Welcome to the July edition of Around Catholic Schools. I trust that this publication will give you a real sense of the many and varied activities that have been part of the life of our schools in the Sale diocese since February.

A quick look at the Contents of this edition shows a broad array of categories, from Blogging to Surfing and all points in between. One of the most exciting events to have occurred in the past few months, and noted on page 4, was the ‘turning of the sod’ at the site of the new St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School in Cranbourne East. The sun shone and the gumboots were not necessary. It was wonderful to be there along with the many people who had worked so tirelessly to see this plan for a new school come to fruition with this symbolic act of turning over a piece of the soil to start the lengthy process of construction that will follow.

I particularly draw your attention to the ‘Partners for Learning’ article which focuses on one of the National Partnerships initiatives, the Family School Partnership. This program aims to enhance student learning and student wellbeing through building strong partnerships between schools, families and communities. Research has shown the link between student learning outcomes and student wellbeing and that both of these elements are assisted when schools engage in partnership with the families of the students enrolled and also with the community in which the school is located.

I hope you enjoy reading all of the articles in this edition and that, as interested participants in Catholic education in our diocese, you get the chance to see first-hand some of these school communities in action.

Maria Kirkwood
From the Director
Even the most reluctant writers at St Brigid’s Primary School in Officer get excited about communicating their learning ... through blogs.

“When students realise their work may be published to a global audience, they are more motivated to produce better writing,” said St Brigid’s Principal, Ken Gale. “Having a real audience for their work gives students a purpose for writing. It’s empowering, knowing that one’s work is important enough to be viewed by others.”

St Brigid’s Primary School began blogging in late 2011, with some initial technical advice provided by Catholic Education Office staff member Phil Rebbechi. The school uses the global2 platform which is the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s version of Edublogs.

Before launching any blogs on the Internet, St Brigid’s staff spent time developing their blogs and reviewing each other’s. It was decided to have one blog per learning group as opposed to one per level so that each teacher and learning group was represented.

For privacy and safety reasons, students are not allowed to include their full name or personal details in their posts. Each post comment is carefully screened by the class teacher before being posted on the Internet.

Blogging has many advantages for students, according to Ken. “Blogs invite students to share their learning and interact with people from all over the world. This nurtures students’ curiosity and encourages them to be independent learners. Blogs also help students improve their reading skills, express creativity, obtain feedback on their work, learn about other cultures and see that we are all connected, no matter where we might be in the world.”

For parents, class blogs are a great way to stay in touch with what’s happening in their child’s classroom. “Gone are the days when a parent asks their child, ‘What happened at school today?’ and has to accept ‘Nothing’ as an answer,” said Ken. “Blogs are able to connect parents with their child’s education and can be a useful conversation starter at home.”

St Brigid’s Grade 1/2 student Lachlan said he loves his class blog. “I like that my mum and dad can see what I am learning at school and can comment on it,” he said. “I especially like seeing the comments.”

Blogging also offers benefits for teachers and principals by providing a vehicle for sharing ideas and lesson plans, receiving feedback and developing a professional learning network.

The St Brigid’s learning community invites you to check out their blogs. Click on the “Classroom blogs” link at the bottom of their homepage www.stbofficer.catholic.edu.au

For a Principal introduction with a difference, meet Ken Gale’s avatar at http://kgale1.global2.vic.edu.au
New school on the way

The Catholic Bishop of Sale, Most Rev. Christopher Prowse, turned the first sod at the site of the new St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School in Cranbourne East in April.

“The turning of the sod symbolises the beginnings of the new school and parish of St Thomas the Apostle,” said Bishop Prowse. “Catholic education is the jewel in the crown of the new development at Cranbourne East and I am pleased that the first stage of St Thomas the Apostle Primary School will be open at the start of next year.”

The new school’s name was one of three suggested by former Cranbourne Parish Priest Fr Andrew Wise and was selected by Bishop Prowse because St Thomas was one of the first evangelisers who took his mission to India to establish the Church. This is particularly appropriate for Cranbourne East, with many residents coming from Kerala in the south of India, where St Thomas established his Church.

Enrolments for all grade levels (Prep to 6) are now open for St Thomas the Apostle Primary School. The school’s Foundation Principal is Brendan Marrinon.

Supporting Sudanese families

An initiative to support Sudanese families is being developed in the western end of the Diocese of Sale.

The group - comprising representatives from the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sale, St Francis Xavier College, St Patrick’s Primary School in Pakenham and the Local Learning Employment Network - aims to improve the learning outcomes of the many Sudanese students that have moved into the area.

Julie Keeble, Cultural Inclusion Officer at the Catholic Education Office, said the group was born out of the recognition that partnership between schools and families is critical to student success.

“This group has seen the importance of empowering the Sudanese community so that parents can become active participants and equal partners in their children's education and lifelong learning,” said Julie.

