

2018 ANNUAL REPORT – ALICE MILLER AND CANDLEBARK SCHOOLS

I approached the thirteenth year of Candlebark School with a sense of foreboding, knowing the dark history of the number thirteen in Western civilisation. This was somewhat offset by the good reputation enjoyed by the number three – and 2018 was the third year in the life of Alice Miller School.

As it turned out however, both schools experienced grim, austere years, reminiscent of the title of the 1983 Yugoslav film *How I Was Systematically Destroyed by Idiots*.

I haven't seen the film, but it was described on one website as 'weak, barely watchable... .. uninspired... overstretched, desperate, lousy, boring...'

I suppose I should get serious now, but with Term 4 having finished three days ago, and me here on a rainy Sunday afternoon, sitting alone in this vast campus, beginning the writing of another annual report, my mood is somewhat bleak.

In my first year of teaching, in the late 1970s, I had many roles, including the editing of the school magazine. Inspired by previous editor, outstanding English teacher Richard Baines, I made sure to present the school in the best possible light, yet at the same time tried to produce something that would be of genuine interest to students. I seemed to do okay until my third year as editor, when the magazine had a stunning (in my modest opinion) front cover: a photograph of one of the school's stately buildings; a photograph which occupied the whole space. The Headmaster seemed thrilled by the magazine, including the cover, but an hour after expressing his delight, he was back, demanding that I call the printer immediately and get the whole lot pulped.

His objection – his only objection – was that the name of the school was not printed on the front cover. Eventually the controversy was resolved when the Chairman of the School Council put enough pressure on the Headmaster to force him to back down.

I suppose I learned from this experience that the marketing of schools is a fraught activity.

Anyway, this hasn't got much to do with anything, so I'd better get on with the annual report. Alice Miller and Candlebark Schools enjoyed a glorious year of fabulous successes and awe-inspiring achievements, all taking place in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. We were not systematically destroyed by idiots, although they never give up trying. For the sake of universal peace and harmony, I will try to refrain from naming them however.

I said back in the fourth paragraph that "I should get serious", and now I seriously will. If I could define the two schools by way of analogy, I would say that Candlebark is like a village and Alice like a university. That's simplistic, but there's enough truth in it to make it reasonably valid. Like any village, university, family, group of friends, work colleagues, we have heaps of drama, comedy, tragedy, romance, 'human interest' stories... we have them every day.

Such things can happen in a train carriage occupied by people who do not know each other, or in the audience at a concert, or on a commercial flight going from Melbourne to Brisbane. But they are less likely to happen in those circumstances, because masks are kept more firmly in place by most people when amongst strangers. The more that people are together, and the more that they get to know each other, the less likely it is that masks will be effective, and instead, real feelings and attitudes will show through. One of the reasons I kind of (this will sound perverse) treasure my six weeks in a psychiatric hospital when I was about nineteen is that for the first time in my life I was in the midst of a large group of people whose masks had failed, and as a result, many of them, for much of the time, did not bother trying to maintain masks.

This state of affairs provided an opportunity to have real conversations, to connect emotionally, to be honest and to be exposed to honesty, all of which was unprecedented, for me.

We had over 350 students at Candlebark and Alice in 2018, so, naturally, there were plenty of dramas, etc. The efficacy of the adults who work at the two schools depends to a considerable extent on how good they are at

coming up with a range of solutions to problems. There may be members of the public who believe that both schools are staffed by new-age idealists who waft around all day smiling munificently at the sweet children and waving incense burners under their receptive nostrils, but it's not like that. Personally I quite like incense, but I've never placed a bulk order to get any for the school.

Life experience, a sense of perspective, honesty, creativity and inner strength are among the elements which contribute to success in problem-solving – and success in teaching. There are many intangible ways of evaluating the worth of a school, and ability to solve problems is one of them. It's an area in which we do well, but we don't have a success rate of 100%. When parents are pulling their child or children in an opposite direction to the one we are advocating, our success rate is dramatically reduced. When young people's lives have been built on foundations of cardboard that's been left out in the rain, and/or when their values are poorly formed or corrupted by bad influences, the task for us is much more difficult.

I taught for four years at Geelong Grammar Timbertop. In my first staff meeting there, the Head of Campus, Jeremy Madin, discussed the Human Studies class which the school doctor took once a week. All the students attended, every Tuesday night. Jeremy commented that there had been a problem during the previous year with the manners of some of the kids, so he and other senior staff had decided that this year we would try a different seating plan. It was thought that this might help improve behaviour.

