarat community more broadly. In July 2005 the Ballarat City Council formally established the Ballarat Friends of Ainaro Community Committee (BFACC), providing funding and support to further develop the friendship with the Ainaro District which had commenced in a less formal way in 1999. It was through BFACC’s Sister School Program that Damascus established a sister school relationship with Santa Maria College in Ainaro in 2005.

In the early years of this relationship, direct communication with Santa Maria was made difficult by the lack of infrastructure in Timor-Leste. Damascus College students sent letters and donations of educational items from time to time during this period, but it was not until 2010 that the first Damascus College staff member had an opportunity to visit Ainaro.

Tony Haintz, Assistant Principal of Catholic School Culture at Damascus (then Religious Education Coordinator), travelled with St Joseph's College Echuca on their first immersion experience to Timor-Leste in 2010. This visit took Tony to the town of Aileu, not far from Ainaro, where Sr Maryanne Dwyer, a Sister of Mercy from Ballarat and former Damascus staff member, was living. Tony then travelled onto Ainaro to establish a personal connection with the community of Santa Maria College. Upon his return to Australia, Tony led the formation of the Damascus College Timor-Leste Immersion Program for Year 11 students.

In line with the College's Christian values and teachings, the immersion program sets out to provide an experience for students which will allow them to consider the principles of human dignity, community and the common good, rights and responsibilities, options for the poor and vulnerable, solidarity and the promotion of peace. The immersion experience is now an integral part of the College's social justice program.

The first group of Year 11 students to participate in the College's immersion program travelled to Ainaro in June 2011. Since then, immersion groups have continued this tradition annually, with the 2016 cohort of fourteen students and four staff members returning to Australia in early July.

Each year the immersion group is tasked with raising awareness of the struggles faced by the people of Timor-Leste, as well as raising funds which are donated to various organisations during their travels. The 2016 immersion group raised over \$18,000 in the nine months leading up to their departure, which was donated to schools, hospitals and other non-government organisations in need of funds.

The Timor-Leste immersion experience has a powerful impact on the students and staff who take part. Four students from the early immersion groups have returned to Ainaro as volunteers during their gap year, and several students from the 2016 immersion group are already making plans to follow in their footsteps.

In early 2016, we welcomed Fr Joao Felisberto to Damascus College. Fr Joao had been a great support to Immersion teams in his role as assistant priest to Fr Lito and then as Parish Administrator and then again as assistant to Fr Armindo in Ainaro from 2012-2016. Fr Joao's visit was essential for the ongoing nature of the connection that Damascus College has with Santa Maria. With Fr Joao now in a new position look forward to working with Fr Armindo de Brito, Parish Priest of Ainaro

Planning is already underway for the seventh group of Damascus students to visit Ainaro in June 2017. The thirteen members of the group were brought before the Damascus College Assembly on Damascus Day. A Catholic Church Insurances (CCI) risk review of the College International excursions has been commissioned by the College across 2015/16 to bring all

college excursions under a secure framework is continuing to maintain the safety of the program.

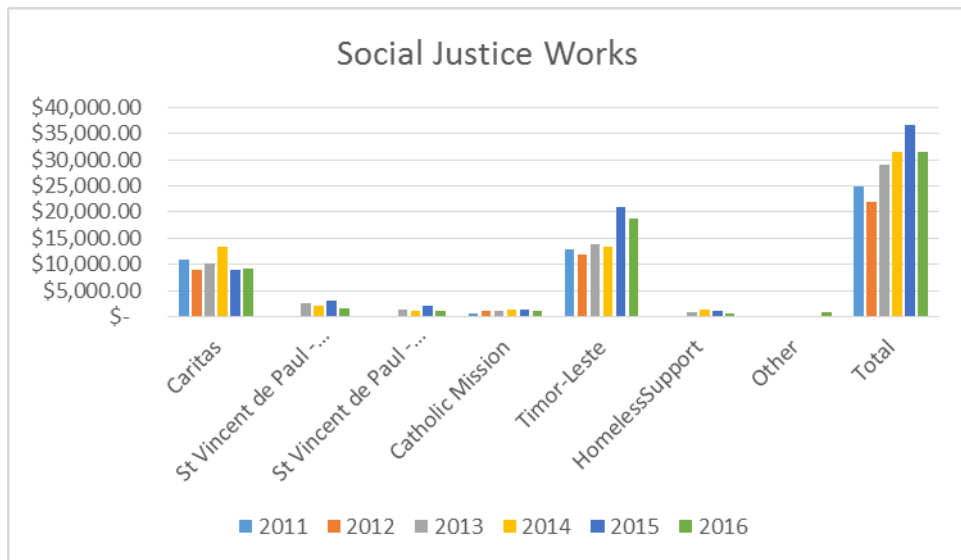
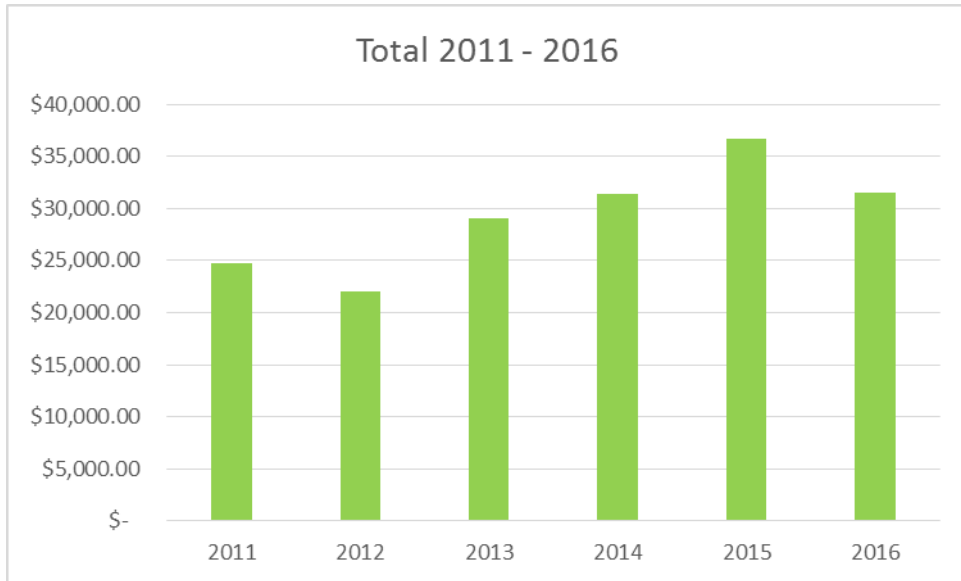
Seeds of Justice Program

Ongoing involvement with the Seeds of Justice Project is a part of the Mercy Ethos family of the activities. This program developed a regional option in 2012 at Anglesea so that more students can be touched by the story of Mercy and its work for social justice. The theme at Camp Araluen Anglesea in Thursday 25th and Friday 26st August 2016 was Mercy – Speaking for those kept silent. After the Seeds of Justice Experience at Anglesea, many Justice Action Group members came to believe that we needed to act on Fair Trade. The global fair trade movement seeks to challenge conventional trade by placing fairness in prices and wages and the capacity to compete, and the alleviation of poverty at the core of international trade practices, both in Pacific region, and beyond.

Damascus College has decided to investigate becoming a Fair Trade School Community. Our journey into this area is just beginning and we hope to form an interest group to understand this commitment more, which could lead to a more sustainable way of life at Damascus College. Not a full stop ... another beginning.

Annual Collections for Social Justice and Mercy

In 2016 the Lenten Project Compassion appeal for Caritas Australia was no longer a part of the Ron Matthews shield and the collection, although significant, was down on recent years. The winter collection of 2015 again focused on blankets for distribution by the local St. Vincent de Paul Society. There were new 30 queens size blankets purchased and these provided immediate support to the needy of our area. The contribution to Catholic Mission, through the fundraising efforts of the College, supported the global development work of the Mission Societies. The St. Vincent de Paul Christmas collection to share with the needy families of Ballarat was badged as "Credit for Christmas" was a new initiative in 2016. Over \$30000 was again raised and distributed by the College Community under the banner of Social Justice.



Christian Personal Development Award

The Christian Personal Development Award (CPDA) began at Damascus College in May 2003. The twenty-sixth Year 10 CPDA Introductory Program concluded in October 2016. The program introduces the students to a certificate that they can aim to achieve in their final years of schooling at the college. For twelve years now the program has included a retreat based on the corporal works of Mercy, an experience of the other (in Melbourne), an experience of alternative recreational activities, an assessment of physical potential for sporting activities and an experience of volunteering.