Some of the issues and priorities already identified by the group include the need for translation and interpreter services to be available, initiatives to ensure Sudanese parents feel comfortable in visiting their children's school, support for parents in understanding the learning pathways available in upper secondary school (e.g. VET and VCAL) and culturally appropriate activities to encourage and support family participation.

“We are examining similar initiatives that have taken place in other schools and hope to use some of their experiences and initiatives to shape how our group develops,” said Julie.

Follow the yellow brick road

Visitors to Yarram’s 41st Annual Tarra Festival could have been forgiven for thinking they were in Oz when St Mary’s Primary School students walked past.

The St Mary’s float, coordinated by Art Teacher Maria Moore, took out two prizes: Brightest Float and People's Favourite Float.
Since the start of 2012, St Peter’s College has had a vertical tutoring system, where students are allocated to a House for the duration of their family’s time at the College. St Francis of Assisi is one of the eight House patrons.

Over the past 18 months, St Peter’s students have been actively involved in learning about their Patron and have developed House prayers, crests, colours, motto, songs and sporting chants. However, Assisi House students received a special surprise when they heard that Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio had not only been voted a Catholic Pope but that he had taken the name Pope Francis I from their Patron, St Francis of Assisi.

In an impromptu liturgy held in March, Assisi House Leader Roger Hampson spoke of waking unexpectedly during the early hours of the morning and turning on the television, to see the white smoke that indicated that a new Pope was to be announced.

“When Pope Francis appeared on the balcony for the first time, I was struck by the simple dress he had chosen to wear,” said Roger, “and the immediate link that had to me with St Francis of Assisi’s choice to give up his worldly goods—including his clothes—to live his life dedicated to God”.

A recipient of a 2013 Spirit of Catholic Education Award, Roger invited his students to “celebrate the occasion and consider the synergy between their House and lives and the path chosen by the new Pope, to continue to be Knights of Peace and to carry the message of St Francis of Assisi”.

The link between Assisi House at St Peter’s College and Pope Francis I and St Peter’s Basilica was not lost on students, with many expressing how fantastic they thought it was.

St Peter’s College Principal Tim Hogan said the election of Pope Francis was “great news for the Catholic community. It struck me, the humbleness of why St Francis of Assisi was chosen. He was a simple man, loved the world over, a great role model and example of what people are looking for from the leader of the Catholic Church. We can have high hopes for the future, for Catholics all over the world”.

With Pope Francis I being the first Pope to come from South America, World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro this month is expected to be very special.
As of this year, students at Lavalla Catholic College in Traralgon are allowed to ‘bring their own device’ (BYOD) to school for learning.

While there are still laptops funded by the Federal Government available within the College, families are encouraged to provide the device that best suits their child’s needs and own circumstances.

“We are mindful that many families already have multiple devices, any of which may be suitable,” said Deputy Principal Lee McKenzie. “iPads, tablets, netbooks, laptops and even smart phones will all be able to connect to the College network.”

Instead of prescribing the device students need, the College has simply provided a list of the minimum operating requirements and suggested points for consideration when making a purchase. For example, it is important the device has a battery life of close to four hours as severely limited facilities exist for recharging devices during the day.

“The more technologically savvy parents have been pleased to have the constraints of a prescribed machine removed, while less confident parents are reassured by a shopping list of minimum operating requirements to guide their purchase,” said Lee.

For Lavalla teachers and ICT staff, the move to BYOD has forced them to become conversant with multiple devices, to accommodate different programs and to troubleshoot across a wide range of devices.

With so many ICT devices on campus, the safety of both students and devices has assumed a new level of importance. Lavalla students are expected to follow College Internet usage policy and adhere to College guidelines at all times. Students are also strongly encouraged to store devices in their lockers when not in use.

“Students, as the digital natives in this landscape, expect to be able to use apps, programs and devices to support their learning,” said Lee. “The move to BYOD has been a further development of ICT at Lavalla College. Although we can’t be sure what is developing in the ICT world, with plans for infrastructure to support multiple users with multiple devices, we are well placed to deal with the next phase as it evolves.”
Religious Education gallery walk

Grade 3 and 4 students at St Mary's Primary School in Newborough were so proud of their efforts in a unit of work they completed on the Sacrament of Reconciliation they wanted to display their work for everyone to see.

Thus Catholic Education Week at St Mary's began with a gallery walk! Work on display included information posters, PowerPoint presentations, poems, songs, stories and personal prayers. Some of the students even made special spectacles through which their work could be viewed.

With classical music playing in the background and an array of healthy and savoury snacks, students enjoyed an afternoon of viewing and critiquing each other's work.

The entire St Mary's community was invited to view the students' work and many parents marvelled at their child's efforts.

