

Statutory Annual Report 2009

Here is the 2009 official report on Candlebark, as prescribed.

We are required to provide “contextual information about the School, including the characteristics of the student body”.

Devotees of “Beyond the Fringe” (if anyone even remembers it) will understand the temptation I am battling with, to write that the average student body at our school consists of four student limbs, a student torso, a student chest, and is joined to the student head by the student neck. However I am made of strong stuff, and will resist the temptation.

I’m not sure what “contextual information about the School, including the characteristics of the student body” actually means, but will confine myself to facts and say that Candlebark is a day school for children from prep through grade 9, in a forest setting, enrolling 86 students as of the August census in 2009. The typical student body lives in Gisborne, Sunbury or Woodend, and is transported to school by the student bus. However there are about 20 other student bodies scattered in a wide area from Trentham through Daylesford, Castlemaine, Newham, Lancefield, Romsey and Wallan.

Next, we are required to comment on “teacher standards and qualifications as mandated in the relevant jurisdiction”. This seems a little redundant, as we are not allowed to employ unqualified teachers, and to employ a teacher who was not registered by the Victorian Teachers Registration Board would result in heavy fines and, if we persisted, deregistration and closure. But, be comforted in the knowledge that all our teachers are qualified, registered, and generally quite clean.

We are asked to comment on “Workforce composition, including Indigenous composition”: in 2009 we had eight full-time teachers, one 0.8 teachers, one 0.4 teacher, three visiting music teachers, a Business Manager, a Property Manager, a School Manager, a part-time cleaner, a part-time bus driver, and a full-time principal. I haven’t been rude enough to ask any of them about their indigenous composition.

Next is a requirement to discuss student Attendance at school, and the way in which non-attendance is managed by the school. For 2009, we had a student attendance rate of 95%. Parents generally notify us when a student is unable to attend, but when they don’t, we contact them. We don’t have a problem with unauthorised absenteeism.

Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing:

Year 3

All students exceeded the national minimum standard in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation & Numeracy for this year level except for one student in three of the categories tested.

Year 5

All students exceeded the national minimum standard in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation & Numeracy for this year level except for one student in spelling, and another student in Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation.

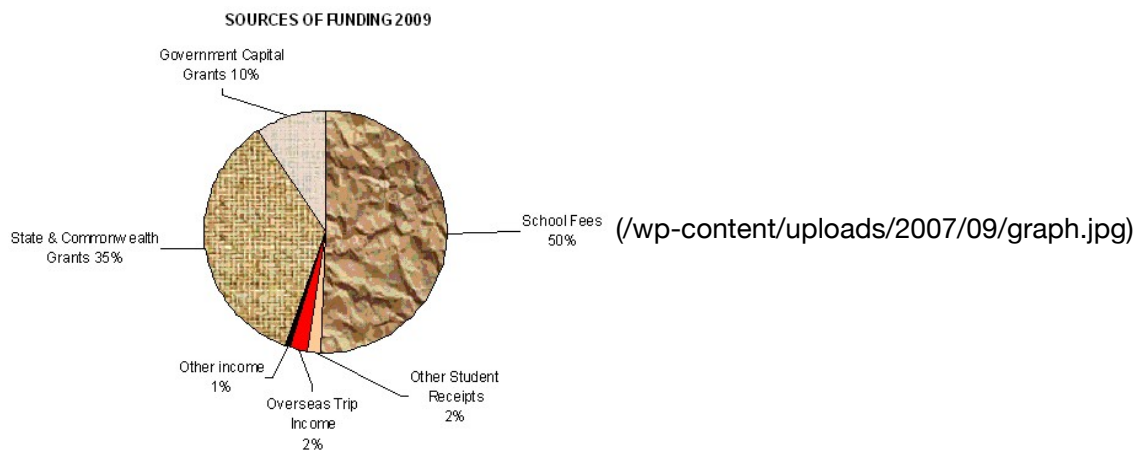
Year 7

All students exceeded the national minimum standard in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation & Numeracy for this year level except for one student who was below the national minimum standard in four of the categories tested.

Year 9

All students exceeded the national minimum standard in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation & Numeracy for this year level except for one student in numeracy.

We are required to give information as to our income, broken down by funding source. Hence the following pie graph:



I recently received some advertising material advertising a new set of textbooks or something similar. It asked six introductory questions.