In November, the Year 12 class of 2017 were the twelfth group of graduating students have the opportunity to achieve the Christian Personal Development Award (CPDA). The CPDA is awarded to students who have completed 120 balanced hours of personal development activities in the four categories: Action for Social Justice / Community Service; Spiritual Development; Physical Pursuits, Other Personal Development Activities. The CPDA has

become the backbone to extra-curricular experience in the senior school. The Awards were presented at Graduation.

Areas of ongoing focus areas in 2017

- Reconciliation – Constitutional Recognition
- Relocation of the Remembrance Garden
- “Leadership-in-faith” Consultation 2017
- Staff Formation: Fr Ronald Rolheiser 2nd August 2017
- Awakenings Review Outcomes
- Family Faith Formation
- Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) – International Excursions
- Year 9 Nazareth House and Eucharist Program
- Australian Catholic Youth Festival – Sydney December 2017

VALUE ADDED

Liturgical Calendar 2016

2016 TERM 1

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Celebration of the Eucharist

Thursday 25th February Year 11 9:30 a.m. (Ret. Bishop Peter Connors)

Monday 10th March Year 9 9:30 a.m. (Fr. James Kerr)

Other Liturgical Events in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Every Thursday Morning: Staff Prayer

Liturgical Events in other Venues

Tuesday 9th February Shrove Tuesday Mass for Student Leaders of Ballarat Secondary Schools with the Bishop at St Patrick’s cathedral

Wednesday 10th February Ash Wednesday Ceremony of the Distribution of Ashes in John Shannon Centre – 9:00 am

Friday 12th February Opening Mass 11:30 a.m. – Bishop Paul Bird

Thursday 24th March Stations of the Cross in House Areas

2016 TERM 2

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Celebration of the Eucharist

Thursday 5th May 7:30 am Mother Day – Fr Justin Driscoll

Monday 9th May Year 12 2:00 pm. – Bishop Peter Connors

Friday 3rd June Year 10 9:20 am – Fr Kevin Maloney

Friday 3rd June Year 7 11:30 am – Fr Anthony Nagothu

Friday 10th June Year 8 9:20 am – Fr Anthony Nagothu

Other Liturgical Events in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Every Thursday Morning: Staff Prayer

Friday 13th May - Prayer for Christian Unity Week. 8th May (Ascension) – 15th May (Pentecost)

VALUE ADDED

Liturgical Events in other Venues

Friday 22nd April 9:00 a.m. Anzac Day Commemorative Service Grass Area facing the Australian Flag

Monday 23th May 11:00 am Annual Mass held at Sovereign Hill to celebrate Catholic Education week 2015 - Year 9 SRC

Sunday 15th May Timor-Leste Planning Day commencing with Eucharist at St Alipius

Tuesday 21st June Acknowledgement of the Feast of the Sacred Heart and the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal Collection in the TA Period

Year 7 Eucharist and Mercy Program

Wednesday, 20 April 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Thursday, 21 April 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Friday, 29 April 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Monday, 9 May 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Friday, 13 May 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 17 May 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Thursday, 26 May 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

Monday, 30 May 2016, St Patrick's Cathedral

2016 TERM 3

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Celebration of the Eucharist

Friday 29th July 2:00 pm French Exchange Students Farewell Mass – Fr Adrian McInerney

Thursday 1st September 7:30 am Father's Day followed by Breakfast - Fr Adrian McInerney

Other Liturgical Events in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel

Every Thursday Morning: Staff Prayer

Formal Liturgy of the Word in Class Groups in Class Time

Liturgical Events in other Venues

Wednesday 14th September 11:30 am Damascus Day Mass in the John Shannon Centre

Year 8 Justice & Eucharist Program

Tuesday, 26 July 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 9 August 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 23 August 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 6 September 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 4 October 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 18 October 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 25 October 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

Tuesday, 1 November 2016, 12:05 pm St Patrick's Cathedral

VALUE ADDED

2016, TERM 4

Our Lady of Mercy Chapel
Celebration of the Eucharist
Wednesday 14th December Staff Final Mass 10:00 am

Other Liturgical Events in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel
Every Thursday Morning: Staff Prayer
Formal Liturgy of the Word in Class Groups in Class Time
Friday 25th November: Remembering Our Loved Ones – 1:05 pm

Liturgical Events in other Venues
Monday 10th October 2:00 Graduation Mass Rehearsal
Thursday 10th for Friday 11th November Remembrance Day over the PA arranged by
Humanities (Gerard Macklin)
Friday 18th November Year 12 Graduation Mass 5:30 pm at St Patrick's Cathedral
Wednesday 7th December Years 7-11 Final Mass 9:30 am in the John Shannon Centre

Community Engagement

Goals & Achievements

Goal 1: Confident and clear communication processes giving voice to the wisdom of all Actions:

- Implement the Damascus College Marketing & Communications Plan
- Update website so it is suitable for mobile devices and large screens
- Update website with new pictures, social media platforms and increased key messages
- Increase communication with local media to promote events, achievements and activities on an on-going basis
- Increase and diversify engagement on Damascus College and Alumni Facebook pages
- Introduce a Digital Student Ambassador Program
- Introduce Parent Ambassador Program to have parents assist at Info Session and Open Mornings, Digital Ambassadors, Primary School presentations etc (Goal 3)
- Follow up Info Session, Open Morning & Campus Tour attendees and Enrolment Pack email requests
- Introduce Damascus to Twitter and LinkedIn
- Consistently communicate the key selling points as identified in the Marketing Plan of DC to the local community
- Introduce new methods to communicate and grow DC Alumni eg Facebook, advertisements, emails, newsletter
- Restructure Reunion events to increase attendance and professionalism
- Increase Alumni engagement and events throughout the year
- Meet with ALL Principals of Catholic Primary Schools throughout the year
- Introduce school visits to ALL primary schools. Specifically aimed at catholic primary schools as well as catholic students in public primary schools
- Develop Strategic Directions marketing material: video, poster, merchandise
- Develop marketing material and consistent brand
- Improve the management of College archives

Achievements:

Throughout 2016 Damascus was promoted in line with the Marketing and Communications plan across a variety of channels including: social media, media stories generated in newspaper, radio and TV, College billboard advertising, newspaper advertising, consistent primary school communication and the College website.

The Damascus website was updated to increase and improve user experience, so that it is now optimised for any mobile device. The new look and feel of the website is continually enhanced with new images, social media platforms and increased key messages, in order to improve consistent communication to our parents and the wider community.

Consistent and constant communication with local media throughout 2016 has been enhanced considerably, resulting in increased stories being included in the Ballarat Courier, WIN TV, Our Diocesan Community and various radio stations. Increasing the Damascus presence in local media, raises the profile of the College within the community. 24 media releases were

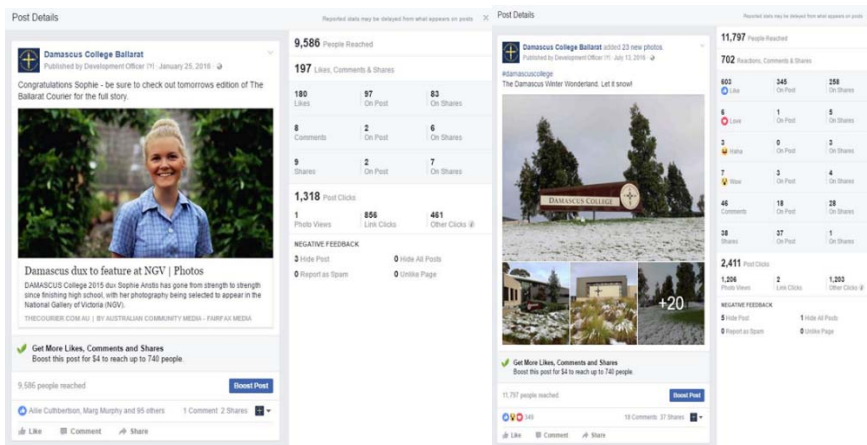
developed in 2016, compared to 4 in 2015, and the stories covered by media have promoted Damascus events, achievements and activities and showcased what we do well to the wider community. The relationships built throughout 2016 with local media has positively improved to the point where the media now contact Damascus for comment and stories, rather than vice versa all the time, which is a fantastic result.