It may give the reader some idea of the poor management I had experienced in schools when I say that I listened to this with open-mouthed wonder and delight. In five years of full-time teaching this was the first time I had heard an administrator calmly state a problem and then propose a solution. I was so used to denial that the problem existed, or denunciation of staff or students for the problem if it did exist, followed by promises to do something sometime in the distant future when things weren't quite so busy... and perhaps the announcement of the establishment of a committee to look into the situation. I'd assumed that this was the way all schools operated, all of the time – and of course, even in 2018, the sad truth is that most schools still operate this way, all of the time.

In my adult life I have tried to live by the President Truman dictum "Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions." That day at Timbertop, I felt a weight lift from my shoulders as I realized that for the first time in my teaching career I was in a community of problem solvers.

Another startling aspect of life at Timbertop was that virtually all the staff members were incredibly dedicated, worked incredibly hard, and cared deeply about their vocation. They didn't count the hours that they worked, much less the minutes; they didn't count the kilometres that they walked on school business, even though these totalled thousands each year.

In my four years there, I encountered only two teachers whom I'd call less-than-fully-committed i.e. lazy. And the maintenance staff was awesome!

As a teacher, and later as an author visiting schools to give talks or take workshops, I found many staff rooms dominated by people notable for their self-indulgence, pomposity, banality, cruelty and/or lethargy. Dedicated teachers who gave the job every ounce (milligram?!) of the energy, thought and care that they could muster could be found in most schools, but were almost always in a minority.

So, dedication, problem-solving skills, honesty, GREAT administration... were they present at Alice Miller and Candlebark in 2018?

Hell yeah! Especially great administration!

Time to get serious yet again. I'll return to the analogy of Candlebark as a village and Alice as a university. Candlebark is a village in the sense that we try to cultivate an atmosphere in which everyone cares for everyone else. We adhere strongly to the principle that the elders of the village, selected for their life experience, honesty, creativity and inner strength, (I'm plagiarising myself now – see above), have knowledge, understanding, wisdom which they are expected to pass on to the neophytes whose parents enrol them at the school. The students do not determine the philosophy, the curriculum or the pedagogical styles of the school, because they do not have the knowledge and life experience to do so. We do all that we can however to help them develop their life experiences, strength, honesty, creativity and skills, so that they can evolve into “elders” themselves. Any school that doesn't do this is a disgrace.



Alice Miller is a university in the sense that we try to cultivate an atmosphere in which people care for each other, in which knowledge and wisdom are respected, admired and even cherished, in which global – even universal – perspectives are encouraged, and in which, once again, the elders have much from their own lives and learning to pass on.

How does all this work in practice? It's time to get down to the nitty-gritty: reporting on how the schools “functioned” in 2018.

The life experiences in which Candlebark students participated in 2018 included a vast number of camps, excursions, sleepovers and outdoor adventures. This began in Term 1, when all primary students, including Preps, travelled some hours to the beautiful town of Bright, where they spent four days/three nights camping in tents. As well as swimming, buying stuff at the local lolly shop, buying stuff at the Op Shop, reading, paddling in the creek, talking, eating, sleeping, mucking around, wandering, wondering, playing games of their own choice or devising, exploring... well actually, they didn't do much more than that.

I received a school camp advertisement recently which contained, in its covering letter, the enticing words 'Our huge range of on-site activities keeps students busy...'

I'm afraid we fail to 'keep students busy'.

2018 continued with activities like...

- Sustained whole school commitment to chess, resulting in our once again qualifying for the National Chess Titles, where we performed with startling success for a school of our size. Along the way our girls' team – Acer Jay, Penny Fish, Om O'Carroll and Kate Turnbull – came third in the state championships.
- Participation in Tournament of the Minds. Being small, we could only enter a couple of sections, but we won those sections, which made us pretty much the only school to defeat the huge school which I think won every other section! In the State finals, one of our two teams received Honours, which is effectively equal second place. After the State finals, one of our students wrote: "Our play ran pretty smoothly, we did really well and I'm proud of my team. As we walked back to our seats I could hear one girl from another team say 'That was really good' to her friend and I couldn't help but smile."
- Bike camps for up to a week for most students in the school, including Preps, and which for the older students involved epic journeys camping at different sites each night.
- A twelve day trip to New Zealand for the Year Sevens, where they did everything from ocean kayaking to hiking... to shopping...
- Students storming around the interschool regional Cross-country competition at Hanging Rock, with stunning success. In the large fields, none of our runners finished further back than twenty-sixth. Seven achieved divisional qualification; five qualified for the regional championships; and subsequently two, Aidan Ford and Henry Bourke, qualified for the state titles.
- A remarkable number of students had creative writing pieces selected for inclusion in a book published by the Bendigo Writers Festival. Eleven of the thirty authors chosen for the book were from Candlebark or Alice Miller.
- A performance of 'The Bottle Collector', a theatrical presentation by a remarkable creative pair who have given themselves the appropriate sobriquet Asking for Trouble.
- In October, students once again held the annual Candlebark Fête. This is entirely organised and run by children, with no roles for adults – except as customers for the various stalls and activities. An amount of \$7083.60 was raised for a variety of charities.
- Thirty-four Grade 5/6 students went camping in the bush for forty hours with a minimal amount of food, to recognise some realities of world economics, and to raise money as part of the forty hour famine appeal. Each person was restricted to a \$3 food budget for the two nights of the camp. Groups had to construct their own shelters, using natural and salvaged materials. We raised more money for the forty hour famine appeal than did any other primary school in Australia.
- We were treated to a wonderful production of the musical "Game of Shows", written and directed by teacher Donna Prince. Running for two nights, with a lively and spirited assortment of terrific performances by Candlebark kids, this was one of the highlights of the year.
- The first "Colours Run" to be held at Candlebark was... er... held. Students and adults jogged, skipped, walked, danced, cart-wheeled, even ran, several kilometres through bursts of colour clouds...

