

# Our Stories

Support

Success

Care

Renmark Education Partnership

## Creating a calm learning environment

Renmark West Preschool has taken a new approach to their learning environment to improve outcomes for their learners.

Staff at the preschool have engaged with research that revealed that children are being over stimulated, over scheduled and over exposed to technology. As a result, the preschool has taken steps to ensure that their learning environment is a calm sanctuary where children feel supported to take risks, face challenges and lead their own learning.

Creating a calm sanctuary for learning has been a combined effort from staff, children, parents and the wider community. Careful planning and flexible budgeting has allowed the preschool to 'mute' the learning environment through neutral colours, wooden furniture and smaller learning spaces.

Renmark West Preschool Director Sally Schwartzkopff helped drive the changes. She explains, 'Our preschool 'feels' different. Staff can

articulate it, parents have responded positively to it and visitors comment on the sense of calm they feel when they walk through the door. Most importantly the children are settled, focused on their learning and happily engaged in their play.'

In addition to the physical changes in the building, staff are also teaching children how to wind down and the importance of rest. This term they have introduced a Yoga teacher to help children understand when they need to take a break, meditate and then refocus their learning.

'At Renmark West Preschool we take a step back from play and prioritise the child's well-being,' Sally explains. 'Our relationships with the child and family are important to ensure that we meet all the needs of the child.' This focus on relationships has led to children having the time and space to get to know their learning environment and develop a strong sense of belonging.

Walking in to Renmark West Preschool it is evident this approach is working. Sally says 'We still value play, but it is different, children lead their own learning, select their own learning materials, and build upon their relationships with staff, each other and their learning environment.'

## Hello!

Welcome to the first edition of the Renmark Education Partnership newsletter *Our Stories*.

Every child has a story. In this newsletter you will discover the amazing things happening across the Renmark Education Partnership to help learners share their story.

The Renmark Education Partnership is partnership of six public education sites across the Renmark area.

We share the values of Support, Care and Success and form the foundation for everything we do for learners.

Our vision is 'Learning for your future.' As a partnership we work together to share knowledge and expertise to help every learner further their learning story.





## THE BOY'S DIDGERIDOO GROUP

When can I make a didgeridoo?

A simple question from a student has led to a groundbreaking program at Renmark Primary School. The Boy's Didgeridoo Group is a student led group facilitated by teacher Martine Turnbull with help from Grant Schwartzkopff. In the group boys work together to create didgeridoos, learn the skills to play the instruments and then take to the stage to perform.

Six boys started in the group at the end of 2015. Today 17 boys participate in the group with more participants on a waiting list.

The success of the group has in large part been due to the students taking control of their learning. Teacher Martine Turnbull explains, 'As someone with little musical knowledge or skill I can only encourage, support care and coordinate. As a female, I cannot play didgeridoo let alone teach students how to play it. Therefore the Boy's Didgeridoo Group learn together. They determine what they need to succeed, I help them source it and then they take control and work as a group to get to their goal.'

The Boy's Didgeridoo Group is working with the Aboriginal community to gain knowledge about the didgeridoo and Aboriginal culture. Local man, Aaron McArthur has volunteered his time to be a mentor for the group on several occasions throughout 2016.

The group is now looking as to what they will achieve next. The students' skills have surpassed the cardboard tubes they currently use as instruments, so the boys are investigating other options. At the moment they are trialling PVC pipes with paper mache and plaster bandage.

The inspiration for the group came from a student but it is the dedication from Martine Turnbull and the rest of the staff at Renmark Primary School that has lead the boys to achieve fame. Martine explains, 'These boys are capable of such amazing things and while I might be the person who helped them get started, I am mostly out of my depth. They have already surpassed what I can help with so we keep going, trialling things and most importantly, provide them with the opportunity to soar.'

---

## Embracing school choir with a can-do attitude

Renmark North Primary School joined other Riverland schools in the Festival of Music for the first time in 2015. Before then, staff were hesitant to lead a choir, having limited musical experience themselves. Teacher Sam McInerney dove into the deep end and started the choir with 12 enthusiastic children.

The choir has embraced the program and worked together to learn the lyrics, understand the music and sing in harmony. Support from other teachers and parents has been vital to the success of the program. Students are released from their class once a week to sing and parents have willingly provided students with the t-shirts, books and CDs required.

This year 17 students participated in the choir and recently took to the stage at the Chaffey Theatre with students from Loxton, the Mallee, Glossop and Renmark. It was a wonderful occasion and it was fabulous to see them performing with large smiles on their faces.



# LUNCHTIME CLUB HELPS STUDENTS BECOME LEADERS

Three years ago students at Renmark North Primary School initiated a lunchtime club for children to participate in constructive activities during their lunch break. Over the years, the club has evolved and is still going strong today.

The club is driven by students. They make the decisions, organise the events, generate interest and work to make sure they have the equipment necessary for the activities. Teacher Athina Lioutis explains, 'One of the most amazing things we have seen from the club is that the children become true leaders. After every event they seek feedback about the activities to determine whether they have been successful, which is fantastic.'