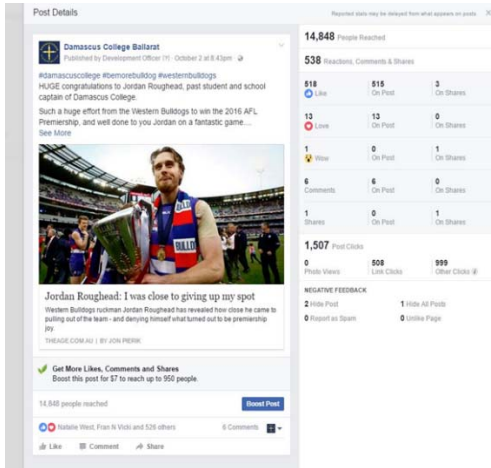
Social media is the most popular form of promotion these days, and Damascus has increased and diversified engagement on the Damascus Facebook page and the Damascus Alumni Facebook page. To diversify and increase our reach through social media, Damascus has also introduced a Twitter Account and a LinkedIn account. At the end of 2016 there were 2,446 followers of the Damascus Facebook page, compared to 1,906 at the end of 2015, which is a healthy annual increase of 28.3% (540 followers). The below graph shows the consistent growth in Facebook likes of 2.6% per month for 2016, which is achieved by regularly posting interesting posts.

2016 Facebook Likes:



Throughout 2016 the Total Reach (no of activity, posts, comments, likes, mentions) on Facebook was excellent, with highlights being on 25th January 2016 with 9,586 reach for the 2015 College Dux, 13th July 2016 with 11,797 reach for the Winter Snow post, 2nd October 2016 with 14,848 reach for Jordan Roughead:





In order to give voice to the student body, a Digital Student Ambassador Program was introduced in 2016, which saw 2 junior and 2 senior members of the Student Representative Council (SRC) from each of the 4 Houses become Digital Student Ambassadors, where they regularly contribute weekly posts on Facebook about Damascus student life.

At each student recruitment event (Info Session, Open Morning and Campus Tours) these contacts are now followed up with an email to thank them for their attendance and to see if there is anything further we can assist them with. This increased contact after an event, is aimed at increasing engagement and ultimately enrolments.

The Damascus key messages, taken from the 2016-2020 Strategic Directions, have been consistency reinforced at every opportunity through various marketing channels. The creation of a video to launch the Strategic Directions was developed to visually tell the story over the next 5 years. A Campus Tour video was also developed in 2016 that is featured on the College website homepage, increasing engagement and reach to the wider community and extending our reach overseas. These two videos are a fantastic resource to use for promotional pieces to reinforce and communicate the Damascus key messages.

2016 has seen the introduction of an Alumni & Development Officer which has given renewed focus and innovation to Damascus Alumni. The Damascus Alumni Facebook page has grown from 400 members in January 2016 to 975 in December 2016. A communications plan has been developed and implemented to regularly communicate via Facebook, email, newsletters, reunions and newspaper ads to alumni. Separate Facebook pages for class reunions have been introduced in 2016 which has increased engagement and attendance at reunions. In 2016 we had 490 members in the five Facebook class reunion groups. We have restructured the format of reunions, with the introduction of a Friday Welcome Reception for reunions on campus, to enable more staff to attend the reunions, and in 2016 one of the five reunions took up this opportunity. We introduced the Try Booking system for reunions bookings, which was an amazing success, allowing us to accurately keep track of registrations, but also to update our database with contact details. In 2016 Damascus has taken more of a lead role in co-ordinating

reunions in consultation with each class organising committee. Damascus now co-ordinates the sending of invitations, so that they are professionally produced reinforcing the Damascus brand. The Alumni database is problematic, in that it is difficult to keep it accurate, as past students notoriously do not regularly update their details with Damascus. Maintaining the accuracy of the alumni database is a difficult and ongoing task that has been given more priority throughout 2016. At the beginning of 2016 we reviewed the Alumni database and found that there was lots of meaningless data from previous years, so upon analysis and through constant communication we have increased the database from 6957 to 8566 meaningful members, an increase of 23%.

In 2016 the Principal and Leader of School Development met with the Principal of St Aloysius Primary School to strengthen our relationship and see how we can better work together for mutual benefit. As a consequence of this meeting, Damascus staff and students attended St Aloysius to give a morning liturgy which will become an annual arrangement. In addition, the Principal attended St Aloysius to address their community and to present on the benefits of Catholic Education.

In 2016 Damascus welcomed a new Archivist which again brought renewed focus and innovation to Damascus Archive Management. Throughout 2016 we identified that the College archives needed attention and re-organisation, and this was a priority for 2016 and will be an ongoing task moving into the future. Cataloguing data in to the Archives database is an ongoing task and the sorting and cataloguing of 'unsorted' archive boxes since 1996 has begun. We have disposed of archive items as per the retention schedule and the Archivist now regularly contributes to the Alumni Facebook page and The Road publication, by submitting archive photos and stories.

In order to develop a consistent and professional Damascus brand, throughout 2016 a Communications Style Guide was developed, defining the new Damascus brand, how it should always look in the marketplace and provides templates for launch in 2017 to the College staff, including fax sheets, letterhead, ads, brochures, colours, envelopes etc.

Goal 2: Engage parents who contribute to the growth of students, the College and broader community

Actions:

- Engage parents in established school events and ensure opportunities for participation are communicated via a range of methods Eg. Guest Speaker, Mothers & Father's Day liturgies, Morning Teas
- Communicate regularly with current and prospective parents through the College Facebook page, Twitter, College Newsletter and SMS messages
- Develop and implement a Parent Ambassador Program that gets parents involved in marketing DC eg. Info Sessions, Opening Mornings, Coffee Catch-ups, digital ambassadors etc
- Communicate volunteer opportunities to parents and grow the volunteer database

- Communicate to current parents to join DC Alumni via email, Facebook, twitter, newsletter, LinkedIn
- Conduct an online survey with parents about parental engagement eg. Do they feel they're engaged, what do they participate in, what would they like to participate in, how could improvements be made etc.
- Improve the Damascus Newsletter to better engage with parents
- Respond to parent enquiries in a timely manner eg. within 24 hours
- Increase alumni activities and ensure current parents are invited, as they are also past students
- Communicate effectively with parents regarding upcoming College event opportunities

Achievements:

Throughout 2016 Damascus continued to strengthen engagement levels with its parent community. Parents were engaged in established College events with strong attendance at events such Guest Speaker, Awards & Achievement Evening, Mother's & Father's Day Liturgies, Year 7 new parents morning teas, TA interviews, Subject interviews, Orientation Day morning tea and Year 7 Meet the Teachers evening.

A new event was developed throughout 2016 which will be launched in February 2017 and this is the inaugural Academic Assembly, aimed at inspiring the student body to aspire to academic excellence. This event invited parents and families to Damascus to celebrate student achievement.

The mediums used to communicate to parents have increased in 2016, including College Facebook page, Twitter, College newsletter and website and SMS messages.

The Parental Engagement Policy was reviewed, amended and expanded to be much more comprehensive in 2016. Volunteer opportunities are communicated to parents via the newsletter and College Facebook site. In 2016 Damascus received 12 new volunteer applications, making a total of 69 volunteers listed in the database. Not all of these 69 are active volunteers, so a review was undertaken in 2016, finding 33 of the 69 being active throughout 2016. Parental volunteering is particularly strong in the areas of Rowing, Energy Breakthrough Team (EBT), Camps and the Timor Leste program.

The SAS database was also utilised in 2016 to tap into parent expertise for the annual Science Careers Expo and an approach was made to parents regarding work experience and Gap year job opportunities for graduates, which brought numerous new work experience and/or gap year opportunities for graduates, through local and Melbourne organisations.

Parents of Damascus can also be past students of Damascus, so we have regularly communicated via the College newsletter and Facebook for parents to join the Damascus Alumni group, so that they stay connected and are invited to their class reunion.

An online parent survey conducted to Year 8 parents, reflecting on their experience as a Year 7 parent the year previous. This data is compiled and used to continually improve processes at Damascus.

The Road publication (produced biannually) that is distributed to alumni and current families was given a fresh new look in 2016, with the aim of making it a publication that families are excited to read, proud of and keep for posterity. The improved design of The Road also adds to the attractiveness and professionalism of the publication.

The Damascus Newsletter was improved and reorganised in 2016 to increase parent engagement and readership, in addition staff were encouraged to regularly contribute stories to the Newsletter, so that it is more interesting and parents feel more connected with the College and its activities.