"The students were proud of their work and wanted everyone to see it," said Grade 3 Teacher Trish Mulqueen.

Diocesan Students’ Mass

Around 250 students and teachers from 36 diocesan primary and secondary schools gathered to celebrate Mass in St Mary's Cathedral, Sale, on Tuesday 30 April.

The Diocesan Students’ Mass, led by Bishop Christopher Prowse, is a key part of annual Catholic Education Week celebrations in the Diocese of Sale. This year's theme was 'Faith in Action,' a call to students and families to live out their faith through community service and their everyday interactions with others.

The Mass began with an introduction to the Cathedral given by Very Rev. Dean Andrew Wise and a procession of school banners from both diocesan primary schools and secondary schools.

Student involvement in the Mass was high, with students taking responsibility for the Readings, General Intercessions and Procession of Gifts. Lavalla Catholic College's choir led the congregation in song.

After Mass, students enjoyed a shared lunch, courtesy of the Parents and Friends Committee of St Mary's Primary School in Sale.

Samurais in Sale

Students at St Thomas’ Primary School in Sale enjoyed making Samurai helmets (kabuto) and fish kites (koi nobori) for Children's Day on 5 May.

Japanese is a new subject offering at St Thomas’ Primary School and is taught by both Patton Sensei and Yaeko Sensei.
Nurturing the spirit

Teachers from primary schools across the Diocese of Sale have participated in a Religious Education Closure Day with a difference.

Instead of focusing on Strands of the RE curriculum, this year’s Closure Day was a day for teachers, the gift of time to reflect.

Led by Assistant Director of Catholic Education (RE) Dr Rose Duffy csb and inspirational speaker Jim Quillinan, teachers were invited to consider what gives them life and what they need to allow God to find them.

"Without the wonder and awe, without the excitement of life, without nurturing our own spirituality, we cannot possibly write on the hearts of the students we teach," said Dr Duffy.

"We need to know ourselves, wipe aside the business for a moment and get in touch with our inner being, get in touch with God."

Feedback from schools that have participated so far indicates the Closure Day has been a resounding success, meeting an unspoken need for spiritual reflection.

Surf’s up
Nagle College

Year 10 VET students from Nagle College in Bairnsdale participated in two surf camps at Cape Conran in March.

The camps enabled students to meet the requirements of the VET Outdoor and Recreation units by learning a new skill and gaining a certified qualification.

Nagle College staff and students camped overnight at the Marlo Caravan Park, making an early start from Bairnsdale and reaching Cape Conran in time for a late morning two-hour surf lesson at the East Cape Beach.

A second two-hour lesson followed the lunch break and students demonstrated strong progress, with most managing to stay on their boards and even stand up.

The focus of the second day was learning to save a drowning person via a board rescue. Under the expert tuition from staff at the Lakes Surf Shack, all participating Nagle students achieved either a Level 1 or Level 2 Safe Surfing Certificate.

“Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to take the classroom into the outdoors and to experience the beautiful East Gippsland environment,” said a Nagle College staff member. “Valuable life skills were learned, closer friendships were formed and a better understanding of surfing as a recreational activity was gained.”

Tablet technology

Students at Lumen Christi Primary School in Churchill are enjoying use of the school’s 30 new iPads. Two classes have set up their own Twitter account so that parents can follow what the class has done for the day.
Students from Sacred Heart Primary School in Morwell have been polishing their conflict resolution skills in a series of workshops around the concept of Restorative Practice.

Restorative Practice, an intervention model based on Restorative Justice, aims to solve issues through a conference between conflicting parties rather than simply through punishing one or both of them. The goal is the same—to prevent the problem from recurring—but with Restorative Practice the relationship between the two parties is restored as well. This is particularly important in schools, where students cannot simply avoid a classmate for the next one to seven years!

Sacred Heart has decided to implement the Restorative Practice model as part of the school’s commitment to providing a positive and productive environment for students and teachers.

In recent workshops, students from Prep to Grade 6 learnt some simple techniques they can use when things start to go wrong in their interactions with others.

Workshops involved students watching a role play—performed by their peers—involving a scenario where a child was excluded from a game and made to feel unwelcome. The ‘teacher’ in the role play worked through the Restorative Practice process, asking the required questions of both parties:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Class-based discussions and role plays at school assemblies reinforced the messages delivered at the workshops.

As key partners in their children’s education, parents were invited to attend the Restorative Practices workshops.

“Attending the session was valuable,” said one parent. “I now understand the process the teachers implement if an issue arises between the children. I am confident in the knowledge that there is a well-structured process in place at school and that issues will be handled in a fair and constructive way. Additionally, if my child mentions anything at home, I am able to reinforce the Restorative Practice process.”

