

Year 9 Connections Program – Opening up your world

Year 9 at St Andrew's is a most exciting year that has been designed to cover the themes of Academic, Community/Service, Adventure, Independence, Environment/Culture and Enjoyment. From the outside, Year 9 at St Andrew's appears to be similar to Year 9 courses at other schools. The students attend four lessons each of Mathematics, Science, Humanities and English with their respective core subject teachers. They also participate in lessons of HPE, House lesson, Sport, Chapel, Student Well-being, Assembly and choose three elective lessons each semester, much as they have done in the past in Year 9 at St Andrew's. They undertake assessments along the same lines as the year levels above and below them. However, there is a lot more to a Year 9 education at St Andrew's during this time of adolescent growth. The College attempts to connect these young people to a world in which they feel they belong.

The different components that make up the year of learning opportunities and experiences do not stand alone, but are connected in endeavouring to address the needs of our students. We believe that these connections link our students to a world of which they want to be a part of.



The Structure

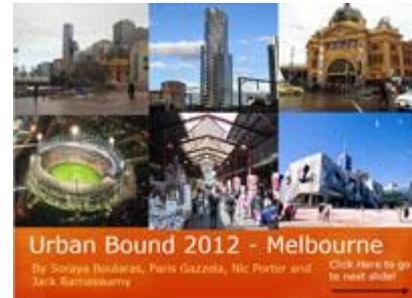
Each off campus experience has been purposefully positioned around the middle of a school term. This is to enhance the timeline for students in Year 9 to be more engaging. The students spend approximately 4-5 weeks in a classroom then a week on a program that takes them outside of the classroom. They come back into the classroom for another 4-5 weeks and then have a holiday break. This structure is repeated each term. One of the observations from the

core subject teachers this year has been a noticeable increase in the amount of work being covered at the end of the term. Often students are tired and find it harder to engage by week 10 but we find that this is not the case in 'Year 9 Connections'.

1) Urban Bound - Melbourne

The students spend a week in Melbourne completing a variety of experiences directly related to our themes. A summary of the activities are:

- The students complete a multimedia, collaborative, inquiry based project centred on the systems of a city. The project takes on a scientific approach based on collating data collected from interviewing the public in both formal and informal interviews.
- The students attend both a major sporting event and live theatre and complete a multimedia report on each. Here the students begin to understand that cities must provide for the interests and entertainment of those that not only visit the city but those that reside in it.
- The students visit and work at Ormond College (Melbourne University). They receive a tour and the opportunity to ask questions of University students. They work daily in the environment of the College and dine in both the Café and formal Dining Room. They complete a multimedia report on the different aspects of the College.
- In groups, using city websites, the students research a restaurant to dine at. Their choice is based around parameters set by the Teachers. Melbourne's dining precincts are based around different cultures and with a set budget they book and eat at their restaurant. Their multimedia report includes an interview of one of the restaurant's employees.
- The students visit the Victoria market and again in small groups, interview shoppers to find out why the market is such an attraction. Why do shoppers travel into the city to do their fruit and vegetable shopping? What transport do they use and why? They transfer the data into another multimedia report. They are also given a budget to try some of the unusual delicacies.
- Unique to our program across Australia is the special bond we have developed with St. Vincent de Paul. Our Year 9's are the only students at that level allowed to help out with the Soup Kitchen van. Working together with our teachers they prepare food for the night run, help serve the needy and then return to the kitchen to clean up. At each stop our students give out items such a socks, scarves and toiletries to those in need. They have the opportunity to chat and converse with the homeless along with their teachers and the staff from Vinnie's. This has proved to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the trip.
- Integrated with the many activities, the students learn how to use Melbourne's transport system independently from adults but in groups. This is slowly developed through the week using tours and walks around the city and culminates at the end of the week in an unseen challenge where the students complete a course around the city. Here they must



use certain trams and trains to collect information around the CBD. The students record their experiences by completing a 'Great Race' type of video.

2) Brisbane – A World City

The students spend a week in Brisbane and complete a multimedia project exploring the Brisbane Council's claim that Brisbane is a World City.

- The students complete research on well-known World Cities. They devise a set of criteria to measure against, and armed with their questions they head into Brisbane. Our Year 9's investigations have been quite varied, from Tourism to Brisbane's ability to cater for the disabled in public places. Students collect data from interviews and arrive at a conclusion to see if Brisbane measures up. They bring their project together through a multimedia presentation.
- The students also explore the transport systems in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast, travelling to different venues to work in collaborative groups.
- The Year 9's travel to Brisbane 3 days out of the 5.



3) North Stradbroke Island – Working with Quandamooka People

The students spend a week camping at North Stradbroke Island. They work with, and get to know the Indigenous people. Linked strongly to the Year 9 Humanities Curriculum, the students explore the topics of Land Rights, the Stolen Generation, mortality rates, the stolen wages and the history of the Island including the asylum institution and leper colony that used to be on the island. Other activities include:



- Water Ways – Beach clean-up and audit, visit to Science research centre
- Dunwich Historical Tour/ Museum Visit/ Myora Cemetery site led by an Indigenous Elder
- Environmental Scientist walk and talk to Blue Lake – learn about the environmental impact of mining
- Beach Art – stories told through Art and a tour of the coast - how the land tells a story of survival and a way a life led by the local Indigenous people
- Q Dancers – Aboriginal Dance Group followed by a 'Dance Off' – Building Community Relations with Indigenous children
- Brown Lake visit – the Traditional daily meeting place of the Quandamooka Women and Children.