It is the Damascus philosophy to respond to parent enquiries in a timely manner, which are generally completed as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the enquiry has been made.

Student attendance at College events is extremely important, and in 2016 we regularly communicated to parents this importance. In 2016 out of the four key major events (Swimming, Athletics, Lap of the Lake and Damascus Day), student absences fluctuated, in comparison to 2015, absences for the 2016 Swimming and Athletics Carnivals were higher, but absences for Lap of the Lake and Damascus Day were less or similar. It is a challenge to reduce the amount of absences at these key events, but we continually communicate this to parents.

Parent Access Module (PAM), TA interviews and Parent Teacher Subject Interviews are other forms of communication to parents about student progress. Parents attending TA interviews increased when compared to 2015. There are four opportunities for parents to attend a TA interview and for 2016 the attendance rate was Term 1 88%, Term 2 65%, Term 3 53% and Term 4 50%. This gradual decline in attendance throughout the year is consistent amongst previous years, but overall attendance rates were good, but there is always room for improvement.

Effective communication with parents remains key to strong parental engagement and the College continues to use a range of communication methods to engage with its parent community.

Goal 3: Strong links to the global community

Actions:

- Host all 17 Catholic primary schools for a transition visit
- Conduct a Maths Games Day for Grade 4 students from key Catholic primary schools - St Alipius, St Francis Xavier and Emmaus

- Host Guest Speaker event and invite catholic primary staff, parents and local community to guest speaker event in May
- Communicate College events and activities regularly to catholic newsletters, such as Catholic Diocese of Ballarat - Our Diocesan Community and Sisters of Mercy – just Mercy e-newsletter
- Increase distribution of 'Damascus In Touch' newsletter to catholic primary schools from twice a year to four times a year (1 per Term)
- Invite Grade 5 students from target Catholic Primary School's to performing arts production, limited space available at venue
- Meet with Principals of catholic primary schools biennial (every 2 years) to discuss ways of working together, value add. Distribute collateral
- Introduce school visits aimed at catholic primary schools by DC staff and students
- Develop relationships with key local media personnel
- Represent Damascus at Catholic Development Network
- Engage Alumni artist each year for the Alumni Art Project
- Improve communication and collaboration with Loreto and St Pats in Ballarat
- Regularly promote Damascus commitment to social justice and helping people less fortunate

Achievements:

Damascus College has continued to consolidate its relationships with local parishes and parish primary schools throughout 2016. 15 of the seventeen parish primary schools undertook a transition visit to Damascus with their Grade 5 students in 2016, which was similar to the previous year. Throughout 2016 numerous primary schools requested additional transition visits at lower year levels to Damascus, including St Thomas More, St Brendan's Dunnstown and St Mary's Clarkes Hill. This demonstrates the value primary schools place on visiting Damascus and this increases our exposure to a greater number of prospective students.

The Damascus Transition Co-ordinator also visits parish primary schools to assist with the transition of incoming Damascus students, in 2016. This practice builds on the relationship with the primary school, as well as helping the student to better transition to secondary college.

The College's transition program continues to receive extremely positive feedback from primary school staff as a highly engaging experience for their students, and we know of several instances where students have returned with their parents to participate in a School Tour or an Information Evening following an enjoyable transition visit.

In addition to the transition program, Damascus hosts a Maths Games Day for Grade 4 students from Emmaus Primary School, St Francis Xavier Primary School and St Alipius Primary School, during numeracy week in August. This event, now in its third year, was a highly successful day with 140 Grade 4 students in attendance, who were mentored by Damascus Year 9 students. This event provides a great opportunity for community building between the four schools within the Ballarat East parish, and showcases Damascus not only to the students who attend, but also to the primary school staff and volunteers present on the day.

Each year Damascus holds a school production and in 2016 it was Grease, this event is seen as another opportunity to engage with primary schools and to showcase Damascus. 150 Grade 5 students from Emmaus Primary School, St Alipius Primary School, St James Primary School and St Patricks Primary School in Gordon attended a show specifically performed to this group, and feedback received from staff and students on the day was that it was well appreciated and a very successful day.

The annual guest speaker event at Damascus is a great way to engage with parents, but also the wider community. This event gives an open invitation to all members of the community to attend and experience this FREE event. It showcases our facilities to prospective families who may not have considered Damascus, but also is a positive way to use our facilities that engages and reinforces our relationship with the local community. The 2016 guest speaker event was presented by Success Coach, Darren Pereira, on 'Parenting strategies for teenage success' and we welcomed 259 attendees from within and outside the Damascus community. The important element of this event is that the topic presented is general enough to attract a wide audience from the local community and that it continues to be a FREE event. We received much positive feedback following this event, particularly as the guest speaker presented to the student body and staff throughout the day, and then the parents/community that night, allowing students and parents to consolidate the learnings together.

Throughout 2016 Damascus has developed a strong relationship with local media, as a result increasing Damascus reach and links to the global community. 24 media releases were developed showcasing Damascus, reinforcing this relationship. Damascus also regularly communicates to Catholic media and contributes regularly to Catholic newsletters including: Our Diocesan Community and Just Mercy e-newsletters. This ongoing connection strengthens the Damascus profile and relationship with other Catholic ministries and organisations, thus increasing reach to the global community.

In 2016 Damascus increased the distribution of the newsletter to parish primary schools, from two per year to four per year, or one every Term. This regular communication and information sharing, assists to build closer links with the parish community.

Damascus now regularly attends the Catholic Development Network (CDN) meetings in Melbourne, helping to strengthen the Damascus profile in the wider Catholic community throughout Victoria, and these assist in learning from others to improve outcomes at Damascus. Towards the end of 2016, Damascus was approached to host the first CDN meeting in 2017. This is an exciting opportunity as approximately 150 Development staff from Catholic schools throughout Victoria will visit Damascus, experience our facilities, and strengthen our profile within the global community.

For the last two years, Damascus has commissioned a past student or staff member to produce an art piece interpreting the Damascus motto 'To Live by the Light of Christ.' In 2016 we welcomed the piece by past student Nareeda Lewers and commissioned the 2017 sculpture by Peter Thomas. This innovative project enables Damascus to reconnect with past students wherever they are located, by encouraging them to re-engage with the College and acts as great promotion to the wider community, showcasing the talents of Damascus alumni.

2016 has seen great collaboration and communication with the two other Catholic Secondary Colleges in Ballarat; St Patrick's College and Loreto College, via the Development staff. Building this relationship has led to greater co-operation and cohesion of the promotion of Catholic education in Ballarat, in particular a joint advertising venture in the Catholic Schools Guide, which is a state-wide publication, showcasing our three Catholic Colleges to a state-wide audience, thus assisting to reach the global community.

It is no secret that Damascus is committed to social justice and helping people less fortunate. In 2016 this commitment was promoted through the distribution of media releases (Sleep Out for St Vincent De Paul, Timor Leste fundraisers, White Ribbon Day Activities etc) and a new and exciting partnership was formed with the One Humanity Shower Bus. Developing new and maintaining current partnerships in the local community with not for profit organisations is a great way to help the local homeless and strengthen our links to the global community.