“Students responded positively to the workshop,” said another parent. “They learned the importance of developing a plan to put things right. Students were also able to see that talking through an issue and discussing their feelings will result in a more positive and harmonious outcome for all involved.”
Budding writers

Writing and spelling are two key focus areas at St James Primary School in Nar Nar Goon. And the progress students are making is fantastic.

It is not high-tech strategies that teachers are using, but a commitment to giving students regular time and encouragement to improve their writing and publishing skills.

A favourite writing strategy among the Grade 3 students at St James is a 'stream of consciousness' where students write creatively, with little direction from the teacher other than to suggest new ideas occasionally. Students then have the opportunity to share their writing with other students, who provide lots of ideas for making the stories more exciting or scary. Children report being constantly surprised about where their imaginations can take them!

In spelling, students select their own words for study, the emphasis being words that have come from each student's own writing. Teachers help students with different strategies for learning words.

The introduction of a school spelling bee has also generated a lot of excitement among students. The sense of pride St James students take in their writing and spelling achievements is evident to all who visit the school.

The Easter Story

The Easter Story came to life at St James Primary School in Nar Nar Goon, where students in Prep to Grade 2 showcased their learning through a re-enactment video.

In preparation for the event, students learnt their lines, discussed the clothing and housing of the day and practised where they had to stand during video recording.

On the day of filming, a real pony was brought to school for the child acting the role of Jesus to ride on upon his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Student excitement was consequently extremely high and students took their roles even more seriously following this arrival.

The end result was a beautifully presented, dramatised event that enriched students' understanding of the Easter Story.

St James' Senior students had a different part to play, re-enacting the Stations of the Cross on Holy Thursday. Costumes were simple: mainly sheets tied sarong-style and a simple white sheet for the student playing the role of Jesus.

St James parents were invited to attend the prayerful ceremony and many of the families took up this invitation.

"The audience could see the reverence and genuine sorrow of the students," said teacher Bernie Hance.

A good old yarn!

Residents of Laurina Lodge in Heyfield were delighted to receive beautiful blankets knitted by a group of students from Grades 3 to 6 at St Michael's Primary School in Heyfield.

"It was a very special privilege to witness the students and the residents admiring the finished products," said a St Michael's staff member.
The family and community play a key role in the academic engagement and performance of young people. In the Diocese of Sale, the Family School Partnership focus is to build strong partnerships between schools, families and the community to support children’s learning and wellbeing.

Parents from several Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale spoke at a recent Wellbeing Leaders’ Day about the ways their school is building true partnerships with families.

Parent presenters spoke of an improved sense of community, greater parent voice, connection with services and support, increased parenting skills, greater parental engagement in learning, obvious teacher enthusiasm for partnering and stronger parent-to-parent support.

Initiatives discussed included school playgroups, events for children and their extended families, partnering with other organisations, care group to support families in need, parent/community Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and a literacy volunteer program involving parishioners.

“We are so fortunate to have these partners,” said one volunteer. “It’s a win-win-win! Children love it, teachers have seen amazing improvement in the children’s reading comprehension skills and partners (parish helpers) go home with smiles on their faces!”

Feedback indicated that all who attended the Wellbeing Leaders’ Day found it helpful to hear parents’ perspectives.

“It was a very worthwhile day,” said one Principal. “We saw ideas in action—empowering parents—and I have left with some ideas for our school. We need to review how we can further engage parents and how we can do this better.”

“We have gone from a school where parents were asked to help for special occasions to one where parents are organising, planning, discussing and having a voice in how the school operates,” said a Wellbeing Leader.

“Engaging parents needs to be deliberate and planned,” confirmed Catholic Education Office staff member, Anne Speekman. “Schools and education systems are in a powerful position to reinforce the critical role of parents in education and build parent and teacher confidence to effectively engage with each other for the ultimate benefit of the child.”
Don Bosco Primary School in Narre Warren enjoyed a visit in May from religious singer and songwriter Andrew Chinn. The day culminated with a whole-school concert in the hall, to which parents were invited to attend. Students are looking forward to incorporating the new songs they have learned in upcoming Masses and prayer services.

St Joseph’s Korumburra Prep student Wilhelm Layton organised his own Project Compassion fundraiser, asking family and visitors to donate any five cent pieces they were carrying. He single-handedly raised $30 for Project Compassion.

Students from St Brendan’s Primary School in Lakes Entrance took part in the community ANZAC Day service.

Students from Columba Catholic Primary School in Bunyip were able to stretch their minds and muscles when they visited the Sportsworks exhibit at Scienceworks in May. Students tested their skills as extreme snowboarders, soccer goalkeepers and rock climbers.
Students at St Therese’s Primary School in Cranbourne North are well on their way to becoming life-long learners, thanks to the school’s adoption of an inquiry-based approach to learning. Teachers are embedding inquiry into all areas of the learning program, with the support of Leading Teacher Megan Crewe.