Staff at Renmark North Primary School have taken a 'hands off' approach to the lunchtime club and only assist with monitoring performance along the way. This has increased the autonomy of students and allowed them to build mastery in all facets of running the club.

It looks like the lunchtime club will continue to run for many more years with students motivated to keep the club operating successfully.



## Developing important skills for the future in Child Studies

The Renmark High School Child Studies course has been extremely successful and is expanding quickly. Thirty eight Year 11 students have already enrolled for the course in 2017. The Child Studies curriculum covers a variety of aspects that combine to demonstrate the complexities in raising children.

*As a part of their studies, students identify and discuss the importance of play in the development of children, the responsibilities of parents and how the care for a child comes before anything else.*

One of the outstanding components of the Child Studies course at Renmark High is how the school is working within the Renmark Education Partnership to provide students with hands on knowledge. Throughout the course students

learn about the development of language and literacy skills in children.

Renmark High School students worked with children at the primary school to read and write stories together, learn about healthy eating and how to be safe around the house. It was truly heartwarming to see the older students providing support to the younger children to design 'Bento' style lunchboxes to align with their lesson on healthy eating.

At the end of the day all of the students from both the primary and high school were keen to celebrate their work, a true sign of a successful day!



# Baby Playgroup supports the foundation for lifelong learning

The Renmark Children's Centre has combined with Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) to establish a playgroup just for babies. The playgroup began after feedback from parents indicated that they would like greater support in the first months of their baby's life. So far the playgroup has been a huge success with regular high attendance every Wednesday morning.

Renmark Children's Centre Family Services Coordinator, Louise Loder, led the way in starting the program. She says 'Baby playgroups provide great opportunities to support babies and their parents. The playgroup helps to connect parents and break the social isolation often felt by parents of very young babies. It also provides babies with activities that support their social, cognitive and physical development.'

The Baby Playgroup is a true team effort with many different services working together to provide parents with support. CaFHS Nurses co-facilitate the group and

share information about baby development, feeding, sleeping and settling. Parents can also have their babies weighed and measured by CaFHS Nurses and details recorded in their baby's Blue Book. Renmark Children's Centre Speech Pathologist, Belinda Binney also attends the sessions to share information about supporting children's speech from birth. Staff at the Renmark Children's Centre play a vital role in welcoming parents and babies who attend.

Since the program began feedback from participants has been incredibly positive. Louise says, 'We know that experiences in the first few years of life lay the foundation for lifelong learning and success. The Baby Playgroup provides a supportive space for parents to enjoy relational activities with their baby and helps establish a lifetime of positive learning.'



## GIRLWISE PROGRAM ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO BE THEMSELVES

'Young people looking out for each other is one of the greatest privileges an educator can ever observe,' says Renmark North Primary School Pastoral Care Worker, Maria Dowzard. 'We started the Girlwise group at Renmark North in response to girls looking for help building the skills to navigate the occasional complex situations that arise at school.'

The Girlwise program involves girls coming together to discuss issues and feel better about their time at school. Through this program, girls are realising that being themselves is the most important thing. Comments from participants in Girlwise include: 'It's helped me to make more friends.' 'It's helping me to be a better person.' 'The program has helped me to step out of my comfort zone.' 'I now realise that it's OK to be me.' 'It's helped me to realise that I don't have to change who I am to make friends.'

The program has been a great success with children looking out for each other more than ever. This is a fantastic result and a credit to all of the students involved.



# STUDENTS ENCOURAGED TO BE BRAVE EVERY DAY

Renmark West Primary School is using the approach of 'Play Is The Way' to build the growth mindset of their students and encourage positive self talk. Play Is The Way is a practical way to teach social and emotional learning using guided play. Key concepts are embedded through classroom activities and empowering language.

Students at Renmark West Primary are learning that school is about stepping bravely into the unknown.

Many students had the courage to take the risks to challenge themselves in their learning and how they behave. Teachers have been helping children accept that failure is part of the learning process and explaining the essential role failing plays in improvement. When a student does not achieve the result they were hoping for it's not because they can't do it, it's just that they can't do it yet. Taking this approach helps students at Renmark West adopt a growth mindset.



## Presenting to the Governing Council

Year 6 student, Chelsea put her hand up to represent the SRC at a recent Governing Council meeting. At the meeting Chelsea described the many activities the SRC had been involved in during the term and outlined their goals for the rest of the year.



## Forging ahead

We all face obstacles at some point in our lives and it was no exception for Year 7 student Rahmen. Throughout 2016 Rahmen has shown perseverance during literacy and numeracy. He accepted the challenge of NAPLAN testing and is starting to see improvement for his willingness to have a go.



## Reflecting on their learning

It is important to take the time to reflect on our learning. Jade and Alice are using their weekly reflection journals to set learning goals, provide feedback to their teacher and celebrate their achievements during the week.



# Renmark High School ENTERPRISE ACADEMY *From idea to income*

The Renmark High School Enterprise Academy is now in its second year with the number of students showing an interest expanding rapidly!

This unique program provides students with the opportunity to have hands-on experience in running a business. Students lead the way by coming up with the initial idea, sourcing investment, making decisions and producing marketing materials.