VALUE ADDED

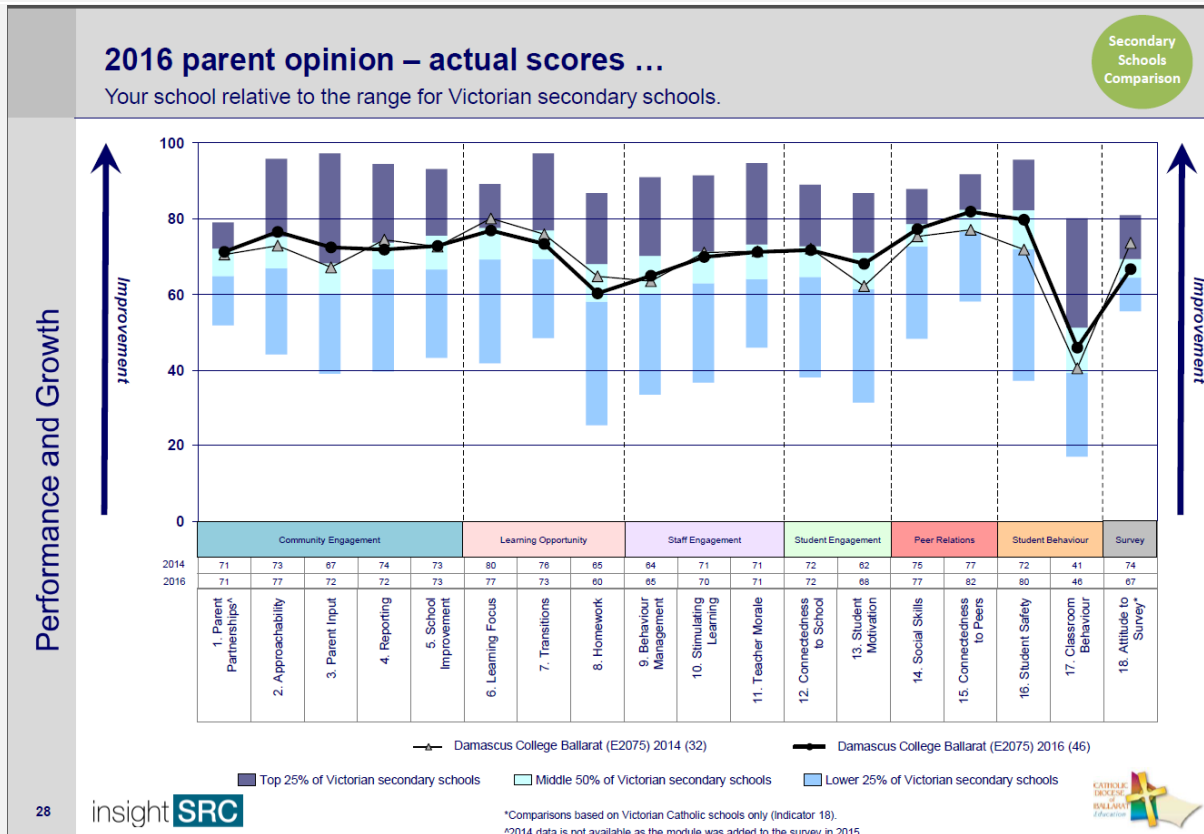
The below are extra-curricular activities available at Damascus College:

- Drama Club
- Rowing Club
- Justice Action Group
- College Choir
- Debating
- Timor Leste Immersion Program
- Environment Group – The Green Group
- Peer Mentoring Group
- Wellbeing Group
- French & Indonesian Language Trips
- Energy Breakthrough Team
- After School Sports: Basketball, Football, Soccer, Netball, Athletics, Swimming, Cricket, Volleyball

- Book Club
- Chess Club
- Music Lessons
- Fundraising and social justice activities
- Performing Arts Production – Drama and Musical
- Visual Art exhibitions
- Interschool Sporting Association – Ballarat Associated Schools (BAS)
- SRC
- Volunteering
- Photography

PARENT SATISFACTION

There are many areas where our parents are reflecting positive feedback on school improvement. The area that requires the most significant reflection is in the learning opportunity domain. This has been reiterated through the strategic directions processes and is a firm focus for the school within 2016 and into the future.



Leadership & Stewardship

Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Finalise and promulgate the Damascus College Strategic Directions 2016-2020
- Create a framework of feedback and professional growth for senior and middle leaders
- Restructure Annual Review Meetings to support improved practice

Achievements

Since mid-2015 the College Board, led initially by Vin Dillon and followed on by Joe Cahir in the role of Chair, commenced the process of developing the Strategic Directions 2016-20.

Experienced educator, Philomena Billington guided the Board in the development of our next road map and the consultation processes were extensive. The College community is very excited about the new directions for our College as they affirm the work that we have already undertaken and challenge us to new heights in achieving the vision for the young people of this community. A vision that states; "Damascus College is a Christ centred Learning community that values each member and is committed to inspiring and challenging students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community."

The Strategic Directions were promulgated at the end of July at a joint staff and Board event. An exceptional multi-media resource was developed by Leader of School Development, Sarah Boswell and O'Collins House Leader, Daniel Jans. This resource allows us to revisit our shared purpose at all levels across the College over the life of this plan. All members of our community have been encouraged to tap into the documentation, it is not wordy and it provides a snapshot of the key elements of the College's identity and the directions to be taken over the years to come.

Our College Board does a wonderful job in providing the strategic focus for our community. They are supported by a series of sub-committees that support learning and teaching, well-being, school community, Catholic school culture and finance, facilities and risk. It was determined through the process that Leadership and Management was an animator within each of the subcommittees and that as such it would be disbanded as a sub-committee of the Board.

The College recognises that middle leaders are the most influential leaders in the overall movement of change and improved outcomes across the College. A framework of feedback was developed and former Principal, Frank Fitzgerald was engaged to work with the Principal on 360 degree feedback to leaders in Positions of Leadership Level three. A schedule of review was developed and the operational implementation commenced in 2016.

The Organisational Culture Inventory of 2015 sought greater clarity of teachers' responsibilities and a structured approach to professional learning. At the completion of last year it was determined to change the previous model where Leadership Team members conduct the Annual Review Meeting (ARM) meetings. The structure was reviewed to empower Learning Area Leaders and Professional Practice Team Leaders to more directly engage with the staff members in their teams. The College moved away from the documentation used previously to frame the interview around teachers' self-reflection on the AITSL Professional Standards tool. Staff commenced the process of developing a professional growth plan, tied into the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards and informed by their Annual Review Meeting (ARM). It is still a reasonably rudimentary process, but provides a starting point for refinement in 2017.

EXPENDITURE AND TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

DESCRIPTION OF PL UNDERTAKEN IN 2016

Teachers undertook a range of internal and external professional learning throughout 2016 with a very strong focus on the internal Teacher Performance and Development Module (TPDM) which is strongly documented in this and earlier reports. External activities were provided through subject association and private providers. A raft of whole staff and role specific professional learning opportunities were provided.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PL

85

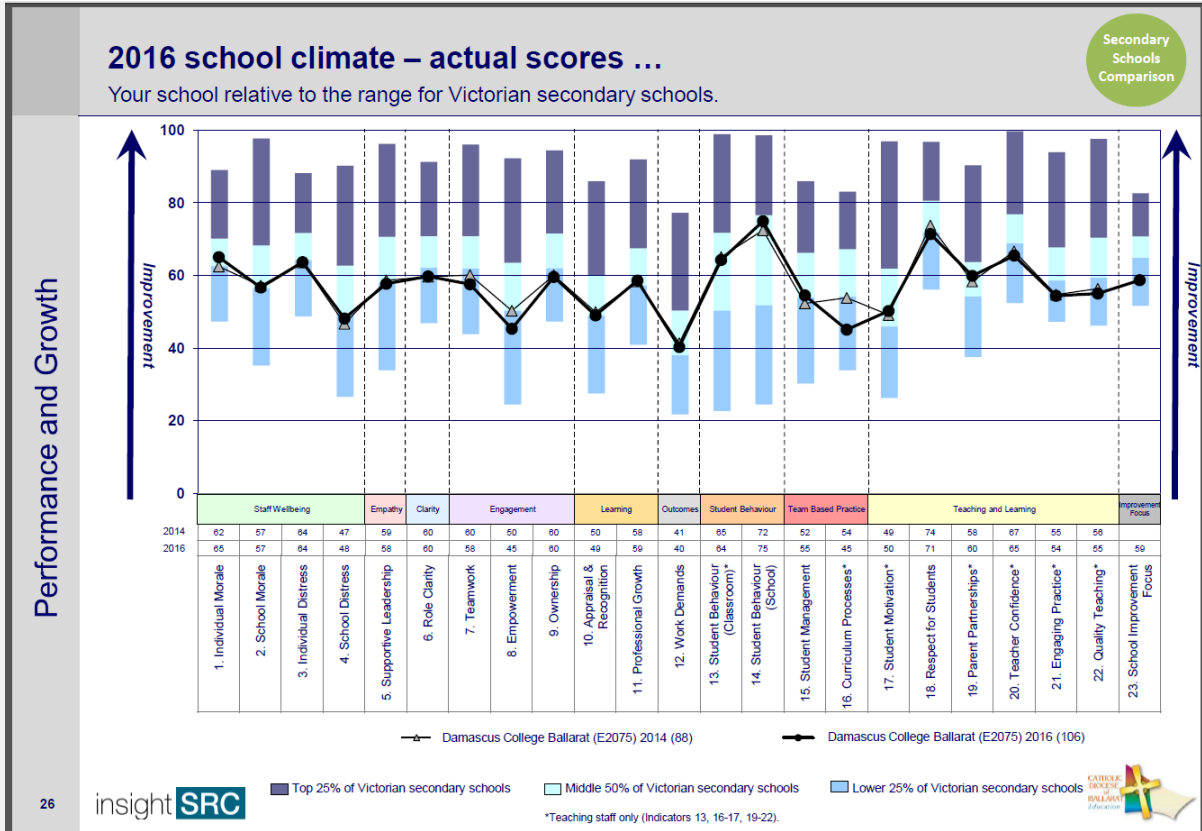
AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER TEACHER FOR PL

\$1988.00

TEACHER SATISFACTION

The context of professional growth has been specifically addressed within the learning and teaching elements of this report, and it is pleasing. There has not been a significant change to the staff satisfaction data to insight SRC on previous reports. This has resulted in the execution of an Organisational Culture Inventory which has been extensively accounted for throughout this report and will influence the future directions of the College.