Mothers, grandmothers and special friends enjoyed a special Mothers’ Day afternoon tea at St Patrick’s Primary School in Stratford.

Students at St Joseph’s Primary School in Wonthaggi created a huge display showing the faces of Christ, as part of the Year of Faith and Year of Grace.

Students at St Brigid’s Primary School in Officer are enjoying their new running track, thanks to a P & F fundraiser.

Preps at St Mary’s Primary School in Sale hosted a pet parade in Term One.
This year’s Prep students at St Michael’s Primary School in Traralgon settled in beautifully.

Primary Principals Richard Wans and Cathy Blackford plus Catholic College Sale teacher Paul Lee recently graduated from the Masters in Educational Leadership program offered through ACU.

Grade 5/6 students at Lumen Christi Primary School in Churchill created their own prayers on cloth flags which were stitched together to create a prayer pennant. This colourful creation was then displayed outside the room between the portables which hold the Senior classes as they await the completion of their new Senior block. The prayers flutter proudly in the breeze for all to see and reflect upon.

Fourteen students from St John the Baptist Primary School in Koo Wee Rup received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Christopher Prowse on Sunday 14 April.

Around our schools...
Around our schools

**FAR RIGHT**
There was pasta, Pinocchio and puppets aplenty at St Mary’s Primary School in Newborough on the school’s Italian Day on Friday 22 March.

**RIGHT**
Staff at St Laurence’s Primary School in Leongatha had a whole school closure day on Friday 22 February to reflect on the importance of prayer.

**ABOVE**
In the lead-up to the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, families from Mary MacKillop Primary School in Narre Warren North donated a record 468 cans to support the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in their local area.

**ABOVE RIGHT**
Catholic College Sale students held a fundraising barbeque to raise money to support schools in South Sudan and East Timor.

**ABOVE**
The swim team from St Mary’s Primary School in Bairnsdale represented the school with pride and distinction at the State Swimming Carnival in Melbourne at the end of Term One.
Team effort

Grade 6 students from St Michael’s Primary School in Traralgon headed to Camp Coolamatong for four days of teamwork, fun and learning.

The camp, located on the Banksia Peninsula near Paynesville, had four goals: to allow students to spend quality time with classmates and teachers in a natural and uncluttered setting, to experience new activities in an unfamiliar environment, to develop independence and self-reliance through spending time in new situations and to promote consideration for others through cooperation and teamwork.

Camp activities including canoeing, rock climbing, abseiling, archery, cycling and hiking.

“Archery was my favourite activity,” said Grade 6 student Kieran, “because we were challenged to try to hit a balloon on the target, which kept getting smaller and smaller.”

Other camp highlights included a ‘Villains and Superheroes’ themed disco and a Red Faces event which saw the audience entertained by some very talented students.

“The children have come back with new insights into what they are capable of,” said Cathy Blackford, Principal of St Michael’s. “Not only have they gained new skills to enhance their final year at primary school, but also their futures.”

Visible learning
St Peter’s, Cranbourne

St Peter’s College in Cranbourne is implementing two key learning initiatives this year: WALT and Learning Walks.

WALT (We Are Learning Today) involves teachers at the beginning of each and every class discussing what students are going to learn today and then eliciting from students at the end of the lesson the learning that has occurred.

Indeed, research by educational theorist John Hattie points to the importance of ‘visible learning’: students being able to articulate not just what they are learning but how and why they learn. Reflecting on the link between what they are learning in one classroom and one subject and what they are learning in other classrooms and other subjects is also of critical importance.

Learning Walks involve members of the St Peter’s Leadership Team, in their role as Learning Leaders, visiting and joining in classes.

“As members of the Leadership Team, we need to be aware of what is going on in each classroom in order to make the best decisions for our teaching and learning programs going forward,” said Deputy Principal (Staff) Elizabeth Hanney.

Staff feedback on the Learning Walks has been positive after seeing the benefits. “It’s definitely a step forward for the school,” said one staff member.

Scripture scholar visit

Many teachers from schools across the Diocese of Sale attended a seminar given by Dr Amy-Jill Levine, Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville.
More than two thousand primary and secondary school students from Catholic schools in the Wellington Shire came together to pray for peace in the world at the 11th Annual Peace Mass on Wednesday 24 April.

Students travelled from as far as Yarram, Heyfield, Maffra and Stratford to join their Sale counterparts at the Bishop Phelan Stadium at Catholic College Sale. This year’s Mass was celebrated by Father Hilarion.

The Peace Mass concept was an inspiration of local Catholic teachers after the tragedy of the Bali bombings and 9/11. Its goal is to bring the community together in a Christian way, to spread the Word of Peace and to acknowledge the fact that peace begins with the individual. The hope is that after the students and staff come together to pray for peace in the school community, the idea will filter through to the greater community and beyond.