- Kitchen garden continued to be a wonderful part of the school's life. Not only did students care for the chooks and other livestock, they cooked up such treats as a Japanese feast, a middle eastern feast, a truffle recipe using only three ingredients (potatoes from our garden, chocolate, not from our garden, and cocoa, ditto)...



- We participated very successfully in the CDSSA athletics events, which are open to all primary schools in the Macedon Ranges. We amassed twelve firsts, ten seconds and eight thirds.
- We competed in lots of other CDSSA sporting events, including soccer, basketball and cricket, and did so with gusto, good spirit, many wins and many losses.
- Sustainability week was a new endeavour, which saw all students in groups undertaking activities which helped them gain a better understanding of the environment, and sustainable lifestyles. One highlight was parent Donna Sparks teaching weaving to the Preps.
- Fashion week. This is fast becoming a tradition (apologies for that apparently paradoxical remark). Organised by teacher Steve Pollet, people who chose to participate came to school each day in a different costume, all of which had to be home-made, and all of which had to fit certain criteria. For example, Tutu Tuesday... the requirement is obvious...

- An earlier association with the famous Flying Fruit Fly Circus was continued when a big group of our students went to their show JUNK in Bendigo, and were invited to arrive early to watch the warmup of the circus artists, and to stay around after the show to talk with the creative team and the seventeen young circus performers.
- Grade 2 and Grade 4 students proved they had what it takes to live in the wild at Survivor Sleepovers, where they made impressive bush shelters, successfully gathered food for pudding, and made some deadly hunting weapons.
- In conjunction with Outdoor Education students from Latrobe University, our Grade 4 students had a four-day camp at Kooyoora and our Grade 5 students had a four-day camp at Cape Liptrap.
- Orienteering at Hanging Rock involved thirty-six Candlebark students who volunteered for a day of “cunning running”, competing against themselves and other schools. Kids ran in pairs. We were able to enter five sections, achieving first and second places in the Grade 3 boys, second place in the Grade 4 girls, second place in the Grade 5 boys, first place in the Grade 5 girls, and first, second and third places in the Grade 6 boys.
- Two heart-warming soirées were held in 2018. They included solo performances by the students who learn an instrument, as well as performances by the elective musical groups at Candlebark (Choir, Chamber Ensemble, Ska Band & Soul Band). The standard of music was electrifying – even the acoustic pieces (sorry; write that off as a Principal joke).
- Students excursed (a new verb) to places and events like the Immigration Museum, Scienceworks, the National Theatre production (from London) of ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time’, a collaboration between the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the famous musical comedy trio Tripod, the Bendigo Writers Festival, the Bell Shakespeare production of Romeo and Juliet at the ACM Playhouse, a Melbourne production of Les Mis, the ACCA exhibition Unfinished Business (exploring feminism today, with a panel of impressive speakers), Melbourne General Cemetery, the Triennial Arts exhibition at the Arts Centre, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra’s performance of Stravinsky’s “Firebird”, the Body Worlds Vital exhibition and a whole lot more.
- Among our visitors were Grade 1, 2 and 3 penpals from a Broadmeadows English language school which works with refugee children and others. For the kids from the big smoke, the enormity of the bush, the majesty of the trees and the friendliness of the Candlebark children seemed to make this a memorable new stage in the relationship between the two schools.
- We also continued with regular visits from Hume Valley Special School. These guests, assisted by our teacher Sam Thorpe and a generous group of our senior students, also seemed to revel in the welcoming attitude of our kids, and the opportunity to interact with our horses and other animals.
- Abiding by new government regulations, as we always do, even the stupid ones, we arranged swimming lessons with qualified coaches at Gisborne Pool for all Grade 5/6 students who needed to meet the new mandatory standards.
- Year sevens canoed down a section of the Murray River, with two of our teachers, Sam Ford and Wendy Wright. One student finished a written account of the trip with the comment: “On the fourth day I woke up with excitement that I was going to go home and see my family and have a shower – the only downside was that there was a hellish three-hour bus trip with singing and I Spy waiting for me.”