The overall school climate has remained relatively consistent across recent years. 2016 saw teacher satisfaction drop off in the area of team based practice and empowerment. These may be attributable to change management needing more effective management, or in response to the college's efforts to bring about cultural change by increasing measures of accountability. It is pleasing to see that there is recognition of improved student behaviour and that staff morale has shown some improvement. Other aspects of feedback are very consistent with preceding years.



Learning & Teaching

Goals & Intended Outcomes

- Develop an Early start program to support improved Learning and Teaching
- Continue the Rollout of the One to One Device Program
- Undertake review of St Martin's Resource Centre
- Consolidate the final stage of the Teacher Performance and Development Model.

Achievements

In the Strategic Directions document, the Learning and Teaching focus for 2016 to 2020 is for "Progressive and innovative learning and teaching that maximises student outcomes." In line with this direction, the College understands that learning is an ongoing process, and each year level/unit is connected to the next.

In 2016 the Learning Area Leaders proposed an early start program that gave greater validity to the end of year transitional arrangements for senior students and provided a mechanism to address the organisational complexities for all students while putting learning and achievement at the heart of the educational change.

The program entails all students progressing to their next year level for the last two weeks of the calendar year.

The benefits of this are

- * To improve the continuity of learning from one calendar year to the next
- * To optimise valuable learning time
- * To increase organisational efficiency

To improve the continuity of learning from one calendar year to the next

It can be difficult for students to make links between what has been learned in one calendar year and learning in subsequent year(s) or unit(s). However, research on learning shows that these connections are vital for learning to be effective. To emphasise the connections, the calendar is going to 'flow' into further learning without the interruption of a long break. This doesn't mean more work for all involved, but it does mean that links between one year's learning and the next will become more apparent.

To optimise valuable learning time

It has become increasingly apparent that the 1st Semester of each year presents a number of challenges due to the number of public holidays that take place at that time every year. There are also a number of whole school events that are important celebrations of our identity and community that occur in the first term. These events reduce both the number of days available

and disrupt the flow of learning as one learning experience builds on the next. In order to create more learning opportunities and more effective learning the College will take a period of time from one calendar year and allocate it to the subsequent semester, thereby optimising learning time. Additionally, moving to a new year level, and therefore new subjects and new groupings, will energise learning at a time when energy levels may otherwise 'flag'.

To increase organisational efficiency

For organisational purposes, the previous transition procedure for the senior school created the complexity of running three timetables at once ('Orientation', normal junior classes and end of semester exams) room clashes, teachers missing extras and students getting lost were constant features of this approach.

VCE and VCAL teachers had to plan for extras as well as Orientation therefore doubling teacher workload. In the Early Start program staff won't be preparing for extras as well as taking orientation classes

Quite often in the past, junior classes were not taught by their normal teacher as their normal teacher was busy with the VCE/VCAL orientation. These students are left with fill-in staff for their final weeks. This created real challenges for end of year assessment and it placed great pressure on junior students finishing off coursework and staff in completing their learning programs.

Having a two week Early Start Program allows students to commence a learning program and carry this work over the holiday break. It provides genuine learning experience and not just a transitional exposure to a subject. It allows for greater equity in semester length to accommodate the many non-classroom events and learning activities that take place over first semester.

With each change of year level, core groupings change, and whilst these changes are made on the basis of the best information available at the time, they are not always ideal. With Early Start, the opportunity to 'try' new student groupings in core classes may be possible. Also subject changes can be finalised before the beginning of the calendar year.

There were two unintended benefits that became apparent from the program. Student anxiety about classes for the commencement of the subsequent year was significantly diminished. This was feedback through numerous families. There was also the benefit of well planned, and collaborative learning activities. The result of this new initiative was a focussed planning and delivery process, achieved through a shared sense of purpose and understanding that to finish the year with something new, the staff team needed to be well organised.

2016 saw the next phase of implementation of the one to one device program with students in Year 7 and 10 receiving a device for 2016. This meant that all student from years 7-10 had a

personalised learning device in 2016. The College had moved the learning resource over to the Jacaranda suite to ensure a more consistent and genuinely interactive experience for students as opposed to the more static learning fields of 2015. The affordability of Jacaranda for families was better, although it did require the introduction of a different Mathematics text book, to enable the utilisation of Maths learning tools such as “Hot Maths”. Students adapted to the new technology well and the College infrastructure coped with the increased demand. The revised protective coverings were far more effective for the Year 7 & 10 students to 2016, with substantially reduced student breakages, particularly amongst Year 7 boys. Staff became more adept managing personalised learning devices for students throughout 2016. The use of One Note as a repository of student workbooks became far more prevalent. Staff collegially shared their learning about ICT and continued to explore new applications and software. The ICT team expanded their staff to meet the growing maintenance needs of the College fleet.

Anne Doody of the CEOB was commissioned to undertake a review of the St Martin’s Resource Centre (SMRC). This review created a picture of the SMRC aspiring to quality support for student and staff learning in the College. Internal documentation can benefit from being updated, and a routine for regular revision be developed. Regular data collection and evaluation should ideally become common practice for the SMRC staff to enable them to self-reflect and revise goals and processes appropriately to be responsive to continually changing educational needs. Eg. What percentage of teachers frequently utilise SMRC resources and facilities? Of those who do not, why not? What would increase the percentage? Are there times when students under-utilise the facilities? How skilled are students in information / digital skills? Do students recognise the SMRC as primarily a place of learning, or somewhere to ‘hang out’? Which resources are being frequently utilised by students, and which are under-utilised by students? How can SMRC staff promote them to be more suitably utilised? How might this information inform decision making about staffing, opening times, etc?

Such questions need to be constantly in the minds of all SMRC and the College Leadership team in informing the future directions of the SMRC.

2016 saw the final cohort undertake the Teacher Performance Development Model at Damascus. This model entailed an Action Research approach to trialling strategies for differentiation in the classroom, with a trusted colleague or colleagues to act as an advisor and making some classroom visits as part of the process. This framework of collaboration and feedback have been an important part of the suite of teacher growth at Damascus in 2016. The majority of the staff have now undertaken the program over the last three years.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The College continues to support students across all facets of their learning. The general trend for improved numeracy outcomes may be attributable to supporting 10% of the Year 7 cohort with the Quicksmart Program. A program designed to improve working memory through the quicker recall of number facts. The strong team approach by the Mathematics team is also an important factor. It is pleasing to see such significant growth in the Year 9 writing data in 2016 and this may be a reflection of the different approach taken within the junior curriculum to writing. Spelling and Grammar within language conventions continue to be areas of reflection for the College address improved learning outcomes in this space.

2015 POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS as per On Track data which received a 25.8% response rate. (30 respondents of 116 school leavers) six months after leaving school

TERTIARY STUDY	54.2 %
TAFE / VET	14.6%
APPRENTICESHIP / TRAINEESHIP	8.1%
DEFERRED	9.7%
EMPLOYMENT	9.6%

Wellbeing

Goals & Intended Outcomes

- To Reinforce Restorative Practices
- To Promote Community Wellbeing
- To assist School refusers to come to school
- To Further develop TA student/teacher/parent relationships
- To Develop student leadership
- To Develop the Potter's Corner
- To support staff wellbeing

Achievements

Another year has passed and our Damascus students have been involved in so many amazing activities both at school and within the community. Sports, Camps, Debating, South Street Competitions, CPDA, Nazareth House pamper group, Retreats, Reflection days, Peer Mentoring, formals, SRC, Magazine Committee, Justice Action Group (JAG), Green Group, EBT, Seeds of Justice, Choir, School Productions, Timor Leste experience, Language trips and Damascus Day just to name a few. What an all-round education our students are able to experience.