Students were involved in every aspect of the Mass and although it was hosted by Catholic College Sale, each school spent many hours in preparation for this huge event. A choir made up of students from every school featured at the Mass following a procession of representatives from each school carrying flags of the world and their school banner.

During the Mass, Catholic College Sale Principal Chris Randell asked each school individually, “Why are you here?” to which students responded with great gusto, “For peace!”

St Agatha’s Grade 6 teachers have also invited the City of Casey to help support them in their ‘Turn off that light’ campaign, modelled on the black balloon campaign run by St Peter’s College last year.

The artwork of students from St Vincent de Paul Primary School in Morwell East was displayed in an arts show at the Latrobe Performing Arts Centre. Many visitors to the show commented on the marvellous artwork and expressed awe that it was created by primary-school-aged children.

Sustainable futures

Grade 6 students at St Agatha’s Primary School in Cranbourne have completed an inquiry unit ‘Sustainable Futures.’

Activities included a visit from St Peter’s College Carbon Management students to teach St Agatha’s students about carbon emissions, the greenhouse effect and environmental justice.

The inquiry unit also involved participation in the Carbon Markets program at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, helping students consolidate their knowledge about carbon emissions.

Finally, the Grade 6 students were called to action through their fundraising efforts for carbon offsetting in the East Timorese community of Baguia, as well as reducing their carbon emissions at home and at school.

St Agatha’s Grade 6 teachers have also invited the City of Casey to help support them in their ‘Turn off that light’ campaign, modelled on the black balloon campaign run by St Peter’s College last year.
Digitally enhanced learning

A new Digital Literacy course has been developed for Year 7 and 8 students at Marist-Slon College in Warragul to support the school’s 1:1 laptop program.

As part of the course, students work in groups to discuss cybersafety and develop skills in Blackboard, OneNote, Excel, Outlook, Prezi and research tools to access and use resources effectively.

The College’s L2L (Learning to Learn) team works closely with teaching staff across the curriculum and at various year levels to implement a program that covers the teaching of these important study skills.

“Our goal is to equip our students with the knowledge and skills that they require to become confident and independent lifelong learners,” said Deputy Principal (Learning) Marian Kee. “To increase student engagement, it has become increasingly evident that students need to be taught the importance of good information and digital literacy skills.”

Grandparents’ day
St Ita’s, Drouin

St Ita’s Primary School in Drouin held a Grandparents’ Day as part of its Catholic Education Week celebrations at the end of April.

The day commenced in the classroom, where students showcased their learning to their doting guests.

The classroom visit was followed by a Grandparents’ Day Mass, organised by the school’s student liturgy team and Religious Education Coordinator Jessica Van Diemen.

After Mass, grandparents were treated to a variety of musical performances by classes and the St Ita’s choir.

The event culminated with an opportunity for grandparents to have a photo taken with their grandchildren and a beautiful morning tea organised by the school’s Parents and Friends’ Association.

“Grandparents’ Day is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the important role these special people play in our lives,” said St Ita’s Principal, Andrew Osler. “At St Ita’s we believe that when children are given the opportunity to spend quality time with grandparents, their lives are enriched through the very special bond that is formed.

Engaging with Asia

Students at St Joseph’s Primary School in Trafalgar experienced a day of Japanese cultural experiences including sushi making demonstrations, origami and calligraphy. The highlight of the day was a three-piece band playing traditional Japanese instruments. The day was organised by Japanese teacher Jo Kondo.
Probots in Berwick

Students at St Catherine’s Primary School in Berwick have been reaping the benefits of the robotics equipment received through the Woolworths Earn and Learn promotion.

Grade 3 students were the first year level to use the new ‘Probots.’ Students had to work collaboratively in teams to design commands for their Probot.

Students reported being surprised at how many mathematical understandings were used in the programming, particularly in the areas of length, perimeter, shapes, angles and addition skills.

Grade 3 students particularly enjoyed the race at the end of the lesson and passionately cheered on their Probot.

The staff of St Catherine’s would like to publicly thank the wonderful families at their school, whose commitment to collecting the Earn and Learn stickers enabled them to purchase so many fantastic resources for the school’s 619 students.

Faith in Action
St Gabriel’s, Traralgon

Staff and students at St Gabriel’s Primary School in Traralgon celebrated Catholic Education Week with great enthusiasm at the end of April.

In ‘care groups’ (multi-age groupings that the school has established), students participated in prayer, listened to Scripture and were involved in discussion on this year’s Catholic Education Week theme ‘Faith in Action.’

Discussion questions included: How do we at St Gabriel’s show that we are a Catholic school? How does Jesus ask us to live out our faith in action?

Children’s responses highlighted a keen understanding that actions including values such as tolerance, generosity and compassion, lead to a better world.