- Our end-of-year night was one of theatre and music, with every child at Candlebark participating in sizzling, dazzling, razzamatazzic (I've never typed so many z's in one sentence before) performances of plays, many of which were written by teachers and/or students, and culminating in an interpretation of the Creation by one of the groups, under the darkening evening sky, with a chorus of kookaburras in the background, and followed by some stirring Christmas singing by all the students (who did not sound much like kookaburras at all).
- We participated in Christmas in Romsey celebrations, by decorating some trees which were then placed in the main street, and by having our choir perform a couple of beautiful Christmas songs at an evening function for the whole community.

Staff changes during 2018 were few, but of course all staff changes are of critical importance in a school.

Dave Connell took on the job of Property Manager, to help us through the first part of 2019. He was greatly assisted by Luke Mitchell and Oliver Tautkus. They attended to everything from landscaping in order to achieve better drainage to cleaning out gutters; from new fence lines to clearing fallen trees.

The school's Catering Manager Fiona Halpin left at the end of 2018, after nine years of faithful, thorough and committed work. Students and staff were sad to see her go – she was much loved, particularly on Thursdays, the designated Cake Day. We wish her all the best in her new career, in Kyneton.

Popular kitchen assistant Skye also left, and was also greatly missed. We enjoyed her friendly manner and appreciated her hard work.

Meanwhile, at Alice Miller, lots of stuff happened, including...

- Performances of the Threepenny Opera, with an electrifying cast bringing Brecht's timeless words to life in a brilliantly designed setting. Directed by teacher Anne Browning, this was a memorable experience for its audience, and could have more-than-held-its-own with any piece of theatre anywhere.



- Among the musical ensembles emerging from Alice Miller were the rock band Crane, who took out second place in the Macedon Ranges' Battle of the Bands competition. As well, our three VCE Music ensembles performed at the opening night fireworks for the Woodend Winter Arts Festival.
- Year sevens bussed it to Canberra, spending a week exploring the mystical delights of this fabled, illusory city.
- Year tens spent a week in Melbourne, examining graffiti, shopping, and being enculturated.
- Year nines went to the WOMAD Festival in Adelaide, diving into an almost overwhelming celebration of the music, dance, drama and food of many different cultures.
- Year sevens canoed down a section of the Murray River, in company with Candlebark year sevens.
- Four groups from Candlebark and Alice Miller spent five days riding through some of the most spectacular landscape in Victoria. One student's comment sums up the feeling after this epic challenge: "I feel almost dead, but I also feel totally alive!"



- Year nines went to France and Spain for six weeks, led by teachers Basil Eliades, Wendy Wright, Kate Tucker, Chris Le Messurier, John Philip and Anne Browning, and travelling in three separate groups. They sampled a rich variety of activities including visits to galleries and museums in Paris and Barcelona, life in the beautiful countryside of the Dordogne Valley, and a challenging hike in the Pyrenees. A key part of these trips is learning how to travel and live as a group, with all the challenges, frustrations and joys this contains. One student wrote, “It feels like we have made a family out of all the different friendship groups and that makes me very happy!”



- Trips off-campus included Werribee Zoo, the National Theatre production (from London) of ‘The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time’, a reading by distinguished actor Annie Phelan of *Unleash Your Inner Miranda* at the Romsey library, the Australian Opera, the studio of distinguished artist Daniel Butterworth, the See Yup temple in South Melbourne and other sacred spaces in the city and Fitzroy, the controversial and powerful Body Worlds Vital exhibition, Hanging Rock, Melbourne Comedy Festival attractions Slamalamadingdong (slam poetry night) and Lentil as Anything, the Top Class Music concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre, and the One Planet factory.
- Sleepovers at school were as frequent as my visits to the Romsey Bakery for cinnamon doughnuts. The sleepovers included ones dedicated to maths, play rehearsals, English, basketball, Media, Biology, Music, as well as sleepovers not dedicated to anything in particular.
- Ferguson tractor workshops were organised by Alice Miller teacher Pauline Wilson and her husband. These were two-day workshops near Ballarat, with students camping overnight whilst they worked on a major restoration of a derelict, dirty, diseased, decaying Ferguson tractor. The results were quite astonishing, and attracted a lot of respect from Ferguson tractor devotees and the public.