1. To Reinforce Restorative Practices

Earlier this year the Assistant Principal of Student Wellbeing was privileged to be part of a Mercy Pilgrimage to Baggot St in Dublin, the home of Catherine McAuley and during the week long pilgrimage Jo reflected on the life of Catherine and the values that she upheld throughout her ministry. These values of forgiveness, love, compassion, dignity and respect align with the values which underpin restorative practices which we continue to use at Damascus when student issues arise. On Jo's return she explicitly imbedded these values into our restorative practices by providing reminders to staff, students and parents of our restorative practices and how they are used within the school. It has been fantastic to see students taking more responsibility for their actions and working through mediation processes to right any wrong that has been done. It has been great to get such positive parent feedback after the mediation sessions as students have gone home feeling happy that all situations have been worked through with a positive outcome.

2. To Promote Community Wellbeing

At the beginning of 2016 the College welcomed Psychologist Stef Tan-Kristanto to our Wellbeing team and she was instrumental in developing a Student Wellbeing team. This voluntary group of students from all year levels met regularly and were prominent in the development of the Wellbeing Wednesday Facts which were published on the Damascus Facebook page, as well as promoting wellbeing days such as RU OK day. The students

presented relevant wellbeing information at House Assemblies as well as to the Student Wellbeing subcommittee of the Board. Well done to Stef and her team. Late in 2016 the members of the Student Wellbeing team for 2017 were elected by their respective House and therefore membership became a much more prestigious position and each member has been given a wellbeing badge to wear on their blazer.

Stef, with the assistance of Jess Dunstan implemented an Art Therapy program during 2016. These sessions occurred after school for a group of students with specific needs who were showing symptoms of anxiety. We employed an Art Therapist who worked with a group of approximately 10 students for a term. These students loved the sessions as they were able to express themselves using their creativity while interacting with both the counsellors and other students. A report was written after the Art Therapy was completed to clinically evaluate its effectiveness for future programs.

Annually the College engages a guest speaker for student and parental wellbeing education. Our 2016 speaker, Darren Perreira, was a hit with both students and parents. The Year 7 and 8 students completed a program titled 'Power to Persist' which was designed to help the students develop resilience, grit and take risks to prepare them for the rigours of academic study and life. The Year 9 and 10 students completed a program titled 'Shape Your Destiny' which was designed to help the students become motivated to achieve, by helping them connect to a meaningful pathway, set goals and create a concrete career action plan. The Year 11 and 12 students looked at 'VCE Success Strategies' which were designed to maximise the students' motivation, organisation, study skills and resilience.

In the evening session Darren spoke to over 300 community members on Parenting Strategies for Teenage Success which gave parents practical tools on how to create a positive home environment conducive to raising their child's academic performance, mental health and wellbeing. Once again it was a fantastic community event which provided fantastic information for each section of the community.

3. To assist School refusers to come to school

One of the emerging issues that we are finding mainly at years 8 and 9 is school refusal. During 2015 one Year 8 student left the school because of school refusal and unfortunately has chosen to not follow through with any education. This was extremely disappointing as we endeavour to assist all students to come to school even part time. During 2016 we had another 4 students who were presenting as school refusers. Throughout the year the House Leaders and counsellors worked with both the student and parents to develop specialised programs, some of them part time, as well as introducing them to alternative education settings within Ballarat. All 4 of these students have moved to other alternative settings within either the Navigator program, Berry Street School or a Federation University TAFE program. We see this as a success when students are still attending an educational setting even if it not at Damascus College.

Stef and Rachel Wallbank worked through 2016 to develop a set of procedures for the House Leaders to use when dealing with school refusers. We will trial these procedures throughout 2017.

4. To Further develop TA student/teacher/parent relationships

It is fantastic to see the relationship within our TA's further developing as students have had the same TA teacher throughout their time at Damascus. Dialogue with staff, students and parents reveal stories about how the students and parents are developing relationships that have been fostered with their TA teacher. TA interviews are becoming a real social event as parents and TA teachers get to know one other so well.

In 2016 Angela Hoban was given the position of Leader of Teacher Advisors. She has provided activities for TA teachers on a weekly basis in an email outlining morning discussion activities, YouTube clips and Word of the Week for TA teachers to stimulate discussion between members of the TA. Angela has also implemented themes for TA periods which occur twice each term and provides information for the TA's to use on topics such as Resilience, Happiness, Study Skills and Goal setting.

5. Development of student leadership

Georgia Shillito and Kirsten Phyland took over the running of the SRC and the Peer Mentoring program during 2016. We had a fantastic number of Peer Mentors from Year 10 who were trained in how to mentor Year 7's. These students worked with the Year 7 students each fortnight throughout Semester 1. The Year 7's loved the activities and formed a fantastic bond with the Year 10 students. It was great to have the Mentors attend Year 7 camp in the evening to work with their group, the Year 7's were thrilled to see them.

Our student leaders took on a fantastic leadership presence around the school throughout the year. Their organisation of Damascus Day was amazing and the numerous activities that they organised went off without a hitch. It was great to have them attend leadership meetings with the staff leaders to present their thoughts on what the day was to look like. They were also able to argue for having a greater amount of time allotted to the student activities on Damascus Day.

All 2017 student leaders were elected by the end of Term 3 2016 and were able to then go through a planning process for this year and gain leadership skills at 2 leadership training days. The senior SRC students attended the GRIP leadership conference at Federation University with student leaders from other secondary schools. At this conference the students developed skills such as communication, leading others, organisation and conducting meetings.

The second leadership day was for all SRC members from Years 8-12 and was led by Travers Munro. In the morning the students worked in House groups and participated in group building activities where communication was essential, in doing this the groups had to make sure that

the Year 8 students had as much say as the senior students. In the afternoon each group worked with their House Leaders to formulate a plan for the coming year.

In 2016 Korina Hegert asked for student volunteers to join the Magazine Committee. The students who volunteered took on the leadership role of organising and producing the Magazine under Korina's guidance and spent many hours involved with this fabulous production. This was another way that students have become leaders within the school.

6. Development of the Potters corner

The counsellors worked closely with Special Needs Coordinator, Cathy Prunty throughout 2016 to form closer links with the Special Needs students and found that one thing that the College lacked was a time out space for these students. In looking around the school the counsellors found a small room in building 4 which was being used as a storage room and they thought it was in a fantastic location for a timeout room as it was close to Year 7 and 8 classes.

The room has been decorated, has a facility to play music and has activities that the students can do to relax while they spend time in the room. Only one student is able to use this room at any one time and is in there for up to 15 mins. It is used by students when they need to have timeout due to anxiety or stress.

The following information was provided to staff regarding the Potter's Corner:

Potter's Corner

Room 4206 has been renamed and redecorated into Potter's Corner. The purpose of this room is to be a safe and accessible place for a student to retreat to for short periods if they are feeling anxious, stressed or overwhelmed.

The room has a number of features in it including:

- Kinetic sand
- Colouring books, papers and pencils
- Fidget, sensory, and distraction toys
- A boombox to play music through the radio or using their own MP3 device (quietly)
- Weighted blanket to assist in calming
- Beanbag for a student or staff member to chat in comfortably in a way they can recognise they are not in trouble (waiting to get a second soon)
- A desk and chair where they can continue with their school work in a quieter or more peaceful environment.

As you can tell by all the cool stuff, it is NOT a place to send students if they have been naughty!!!

Please note the below guidelines for the room's use:

1. Potter's Corner is to remain locked at all times when unattended. Only teachers, Positions of Leadership (POL), Learning Support Officers (LSOs) and counsellors can open the room up for students.
2. A staff member is to take the student to the room if they are feeling overwhelmed or anxious or need 'time out'
3. Students are to use the room for short term time out only (20 mins max) – if the staff member is leaving the student in the room on their own, the timer in the room is to be set at an agreed upon time for when the staff member will collect them to take them back to class. It is recommended that the staff member keep an eye out every 5-10mins from outside the room if they are leaving the child on their own.
4. The staff member needs to sign them into the log book on the bookshelf (to help us work out how often and under what circumstances the room is being used)
5. If the staff member cannot pick the student up, it is the staff member's responsibility to arrange for another staff member to pick them up
6. The staff member who picks them up needs to ensure that the room is tidy when the student leaves and lock the door behind them.
7. If a student needs more than 20 mins, they should be sent to Sick Bay.
8. Email Cathy Prunty if a funded student has used the room so she can follow up if required.

