



The Gifted Students' Literacy and Leadership Camp in the Callide Valley provided Year 7, 8 and 9 students with a variety of activities.

## The sky's the limit for gifted Callide Valley students

A LITERACY and leadership camp for gifted students in the Callide Valley provided students with activities planned specifically for their needs.

Danielle Carige, Learning Support Teacher at Biloela State High School, said the support had been continued in students' classrooms post-camp, and that further activities and professional development for teachers have been offered in 2006.

"I'd been living and teaching overseas and I'd observed how other countries met the needs of their gifted students," Mrs Carige said.

"I'd also studied gifted education for my Master's degree, and attended the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program's *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers* conference in 2005. It seemed to me that in our cluster there were opportunities to be offering more for rural gifted students, and for professional development to assist teachers in supporting these students."

Mrs Carige approached the then

principal of Biloela State High School, Ian Garvey, and a two-part plan was put into action.

In May 2005, 24 gifted Years 7, 8 and 9 students from Callide Valley schools spent three days at The Sky's the Limit writer's camp, funded through PCAP and the AGQTP, at Kroombit Lochbar Station.

"The students worked with author Mark Svendsen. They also attended self-esteem awareness programs, and built skills in effective communication through sessions run by interested teachers and facilitators," Mrs Carige said.

"And they thoroughly enjoyed the abseiling wall and ropes course too!"

In July, a series of professional development sessions on gifted education was run for cluster staff and parents.

"These provided information on Education Queensland's *Framework for Gifted Education*; explored ways the community could be proactive in nurturing gifted students; and looked

at providing tangibles supported by the AGQTP course to enable them to do so," Mrs Carige said.

The results, Mrs Carige said, have been very positive.

"A solid gifted education policy has been established at Biloela State High School. We're working on writing an individual support plan for each student. Professional development is continuing, assisting teachers throughout the cluster to differentiate the curriculum to support the needs of gifted students. Networking between cluster schools – parents, staff and administrators – is growing. A Maths/IT camp for gifted students has been held, and gifted Year 7s are being assisted in their transition to high school."

Mrs Carige said Biloela State High School's initiatives had been showcased at the Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc.'s conference in March 2006.

For further information, contact Danielle Carige on phone (07) 4992 8666 or email on dhurl7@eq.edu.au



Middle Ridge State School staff, front from left, Susan Callaghan, Jill Temple, Dianne Fuss and, back from left, Janet Jones, Lyn Nuttall and Fiona Millar share a final comment on The Purple Stapler at their early morning Philosophy Café.

## Philosophy Café idea thrives at Middle Ridge

THE flyer says, *And now for something completely different...* it's an invitation to make an early start to the day with "tea, toast and talk" at the Middle Ridge State School Philosophy Café.

Teachers at Middle Ridge are getting together to talk about articles that interest them – and the conversation flows freely.

Susan Callaghan, Teacher-Librarian and IDEAS Facilitator at Middle Ridge said the first gathering was really great.

"Fourteen staff members, as well as Frank Crowther (Dean of Education at the University of Southern Queensland) and visiting Canadian scholar Bryan Connors came along," Ms Callaghan said.

Up for discussion was *Peter Senge and the Learning Organisation*, an article one of the teachers had enjoyed and wanted to share. As a follow-up, the group invited Frank Crowther back, asking him to provide a reading and to defend it.

That led to discussion of Drucker's *Age of Social Transformation*.

Ms Callaghan said the morning was highly stimulating.

"It made people feel good to be able to read quite a lengthy article and to make sense of it for their own lives," she said.

IDEAS project manager Marian Lewis, from the USQ Leadership Research Institute, said the morning she attended the Philosophy Café there was lively discussion of the first chapter of Frank McCourt's book *Teacher Man* along with extracts from a blog by Miss Dennis, a high school teacher in the Bronx.

"Lyn Nuttall, the teacher who selected the readings, referred back to the Senge article, acknowledging the power of stories to bring a school to life. He reflected on the effectiveness of story-telling with students and how sharing stories helped teachers to understand their work," Ms Lewis said.

*The Purple Stapler* caused both amusement and reflection. It describes how Miss Dennis totally "lost it" one day with her class when her purple stapler disappeared. It was the final straw – but her emotional outburst changed the classroom dynamics and actually created respect. Teachers used the stories to share aspects of their own professional lives.

Middle Ridge joined the IDEAS Project in 2003. For Ms Callaghan, the Philosophy Café grew out of the school's engagement in the IDEAS processes. The professional conversations about vision, values and pedagogy, the development of a common language, the changing patterns of interaction between staff, the collaborative planning – all helped to prepare the way for more "philosophical" discussions about teaching.

According to Ms Callaghan, over the last three years, data "clearly indicates how much we have grown as a staff and as a whole school".

## Bald Hills State School wins state Arbor Day award

BALD Hills State School's synergy of sun-smart ways, environmental issues and school and community partnerships has won them this year's state prize in the 2006 Queensland Arbor Day Awards.

The Arbor Day awards are sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources and Water, Brisbane City Council, Queensland Health and Ergon Energy, and aim to recognise the huge contribution made by groups and individuals around Queensland, who plant and care for native vegetation and create valuable shade in rural and urban areas.

Bald Hills was named the winner in the Schools Category.

Principal Keith Warwick said the school's focus, which won them the award, has been the ongoing restoration of a 70 year old stand of hoop pines, which are located on the school site.

"Staff, students and parents have undertaken significant 'hands on' and in-class initiatives to create an environment that meets school, community and environmental needs," Mr Warwick said.

"The award is an apt celebration of the impact of thinking globally and acting locally.

"The 'forestry' has become one more venue for learning within our school community," he said.



Bald Hills State School students proudly show their 2006 Queensland Arbor Day Award for their work restoring a 70 year old stand of hoop pines at the school. With them is teacher Jinty Bird.