- Are you committed to the **Personal Development** of your students?
- Do you value **'Positive Relationships'**?
- Do you believe that **TRUST** is important?
- Are you looking for new program **Ideas**?
- Are you interested in new ways to met **Values** education outcomes?

Are you looking for new ways to minimise **Bullying**?

It reminded me of my short career in door-to-door selling when I was 19. We were trained to sell encyclopaedias, using disgraceful tactics. I abandoned the job after knocking on four doors. The main thrust of our sales tactics was to ask customers a series of questions to which they could only answer "yes", so that they were conditioned to saying "yes" by the time we got to the final question, which was "Would you like to sign just here?"

It would be a brave school that answered "No" to the questions above, "No, we couldn't give a stuff about personal development and positive relationships actually."

These annual reports have always required us to write something which will convince those lovable, cute and cuddly bureaucrats, sitting in their remote offices, that we value values, and character development. So let me say that we are committed to the personal development of our students, we value positive relationships, we believe that trust is important, we are always looking for new program ideas and new ways to meet values education outcomes, as well as new ways to minimise bullying.

To this end we continued in 2009 to foster staff development by encouraging, hosting, and/or arranging for teachers to attend workshops or courses in subjects as diverse as the teaching of Spanish, the teaching of Maths, the teaching of reading, as well as more nebulous subjects like “Sustainability leadership & change”, “Learning Today and Tomorrow”, and “Visible Learning” (the last with Professor John Hattie). First aid, bushfire prevention and management, and new technology also came under our scrutiny.

As well as teaching ourselves, or arranging for ourselves to be taught, we taught the kiddies, or arranged for the kiddies to go places where there was a better than average chance that they might learn something. Groups of students went to places or spectacles like WOMAD, Canberra, the haute couture exhibition in Bendigo, Billy Elliot, ballets like Firebird and the Concorde program and workshops with Tasdance, the Great Ocean Walk, the Kimberleys, the Melbourne Writers Festival at Kyneton Town Hall, Scienceworks for Star Wars, “Fresh Science” at the Melbourne Museum, the Science Experience at Latrobe University, a canoe trip along the Murray River, Questacon and Parliament House and other places of interest in Canberra, the Salvador Dali exhibition, and the Melbourne Film Festival for kids. The students met, heard from and interacted with people like Professor John Hattie, flamenco exponents Paul and Lee, footballer/politician Justin Madden, writer Andy Griffiths, artist Shaun Tan, mathematician Dr. Gaye Williams, the producers and directors of the movie “Tomorrow, When the War Began”, charity worker Mother Anita from India, footysack exponent Dan Ednie, a wonderful range of international backpackers, chess teacher Nick Gibson, the Otesha cycling group, and on a regular basis, students and teachers from Sunbury Special School... as well as echidnas, snakes, kangaroos, koalas and wallabies....

Using our own resources we staged a History Week, which offered the opportunity to explore specialized historical topics in considerable depth. The range included The Black Death, History of Sailing Ships, the New Testament, the Renaissance, The Seven Wonders of the World, Bushrangers, and the French Revolution. One of the outcomes involved the whole school getting held up by bushrangers as we were completing a cross-country run, and being taken down to Stringybark Creek where we witnessed a shootout between Ned Kelly’s gang and the police.

And a week-long Drama Festival, which resulted in audiences moving from a scene from Berthold Brecht’s Mother Courage and Her Children, enacted on an old buggy behind the amenities block, down to the creek to see a fantastical performance among the autumn leaves by preps and grade ones. Drama was further enhanced by the adventurous and delightful midyear production of The Real Inspector Hound, along with a short second play, Catastrophe, and later the end of year musical Sanctuary Springs, written by staff-member Scott Hatcher, set to music by Taran Carter, and choreographed by Sarita Ryan, with Rosie Leverton and Belinda Saltmarsh-Kram. We had a real hit with this, and the performance was enhanced further for many of us by our awareness of the number of individual stories of challenges set and triumphantly met during the rehearsals and performances.

We also had many sleepovers and camps, and took the entire school to a four-day camp at Anglesea. We participated successfully in the Premier's Reading Challenge, and continued a strong commitment to chess, which started to bear fruit in one respect at least: success in local tournaments which in turn earned us entry to the Interschool State championships, an unusual achievement for a school our size.

And that, dear friends in the Department of This and the Department of That, is a limited picture of our school in 2009, or in other words, our official annual report.