- Teaching the Primary children of Dunwich – Students devise activities based around the primary school curriculum
- Salt Water Murriss Indigenous Art group – Creating a group vinyl/mural.
- Educational talk by the Sibelco Mining Company

4) The Year 9 Survival Camp

Year 9 camp is an exciting and fun step up for our students. Every day is a new physical challenge- canoeing, hiking, sailing, abseiling, mountain biking- to be attempted and conquered to get to the next campsite. Campsites include Boreen Point, Noosa North Shore, Elanda Point and the Noosa Sea Scouts. Our Year 9's travel and camp in single sex groups of around 20 students with 2 staff. Specialist instructors meet the groups each day to take them on a new adventure.



5) Connected Learning Time (CLT)

With the exponential advancement of ICT there is now a generation of students bringing 'anytime, anywhere and anyhow' expectations to school that defy every aspect of the traditional educational setting. These students skilfully face the increasing pace and business of everyday life in meeting the demands of the 21st Century.

What have schools done to change their educational settings to take advantage of these skills and develop the understandings students need to succeed in the future? Do teachers realise that students learn at different paces, use a range of resources and have different learning styles? As Educators at St Andrew's, we like to think that we have. At St Andrew's Anglican College, student centred personalisation is at the core of our philosophy for education.



'A personalised school should ensure that every student and teacher is both challenged and supported in just the right balance to ensure that they continuously grow in ability and confidence. The first step would be to allow students to make some choices.'

Dan Buckley, Director of Pedagogy at Cambridge Education and Fellow of Education Impact.

In Year 9, a program called CLT (Connected Learning Time) based on the theory of 'Individualised Learning' has been trialled. Through clever timetabling one session each of the Core Subjects - Science, Humanities, English and Science is dedicated to CLT. We have also

assigned an extra three lessons a week to dedicate to CLT so effectively the Year 9 students will get extra time to focus on English, Maths, Humanities and Science. During CLT the entire Year 9 cohort have their four core teachers rostered with them and could choose to work on any of the four subjects. In a survey of the students in 2013 over 80% of the students said their School/Home life balance improved by having CLT sessions.

At the beginning of these sessions students have ten minutes of quiet planning where they complete and set their goals. These plans are stored on SkyDrive and are accessible by teachers and eventually by parents. Then at the end of the session students reflect on what they have completed and evaluate their progress to set new goals.

The students have choice in CLT - choosing to work in any of their core subjects, where to sit and who they collaborate with as they are not restricted to class groupings.

There are a several crucial factors that CLT requires for success:

- Access to core teachers
- Large comfortable and inviting space catering for an entire year level
- Versatile environment that can be redesigned for different learning styles and teaching strategies e.g. independent learning, group collaboration, teacher conferencing or a Year level meeting
- Access to units of work online through the Learning Management System or equivalent using a mobile device
- Specifically designed online units that are student focused as well as teacher driven
- Reflection time before and after to assess students' effective use of CLT

We are ensuring that we meet these requirements. The factors outlined above, result in the creation of student directed learning pathways with resources that can be accessed 'anytime, anyplace and anyway' - engaging students and encouraging them to take control of their own learning within a structured framework.

6) Global Citizenship Week

In the last week of Term 3 the Year 9's complete a Global Citizenship Project and a Personal Art Project. In collaborative groups they examine the way students around the world have used social media to make a change. They then decide on a cause worth pursuing and that they feel passionate about. Using a variety of social media sites they design a campaign to promote their cause. During the week the Year 9's also examine their own Global Footprint. They look at themselves from the perspective of what others may see. Students answer questions such as, 'What would others see if they Googled my name? Is that what I want my image to portray? How do I make my Global Footprint what I want it to be?'



The Personal Art project is a reflection and examination of the inner self and uses different media to bring this outward to celebrate our student's individuality and uniqueness.

7) Celebrating Year 9

During the year, students hold a community expo where they show the wider community what they have learned. They present their multimedia projects and experiences online and through displays. Invitations are sent out to families and the different stakeholders to participate in the evening.



We have been delighted with changes in the focus and engagement we see in students after experiencing the Year 9 Connections program. It is well-balanced, being able to maintain the rigor of a traditional academic course with the engagement of a 21st century learning structure, engaging students in higher order skill development and beginning to prepare them for workplace and tertiary institutions in a time of delicate adolescence growth. 'Year 9 Connections' has received much attention from other Independent schools across Queensland that are also trying to emulate different components of a Year 9 Program similar to ours. St Andrew's Year 9 students complete this enjoyable and engaging year, recognising that they have had the opportunity to make connections that will open up their world in so many ways. Year 9 is the key year for this project, as it sets them in good stead also for the focus and organisation required for the senior years of secondary schooling. This program provides students with both a new vision for the world which lies beyond the classroom and the tools to make the necessary connections as they move confidently through their educational journey and into their futures.

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