- Year 11s shared a camp with students from Western Autistic School (the Wattle Unit). This was a great learning experience for students from both schools.
- 41 students elected to walk a section of the Larapinta Trail in central Australia; a ten-day trip. This was a trek through landscape which was, in virtually every aspect, new to almost all of them. They were divided into three groups: each group flew one way and bussed the other way. The bus trip included stops at Coober Pedy and Burra. One of the teachers on this trip commented: 'More than once we felt as if we were dropped off onto a foreign planet. The rocks, vegetation and landscape were so different, harsh and unfamiliar...'



- Year eights spent three days hiking through the Lerderderg Gorge.
- Other "all-Aussie adventures" included a four-day hike in the Wilsons Promontory area and a hike of similar duration, to Mount Feathertop.
- A Bush Dance at Lancefield, organised by Year 9 students and their parents, attracted a big crowd, and featured traditional Irish-Australian dancing and a great supper :-)
- Year 10s undertook work experience, which ranged from helping at a veterinary clinic to designing lighting and sound for theatre. One employer, commenting on a student, reported "Nothing was too hard or too boring and he gave 100% all day long."
- Poet Emilie Zoey Baker ran an energetic and hilarious workshop on slam poetry and performance for Years 7, 8 and 10.
- Outdoor Ed students had many adventures, including a ski trip, hiking at Wilsons Promontory, visits to Mount Rothwell Biodiversity Centre, and a Year 9/10 self-organised trip to beautiful Kooyoora.

- Alice Miller students spent three days working on production, and then assisted with the fire show at the Village Winter Festival in Castlemaine.