The Enterprise Academy is a sequence of business development programs which involves students developing their own real company.

Knowledge and understanding is gained through participation in Adelaide University's E-Challenge. Teachers, industry specialists and a mentor work collaboratively with students to turn their idea into a successful enterprise that they own and can take with them when they finish at the Academy.

The success of the Enterprise Academy is undeniable. Students of the program have won state-wide awards, completed their Certificate III in Micro Business Operations and have a new found passion for their

learning. Across the school there has been a real growth in entrepreneurial thinking with many students dreaming of one day owning their own business.

The Renmark Education Partnership is working together to instil entrepreneurial thinking in students from a young age. Renmark primary schools are undertaking enterprise activities which will provide a natural progression for students to begin the Enterprise Academy pathway from Year 8.

Support from the local community has been integral to the success of the Enterprise Academy. Local business people donate their time to mentor students and assist in helping them to build their resilience, commitment and emotional intelligence.

Renmark High School has a dream to create a Business Hub at the school for students from across the partnership to access. Judging by the passion and commitment shown by early adopters of the Enterprise Academy, it looks like the school will achieve this in 2017. Watch this space!



LUNCHTIME  
FUN @  
RENMARK  
NORTH  
PRIMARY



# CELEBRATING CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

Children at the Renmark Children's Centre are using Dreaming Stories to help understand different cultures from around the world. Staff at the centre have chosen to focus on finding the similarities between different cultures rather than focussing on differences which has resulted in a more inclusive learning environment.

In order to gain traction with the children, specific Dreaming Stories have been chosen. Teacher Pat Morris explains, 'We wanted to make sure the stories were relevant and meaningful so we chose stories the children could relate to. For example we chose The Butterfly which is similar to The Hungry Caterpillar which is a favourite with everyone.'

The Dreaming Stories have been integrated into all parts of the Children's Centre educational program. Children play a game to find all of the hidden numbered birds in the Wa:Tji Bird which helps their numeracy skills. Staff have also observed the children incorporating the stories into their play. 'The Wa:Tji Bird is a story that tells of the right and wrong ways to behave,' Pat explains. 'It is now common to hear children tell each other "Don't be a Wa:Tji Bird!" if they feel as though their friend's behaviour is wrong.'

Parents and families have been extensively included in the Dreaming Stories program through notes home and in the newsletter. Children are encouraged to have conversations with their families about the stories and their own culture at home.

The Dreaming Stories at Renmark Children's Centre have been extremely successful and provides a blueprint for introducing cultural programs to early years education.



## Science lessons lead the way for a modern approach to education

In an ever changing global environment, knowledge and skills in Science are vital for people to succeed. Staff and students at Renmark High School have recognised this trend and are working hard to design more engaging science lessons using inquiry based learning.

Current methods for measuring student success is based on how well a young person can answer

questions in an isolated environment with a pen and paper. The answer we then give them is 'You are clever or you are not.' This one dimensional approach to learning and tracking student achievement is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the 21st century.

As a result, educators from across the Renmark Education Partnership are working together to create inspiration learning. They have listened to students and are adapting their approach to education in response.

Science lessons at Renmark High School are just the beginning. At the high school they are working on lessons where the investigations have a no hands up approach. Teachers are working on their questioning skills so that they 'Pose, Pause, Pounce and Bounce,' in other words, students and teachers work together to discover the answer.

It is early days and changing the way things have always been done takes time. However the definite buzz of shared excitement across the partnership is undeniable.



# Renmark Education Partnership

## What's On

### October 19

Awards Presentation Ceremony  
Renmark High School

### October 24

Parent Teacher Interviews  
Renmark High School

### October 26

Little Day Out with Cool 4 Kids  
Renmark Children's Centre

### October 31

School Assembly  
Renmark Primary School

### November 1

Preschool to school transition begins  
Renmark Children's Centre &  
Renmark Partnership Preschools

### November 3

Music: Count Us In performance  
Renmark West Primary School

### November 4

Year 7 tour & transition visit  
Renmark High School & all  
Renmark Partnership Schools

### November 7

Year 12 exams begin  
Renmark High School

### November 10

Renmark Children's Centres  
Partnership Meeting  
Renmark Children's Centre

### November 14

Student Prom  
Renmark High School

### November 15

Parent meeting for new  
Reception students  
Renmark Primary School

### November 16

Year 7 camp  
Renmark West Primary School

### November 18

Continental  
Renmark North Primary School

### November 17

Just 2 Deadly Awards  
Renmark Primary School

### November 29

Presentation Night  
Renmark High School

### December 1

Well-being Day  
Renmark North Primary School

### December 8

Let's Celebrate School Concert  
Renmark Primary School  
  
School Concert  
Renmark West Primary School

### December 12

Year 7 Graduation  
Renmark Primary School

### December 14

Year 7 Graduation  
Renmark North Primary School

### December 15

Year 7 Graduation Dinner  
Renmark West Primary School

### December 16

Final Assembly  
Renmark North Primary School

### TBA

End of Year Family Night  
Renmark Children's Centre

### TBA

End of Year Graduation Celebrations  
Renmark West Preschool



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and  
Child Development