7. Staff Wellbeing Program

During term 2 a wellbeing program for staff was developed where staff were given points for participating in a variety of activity programs. Staff Pilates, Boot Camp, Mindfulness and gym sessions were offered to all staff before and after school. Almost half the staff participated in collecting points with the winner receiving a \$100 voucher of their choice and all staff who got at last 50 points were given a movie ticket. This was a fantastic initiative to get staff exercising.

Below is the information provided by the counsellors regarding numbers of students seen, initiatives they developed and reasons for students accessing them.

The College continues to use the SIMON intranet to record daily absences. Non-attendance that is not parentally acknowledged is followed up with a SMS message. Protracted absences without communication are followed up in the first instance by the teacher advisor and following that by the House leader. Significant effort goes into building relationships with families to ensure effective communication between the College and home. The approach to school refusers has been outlined in 3 above.

VALUE ADDED

2016 initiatives

- Student Wellbeing Group (who completed the Action against Bullying Day, R U OK? Day, created a Stress Management TA curriculum, attended headspace and are now a Leadership role for 2017)
- Staff wellbeing points program
- Art Therapy program
- Project Rokit presentation for the Year 8s
- Potter's Corner – a safe space for students
- Autism presentations to teachers and aides
- Supported students on Year 7, 8, 9 and 12 camps or retreats
- Created procedure plans for Positive Behaviour Support, Anxiety Support, Risk Management and Back to School Plans

STUDENT SATISFACTION

The Insight SRC data indicated that student culturally were having a higher expectation on all facets of their school life over the last two years. Culturally the College needs to continue to support students' sense of self belief and build their capacity to achieve and manage difficult situations.

Child Safety Standards

Goals and Intended Outcomes

- To provide a safe and inclusive environment for all children and young adults that is compliant with the relevant legislation.

Achievements

In 2016 Damascus College worked through the Child Safe Standards listed below to ensure compliance by August 1st deadline as per Ministerial Order 870.

We continued to develop the processes into 2017

STANDARD 1- Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety

- Inclusion of Child Safety in the Strategic Directions statement – ‘Damascus College aspires to: diversity in a safe and supportive school.’
- A Child Protection Officer (CPO) was appointed. Sr Marie Davey assumed this role at Damascus.
- CPO, Student Counsellors, Wellbeing Team are accepting of the responsibility for putting the practices into action.

STANDARD 2- A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety

- Included within the college strategic directions documentation
- Child Safe Policy was ratified in 2016
- Child Safe Policy is posted on the College Website and is brought to the attention of parents and students through the College Newsletter.

STANDARD 3- A child safety code of conduct

- A Code of Conduct has been developed and presented to all staff – receipt of this is recorded to ensure that all those who come in contact with the students are aware of their responsibilities. It has also been included in employment processes.
- The Code of Conduct was presented to other adults who work with students in the school – volunteers, Casual Relief Teachers (CRT's), Pre Service Teachers (PST's)

STANDARD 4- School staff selection, supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment

- Reference to Child Safety is included in all documents relating to the employment of new staff. Reference checks also include assurance of Child Safety. Interview questions specifically address child safety.
- All new staff are informed of the school's child safety processes including the Code of Conduct.

STANDARD 5- Procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of suspected child abuse

- All Teaching staff have completed the online Mandatory Reporting module. In 2017 all non-teaching staff will be required to do the same.
- Damascus College follows mandated legislation for reporting child sexual abuse and reports such matters to Child Protection and to the Police – Sexual Offences and Child Investigation Team – (SOCIT).
- The PROTECT resource has been introduced to staff – this resource is wide ranging and familiarisation with this document fulfils several aspects of the Standards.

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/health/protect/ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf

STANDARD 6- Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse

- Risk Assessments are required for excursions but these are in the process of further development particularly in preparation for camps and overseas trips. This is a work in progress to enhance documents which have been in use currently.
- Regular risk assessments are conducted in various Learning areas to ensure the safety of the students in our care.
- The CPO has developed a procedure for recording of allegations and the response made in each case. This is recorded in a secure folder accessible only to the Principal and the CPO.
- College Governing authorities have been made aware of the obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse on an on-going basis through the Principal's report to the Board.

STANDARD 7- Strategies to promote child empowerment and participation

- The College manages behaviour standards for students using the Restorative Practices approach. Staff are given training in the processes to be used.
- The Teacher Advisor program which is embedded in the college is a means of developing healthy and respectful relationships in the community and giving students an avenue to voice their concerns in a safe and confidential manner.
- Student Counsellors are available to the students to support and enhance the previous point.
- Through the Teacher Advisor group issues such as respect, resilience, and empathy are addressed and practiced.
- Students are encouraged to have an awareness of the issue of child abuse and to have confidence to respond to issues where necessary.

VRQA Compliance Data

NOTE:

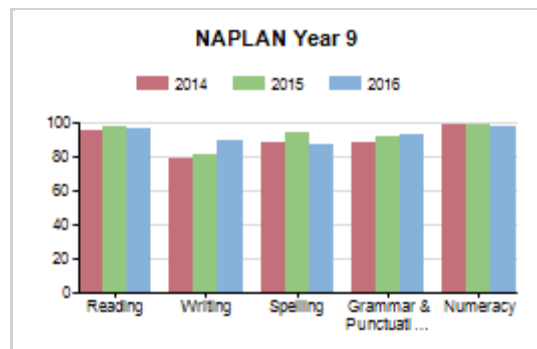
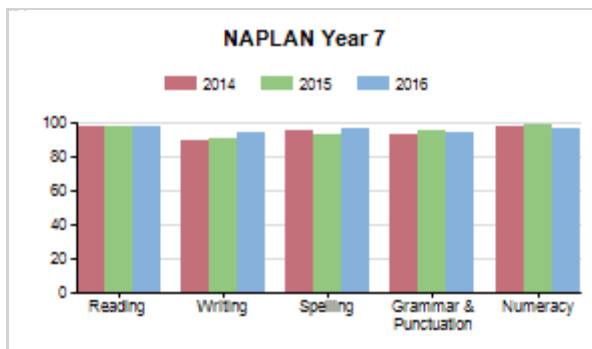
The School's financial performance information has been provided to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and will be available for the community to access from their website from October 2017.

[Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority](#)

E2075
Damascus College, Mount Clear

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

NAPLAN TESTS	2014 %	2015 %	2014–2015 Changes %	2016 %	2015–2016 Changes %
YR 07 Reading	97.4	97.4	0.0	97.9	0.5
YR 07 Writing	89.6	90.6	1.0	94.8	4.2
YR 07 Spelling	95.8	92.7	-3.1	96.9	4.2
YR 07 Grammar & Punctuation	93.7	95.8	2.1	94.3	-1.5
YR 07 Numeracy	97.9	98.9	1.0	96.9	-2.0
YR 09 Reading	95.5	97.7	2.2	96.5	-1.2
YR 09 Writing	78.5	81.9	3.4	90.1	8.2
YR 09 Spelling	88.7	94.8	6.1	87.8	-7.0
YR 09 Grammar & Punctuation	88.1	91.9	3.8	93.6	1.7
YR 09 Numeracy	99.4	99.4	0.0	97.5	-1.9



YEARS 9–12 STUDENT RETENTION RATE

Years 9–12 Student Retention Rate	73.03%
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AVERAGE STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE BY YEAR LEVEL		%
Y09		92.08
Y10		88.92
Y07		92.80
Y08		91.18
Overall average attendance		91.25

TEACHING STAFF ATTENDANCE RATE	
Teaching Staff Attendance Rate	93.52%

STAFF RETENTION RATE	
Staff Retention Rate	94.19%

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
Doctorate	0.00%
Masters	17.65%
Graduate	54.12%
Certificate Graduate	4.71%
Degree Bachelor	82.35%
Diploma Advanced	31.76%
No Qualifications Listed	1.18%

STAFF COMPOSITION	
Principal Class	2
Teaching Staff (Head Count)	87
FTE Teaching Staff	79.775
Non-Teaching Staff (Head Count)	45
FTE Non-Teaching Staff	36.005
Indigenous Teaching Staff	0

MEDIAN NAPLAN RESULTS FOR YEAR 9	
Year 9 Reading	583.50
Year 9 Writing	560.20
Year 9 Spelling	571.10
Year 9 Grammar & Punctuation	561.50
Year 9 Numeracy	573.00

SENIOR SECONDARY OUTCOMES	
VCE Median Score	28
VCE Completion Rate	100%
VCAL Completion Rate	88%