The discussion session concluded with students illustrating and writing words in a heart which reflected their understanding of ‘Faith in Action.’ These hearts were placed in the school’s multi-purpose room as a backdrop for classes’ weekly Masses.

On track for success and fun

Students in Grades 3 to 6 at St Michael’s Primary School in Berwick enjoyed a wonderful cross country event in May.

“My personal goal has been to get into the top five,” said Grade 6 student Korrina, “and every year I’ve got either 6th or 7th. This year, when I found out I came 3rd, words couldn’t explain how I felt!”
Bring your case along

Students in Grade 3/4 at St Mary’s Primary School in Maffra put together a case of the items they would take if they needed to leave town for reasons outside their control, such as political unrest, famine or natural disaster.

The exercise was part of their History unit investigating the history of Maffra and its surroundings.

Students were then invited to display the cases of their significant personal items and share their responses with the rest of the class.

In the footsteps of a saint

While many teachers were enjoying a relaxing April break, three staff members from St Francis Xavier College chose to make a pilgrimage from Portland, Victoria to Penola, South Australia in honour of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Luke Mills, Steven Murphy and Michael Dillon walked an inspiring 217 kilometres in seven days. They chose Portland as the starting point as it was there that Mary MacKillop was called by her mentor and co-founder priest Fr Julian Tenison-Woods back to Penola.

“Our destination of Penola was the obvious choice,” said Luke. “Although Mary travelled widely throughout Australia and New Zealand, this town is widely accepted as the birthplace of her order, the Sisters of St Joseph.”

The trio’s camino was ‘bookended’ by a visit to the Mary MacKillop museums in Melbourne and in Penola. “This provided a certain structure which we wanted to achieve,” said Luke.

Each day involved eight hours of walking, with much of it along cliff tops, beaches, sand dunes, goat trails and farm tracks. Only about 10 kilometres was along major highways.

The trio stayed in the local pub of each town, where they were frequently asked if they were walkers. “We said, ‘No, we’re pilgrims. We are on a camino.’” said Luke. “Needless to say, we were met with curious looks but with a little bit of humour and good spirit we were able to enter into a lively discussion about what our journey was all about. I don’t think there would be many front bars in Australia that would be discussing Mary MacKillop so it was certainly a moment of revelation for many of the local people along the way!”

Overall, the week was terrific, according to Luke. “The peace and solitude combined with the steady rhythm of the feet and walking poles provided many moments of reflection. I really enjoyed it and I hope to do it again next year.”

A six-minute version of Luke, Steven and Michael’s ‘Aussie Camino’ can be viewed on YouTube. For the link to the clip, please email Luke Mills lmills@sfx.vic.edu.au

“I don’t think there would be many front bars in Australia that would be discussing Mary MacKillop so it was certainly a moment of revelation for many of the local people along the way!”

—Luke Mills
St Kieran's Primary School in Moe participated in The Longest Autumn Harvest Celebration, a new initiative under the Victorian Schools Garden Awards program.

After six months of being lovingly watered by children and staff, a giant pumpkin planted late last year was finally picked.

"It was nurtured with gentle words of encouragement from children and staff alike," said Year 2/1 Teacher Rose Howell. "And it rewarded us by growing bigger and bigger—well beyond our wildest expectations."

In fact, the pumpkin grew so big that it took two people to carry it!

The giant pumpkin, plus some smaller pumpkins, were chopped, cooked and turned into delicious pumpkin soup.

Cups of soup were served with bread rolls for a special $1 lunch. The proceeds of the sales went towards funding the cost of more than 100 bulbs (one for each student in the school) that are expected to form a spectacular Spring floral display.

"Roll on Spring time!" said Rose.

Soup for lunch
St Kieran’s, Moe

Beetroot and chocolate cake, zucchini fritters, tomato and watermelon salads and delicious herb pizzas are just some of the delights that have resulted from the edible garden of St Agatha’s Primary School in Cranbourne. Students and families are able to grow their fresh produce from seed to table.

St Agatha’s edible garden

Three awards for diocesan educators

Three Catholic educators in the Diocese of Sale received awards from the Australian College of Educators (Gippsland) at a ceremony on Thursday 7 March.

Phil Rebbechi, Education Officer (Technology and Assisted Learning) from the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sale, was recognised for his contribution to the innovative and responsible use of digital media in education.

Katrina McInnes from St Michael’s Primary School in Traralgon and Dean Hamer from Nagle College in Bairnsdale were the other two Catholic educators—selected from all sectors of education in Gippsland—to be honoured for their innovative use of technology in the classroom.

Principal of Nagle College, Neville Powles, commended Dean on his achievement. "Dean is a natural teacher who has demonstrated insight into strategies and pedagogies that engage students in their learning," said Neville.

The awards ceremony involved the 12 awardees, their colleagues and friends and representatives from the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Sale, Monash University Gippsland and GippsTAFE.