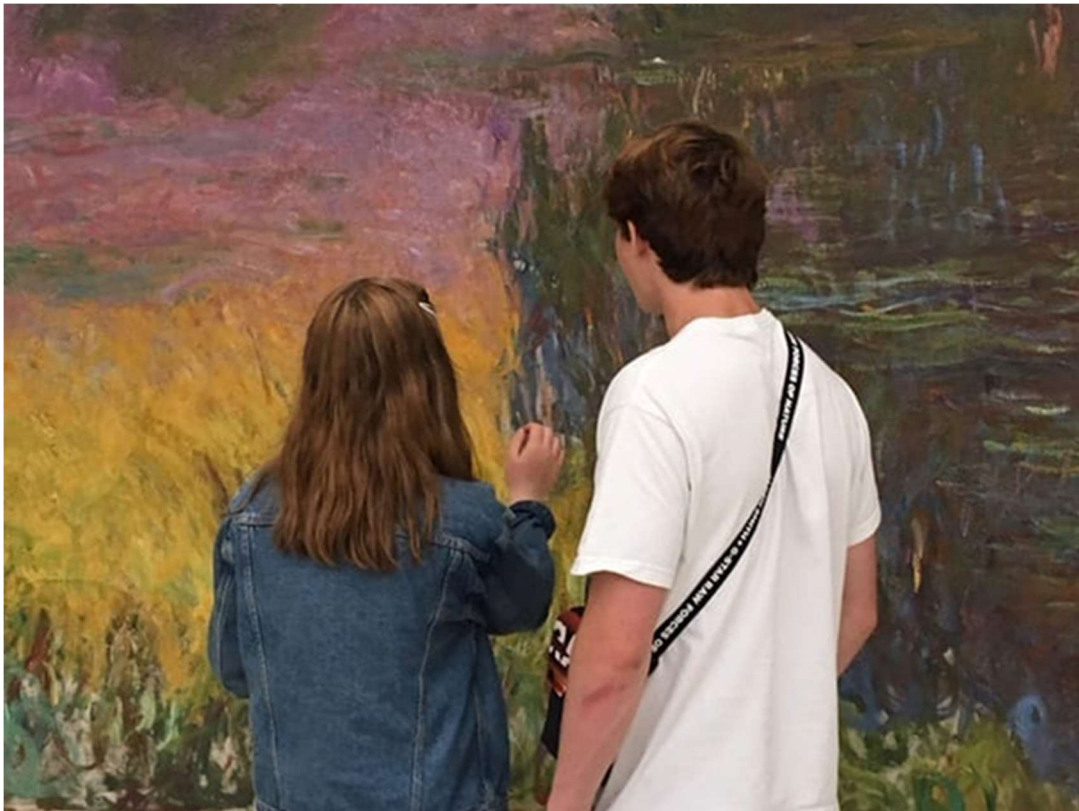


- Year sevens went to the Arapiles, accompanied by some Years 9 and 10 Outdoor Education students, to grapple (literally and metaphorically) with some challenging rock climbing, at which they distinguished themselves. One of our teachers, who is also a very well-known rock climber, reported: “Our instructors made the comment that the kids were the most enthusiastic bunch they had ever taught and it certainly seemed so to me. It was wonderful to see them constantly challenging themselves and encouraging one another. I must admit the skill they portrayed on the rock was quite outstanding. They achieved some things I have never seen students of their age achieve before.”
- The autumn and spring soirees showcased the expanding music program and the impressive skill development of the young musicians within the school. In addition to impressive pieces from the instrumental music program, both soirees featured original compositions by Alice Miller students, and an array of bands, choirs and ensembles.
- The students participated in a variety of inter-school sporting activities. Highlights included athletics, where many of our students took out top places in their divisions while competing against students from some of Melbourne’s most renowned athletic schools. Outstanding results were also achieved in cross country, with Lauren Bourke representing Alice Miller in the State finals.
- Artists’ Week was once again a phenomenal success. Workshops included clowning with Cirque du Soleil’s Hayden Spencer, theatre with Emily Goddard, a multi-disciplinary production with Michelle Heaven and Ben Cobham, documentary filmmaking with Holly Fifer, music composition with Charles Macinnes, character art with artist and curator Tai Snaith, painting with Peter Fifer and fiction writing with Nova Weetman.
- The Text to Performance elective students explored the Otways, Nelson and Princess Margaret Rose Caves.

- The VCE Art students held a graduate exhibition at The Artists' Guild Gallery in the Docklands, Melbourne. Students were involved in all aspects of the exhibition including installation and promotion, and spoke about their work with poise and sophistication at the opening.



Year 8s went to Tasmania, spending a day at the phenomenal Mona Gallery and then exploring other delights around Hobart.



A staff change at Alice Miller during the year was the departure of French teacher Carla Kankindji, who launched the French course at Alice Miller in 2016. Some of the highlights in Carla's time with us included the excellent performance of her students in the international Language Perfect program, accompanying groups to WOMAD and Canberra, the inclusion of her students' work in the Bendigo Young Writers' Anthology, and the positive connections she made with many students.

In the café, Sharon Kittson was a very helpful assistant for 2018, but left to pursue further studies.

Jacqui Lees, part-time Psychology teacher, left at the end of the year, and we thank her for her contributions – including the introduction of Psychology into the subjects we offer at Alice Miller.

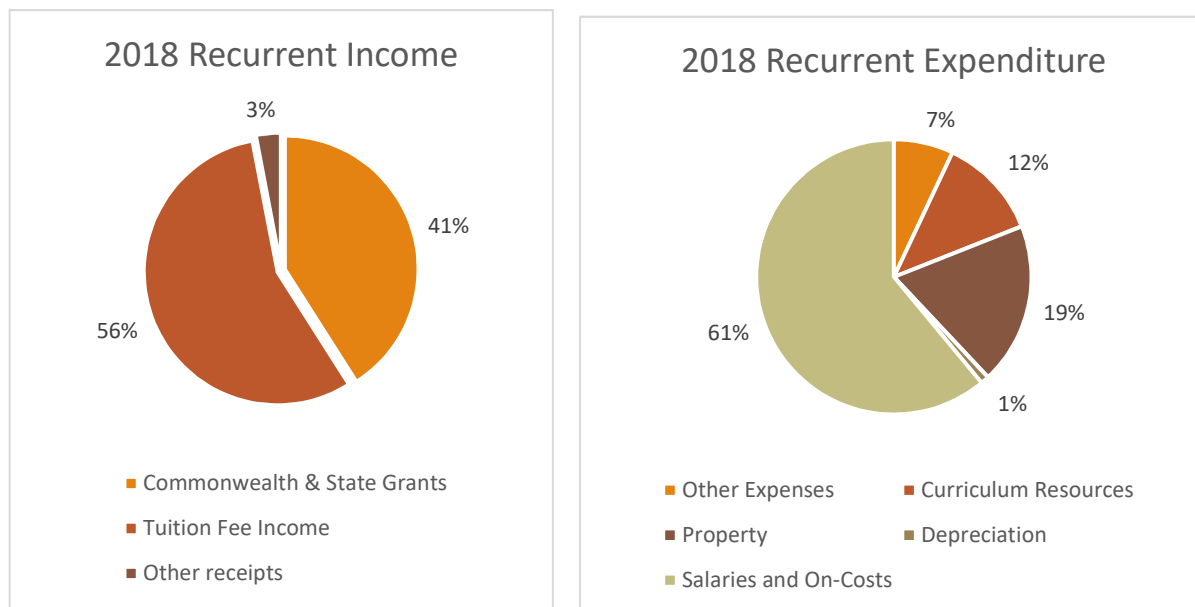
In amongst the activity described briefly above, we also taught the kids all the classroom stuff that we're meant to cover and complied with various fatuous, meaningless government requirements such as offering NAPLAN tests to those willing to undertake them, having the Principal write an Annual Report, suffering through a four-day government inspection (we passed with trumpets sounding and banners flying, for anyone who cares), and completely eliminating bullying in every shape or form by any person, creature or thing... well, as best we could. At least bullying at the schools was well below the levels achieved by the Liberal/National coalition and the Australian Labour Party in their treatment of desperate people who come to Australia as refugees seeking sanctuary.

Our Year 12 students sailed blithely through the rigours of VCE... no, that's not true... it was hard work. It's two years of hard work, but the intensity certainly increases in Year 12, and it's pretty much impossible for a student to coast along until the final exams and suddenly achieve great marks. They have to work consistently, thoroughly, in depth, and then show the stamina and clear thinking required for the exams when they finally roll around. We were delighted by the performance of this small group of very diverse personalities, and were excited for Sasha Malpas who achieved a perfect fifty in Art. Our class of 2018 are now engaged in a variety of pursuits including studying at the Universities of Melbourne and Tasmania, exploring the world and working in a variety of fields.

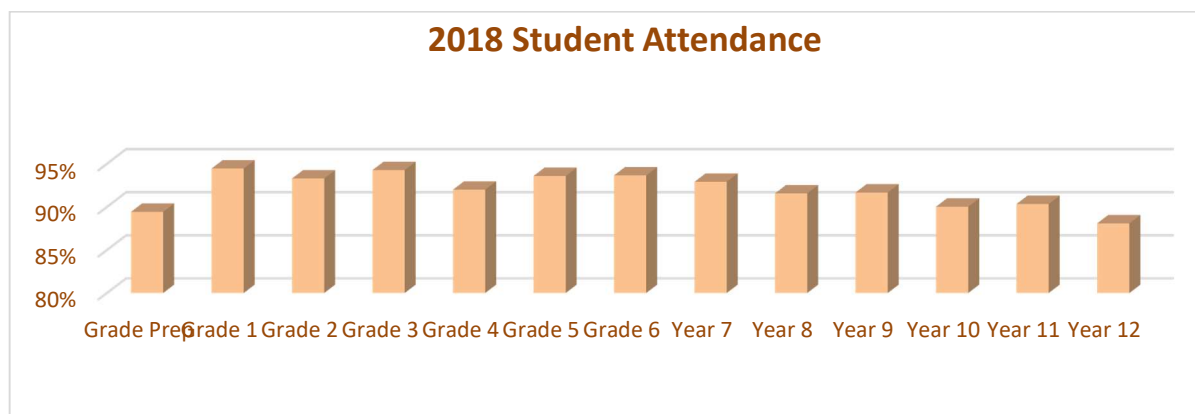
I mentioned earlier that one of the two most startling aspects of my time teaching at Timbertop was the dedication, hard work and caring approach of staff members. It's a wonderful feeling to be able to say the same thing about the staff members of Candlebark and Alice Miller. It matters more than anything. All in all, 2018 was an invigorating, lively and quite inspiring year, or, in other words, not bad for a thirteenth year. So, my apologies for the dour and dishonest comments on the first page of this Annual Report. The good news is that there will never be another 2018 Annual Report for Alice Miller and Candlebark Schools.

Official Stuff that we are required to include, whether meaningful or not:

Income and Expenditure:



Student Attendance:



We are very keen to have minimal student absences and a strong adherence to punctuality. Given the natural sequence which so many learning programs follow, it is important for students to be at school consistently, unless of course illness occurs, or some other serious matter requires the student to be elsewhere. If there appears to be a need for a student to be absent for reasons other than these, parents are required to seek permission for absence from the Principal. Student attendance is recorded at the beginning of the day and again after lunch, and any absences are followed up immediately with parents. In our view there is however a continuing escalation of the anxiety pandemic in our society, and it can be an ongoing problem with certain families to get students to school each day. In these situations the school makes every effort to encourage parents to be more positive and assertive with their children, but occasionally formal referrals to appropriate authorities have to be made.