More than 200 educators have been recognised through the ACE awards program, which began in 1992.
Spirit of Catholic Education awards

Here we present extracts from the nomination forms of the six very worthy recipients of this year's Spirit of Catholic Education Awards:

(Faith category)
Michael Delaney
Principal
Mary MacKillop Regional College, Leongatha

'Michael's faith commitment extends well beyond his obligation to the College community: his sincere and active participation in all aspects of parish life are well recognised by the broader Catholic communities.

Michael has an extraordinary capacity to shoulder others' burdens at those critical moments when an empathetic ear is needed. This he does very discretely. In fact, a great deal of his witnessing is done through the personal pastoral care he offers to those most vulnerable in his community.'

(Learning category)
Gaye Marshall
Head Librarian
Marist-Sion College, Warragul

'Gaye has been instrumental in the College's ongoing research into the use of new technologies and software to improve student accessibility to the latest online learning resources. She has helped so many students become more confident and capable learners.

Gaye is a mentor and confidante to many – students and staff alike. She is a true educator, always learning herself and searching for new ways to diversify our students' learning experiences. Her vision and enthusiasm has made a significant difference to enhancing the learning culture at Marist-Sion College.'

(Growth category)
Romalie Sooriyabandara
Administrative Officer
Trinity Catholic Primary School, Narre Warren South

'The words “Romalie” and “Trinity” are synonymous. Romalie devotes many extra hours to ensure that everything is running smoothly. She is aware of the families in need and quietly and compassionately ensures that they are supported.

Romalie's empathy and love for the children of Trinity is evidenced every day. Whether it's a child in sick bay, a forgotten lunch, a little 'accident', vomit on the floor or a child just feeling a little sad, Romalie greets every one of them with her reassuring smile. Nothing is too much trouble for her.'

(Faith category)
Mike Hansen
Classroom Teacher
Lavalla College, Traralgon

'Mike is highly committed to student awareness of social justice and refers to these often as part of the Religious Education program at Year 7. A parent recently informed the school that her son "hated RE at primary school," however he now loved it. I attribute this change to Mike's work.

Our students are transfixed as Mike brings together the strands of our everyday lives and the central values of our Marist identity. His questioning skills allow for students to uncover truths for themselves and he manages discussion seamlessly and logically. Mike's students often hear him say, "Be of good heart for the Lord is present.”

(Learning category)
Elizabeth Cunningham
Classroom Teacher / Learning Leader
St Patrick's Primary School, Pakenham

' 'Lizzy works tirelessly and passionately to change the culture of teaching and learning at St Patrick's. In Lizzy, you know you have found a teacher who is totally committed to raising the bar for every student. You do not often hear Lizzy speak of a differentiated curriculum, but step foot in her classroom and you know that the students are all catered for, from the non-English-speaking Sudanese students to the student who according to AusVELS is 12 months ahead. You won't hear Lizzy go on about justice but you will see her students take action. You won't hear Lizzy say, "Oh, that will do" but you will hear, "Come on. We can do better.”

(Growth category)
Roger Hampson
Assisi House Leader
St Peter's College, Cranbourne

'Roger's ability to work with and inspire young students who are struggling at various times in their school life is exemplary. Many students who have at times struggled with their commitment to school have stated that without the support and challenge emanating from Roger's words of wisdom they may not have stayed the distance and graduated.

Roger is a giver. He has given a lot to our community and to the wider community of Cranbourne. We are enormously thankful for what Roger brings to our school each day.’

Here we present extracts from the nomination forms of the six very worthy recipients of this year's Spirit of Catholic Education Awards:
Pay by the month. No extra cost.

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Call 1300 655 003 or visit www.catholicinsurance.org.au
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Commemorative Design Competition

Secondary School Students

Create a commemorative T-shirt design based on Mary MacKillop’s life, works or writings. The winning design will be featured on T-shirts worn by the pilgrims to Rome this October and available for purchase to the general public.

Primary School Students

Calendar

Create an artwork or write a prayer, poem or a reflection based on Mary MacKillop’s life, works or writings. The best 15 entries will be featured in a commemorative calendar which will be produced for schools. Entries close Friday 30 July 2010.

www.ceosale.catholic.edu.au

Full competition details and entry forms on our website

2013 Christmas Card Design Competition

Primary and Secondary School Students

Design a portrait or landscape A6 Christmas card on the topic ‘Glory to God ... and peace on earth!’

Up to 41 designs will be printed as Christmas cards for use by the Catholic Education Office and Catholic School Principals.

The best entrant from each school will receive a set of Christmas cards featuring his or her own design.

The most outstanding two entrants overall will receive $100 worth of art materials for themselves and $250 worth of art materials for their school.

Entries close the last day of Term 3, Friday 20 September.