Naplan Results:

| YEAR 9 NAPLAN RESULTS | Reading | Writing | Spelling | Grammar & Punctuation | Numeracy |
|---|---------|---------|----------|-----------------------|----------|
| 2018 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 96% | 88% | 88% | 96% | 100% |
| 2017 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 100% | 43% | 86% | 71% | 100% |
| 2016 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| YEAR 7 NAPLAN RESULTS | Reading | Writing | Spelling | Grammar & Punctuation | Numeracy |
| 2018 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Candlebark) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | |
| 2017 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Candlebark) | 100% | 84% | 100% | 84% | 100% |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 2016 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Candlebark) | 100% | 100% | 89% | 100% | 100% |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard (Alice Miller) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| YEAR 5 NAPLAN RESULTS | Reading | Writing | Spelling | Grammar & Punctuation | Numeracy |
| 2018 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 100% | 90% | 100% | 86% | 100% |
| 2017 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 100% | 92% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 2016 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 100% | 93% | 94% | 100% | 100% |
| YEAR 3 NAPLAN RESULTS | Reading | Writing | Spelling | Grammar & Punctuation | Numeracy |
| 2018 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 88% | 100% | 100% | 88% | 100% |
| 2017 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 93% | 100% | 100% | 93% | 100% |
| 2016 | | | | | |
| % of students at/above National Minimum Standard | 91% | 100% | 100% | 84% | 100% |

A good deal of caution needs to be used in assessing NAPLAN results. The tests themselves are sadly deficient in so many ways that they cannot be given much weight. See, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/apr/09/bizarre-naplan-writing-test-measures-all-the-wrong-things-us-expert-says> and the statement by the previous federal education minister Senator Simon Birmingham, responding to criticisms of the test by a well-known authority on education from Finland, that “NAPLAN is an important assessment tool but it shouldn’t be considered the be all and end all.” <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/naplan-useful-but-not-the-be-all-and-end-all-says-education-minister-simon-birmingham-20180123-h0mkme.html>

The number of students sitting for NAPLAN at our schools is very small, so generalisations about academic performance cannot be made about different grades by using NAPLAN. One student with a significant learning difficulty can have a powerful impact on the results of the group, when such small numbers are involved.

Senior secondary outcomes:

2018 saw our second cohort of Year twelve students graduate. Our graduating class comprised ten students, who were all successful in obtaining their VCEs. One student, Hannah Gibson, completed VET Equine Studies as part of her VCE course.

Our median study score for VCE end of year exam candidates was 31 (out of a possible 50). To take a couple of random schools for comparison, the median study score for Mentone Girls' Grammar was 30, and for Geelong Grammar, 31.

Among our results were a student who performed in the top <1% of the state in Studio Art (scoring a perfect 50), a student in the top 9% for Further Mathematics, and another in the top 3% for Outdoor and Environmental Studies. Amongst our Year 11 students undertaking Year 12 subjects, one student scored in the top 9% for Further Mathematics and another in the top 9% for Outdoor and Environmental Studies, indicating that our VCE acceleration program can help our younger students achieve outstanding results. Several other students performed in the top 26 percentile in their subjects, with Study Scores of 35 and above.

Apart from NAPLAN and VCE, other assessment tools we use are:

1. The Observation Survey for students grade 2 and below. We use TORCH for testing reading comprehension for students above grade 2.
2. Peters dictation for picking up spelling weaknesses, usually for middle and upper grades.
3. The South Australian Spelling Test (SAST) with students above grade one.
4. Neale Analysis for spelling and reading.
5. Ongoing literacy assessments provided as part of the Fitzroy reading Program, which is used throughout the junior grades
6. EOI to assess English skills for students between Prep and Grade 2 (and Diagnostic Assessment Tools in English for follow-up, for students from Prep to Grade 6.
7. MOI to assess maths skills for students between Prep and Grade 2.

Contextual information about the school, including the characteristics of the student body:

Much of this is included in the body of the report and of course is available on the schools' websites. The schools are both coeducational day schools with no religious affiliation. They are both in forest settings; Candlebark on about 1200 acres and Alice Miller on about 80 acres. We continue to have a healthy waiting list for most grades. Class sizes in 2018 ranged from 13 to 24, but some elective subjects at Alice Miller had classes as small as three. The typical student body lives in Gisborne or Woodend, and is transported to school by the student bus. However there are other student bodies scattered in a wide area from Trentham through Daylesford, Kyneton, Sunbury, Melbourne, Riddells Creek, Wallan, Castlemaine, Romsey, Newham and Lancefield.

In 2018 Alice Miller employed 18 VIT registered teachers, and Candlebark employed 21 VIT registered teachers. All are qualified and registered -- it would be illegal for us to employ them otherwise -- and look reasonably well scrubbed.

Workforce composition, including indigenous composition:

I've never known what this means. As well as the teaching staff, we employ a Business Manager, an Administrator, a Registrar, two Property Managers, four maintenance staff, a part-time cleaner, two chefs, two kitchen hands, and three part-time bus drivers. I haven't asked any of the staff whether they are "of indigenous composition".

Distribution of this report:

This report is distributed by email to all members of the school community, including parents, (currently all school parents have access to email), and the VRQA, and is posted on the websites of Alice Miller School and Candlebark School.