



What do you call a collective group of xsellians at residential school? Very happy campers!

Residential school is the favourite time of term for all xsel staff and students where we get to see each other face to face to share meals, laughter, learning, jokes, and of course the Jumping Pillow.

This residential had many firsts; our first disco, our first assembly where parents were invited to attend and students presented a reflection on the year, our first Adobe Connect session with an official from Treasury, our first vertical integration for mathematics lessons and our first celebration of Year 10 who will move into senior schooling next year. So many firsts and yet it all went without a hitch. After one of the most satisfying assemblies I think I have ever attended, I spent the weekend lounging about recovering from residential. Something tells me I wasn't the only one with a "steady" agenda for Saturday.

Staff and students alike are to be congratulated on the vigour with which they devour our time together. The shining faces as students arrive at and leave lessons, the not so shining faces at 6.30am breakfast wake-up call and the fervour with which students partake of whatever opportunity is

presented to them. This "safe risk taking" as it is termed in gifted education circles is indeed one of the best things we can do to encourage our own growth. No-one endorses unsafe risks, but the risk of trying a new task, a new way of doing something, approaching a new friend, trying a new food and perhaps even performing a role in front of one's peers are all what I call safe risks. xsel staff deliberately expose students to safe risks on a regular basis and the personal growth we see in the students can be attributed to their willingness to have a go.

We welcomed a number of new students for 2014 at residential and this weekend we will welcome Year 7 2014 to the xsel office for an orientation and induction. Student mentors will be present on the day to assist staff in teaching the new students the technology used in xsel and to pass on the very best of our school culture. School culture takes time to develop and I can't help but feel extremely proud of the school culture we have collectively built within xsel.

Barbara Bannister

Memories of Term 4 Residential School 2013



Isabella and Eleanor in the Year 9 lab



Year 7— a study in concentration



Steph and Rebekah analysing Year 8 maths with Mr Schroder



New students Amy and Lucy felt right at home!

Teaching, Learning and Technology

Term 4 is whizzing by and the residential has flown past as well. But I must say the residential will leave a lasting and happy memory for me as the BEST ever. We tried some new things and I believe so far we have heard only positive reports. We introduced new students to the xsel residential school, welcomed two new staff Mr Steve Howard from Cowra, who will be teaching Mathematics next year and Miss Emmeline Smith who will be teaching science. We also held our very first xsel disco thanks to the persuasive Ms Winters who had found a volunteer DJ for the event. Dancing was continuous and many students and staff displayed a whole new set of abilities.

Our first ever parent, student and teacher assembly

closed residential school Term 4 2013. It was a fantastic event centred on student voice and reflection of the wonderful times had by our inaugural year 10 students. It was a showcase of the positive culture of xsel, written and delivered by our talented and committed students.

I would like to thank all the students for their impeccable behaviour during residential as without this, residential school would not be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved in its planning and execution. I would also like to thank all of the staff who always pitch in to ensure the residential school is a success each term.

We have a number of reports from other staff about activities at residential throughout the newsletter.

Virginia Cluff

Term 4 Residential: Assembly





Adobe Connect: Mr Brian Cheney, NSW Treasury

Term 4 Residential: Mathematics

Mr Brian Cheney, Director, Fiscal Effectiveness Office at State Treasury spoke to our xsel students at Residential. He communicated with us from Canberra through the use of Adobe Connect.

Mr Cheney clearly explained his role in State Treasury and how the Treasury functions. He outlined the education and the employment he undertook to obtain his current position. In this he revealed was educated in a small rural community and embraced every opportunity that came his way.

Mr Cheney discussed the importance of learning mathematics to develop logical thinking and problem solving skills. He also emphasised the importance of hard work to achieve personal goals.

Students were given the opportunity to ask questions. Unfortunately he could not give a clear answer on where he uses algebra in State Treasury and he could not comment on the government policies.

We are very grateful to Mr Brian Cheney for the time he set aside from his government duties to speak with our students.



Claire Pottie
Mathematics
Teacher

Term 4 Residential: Science

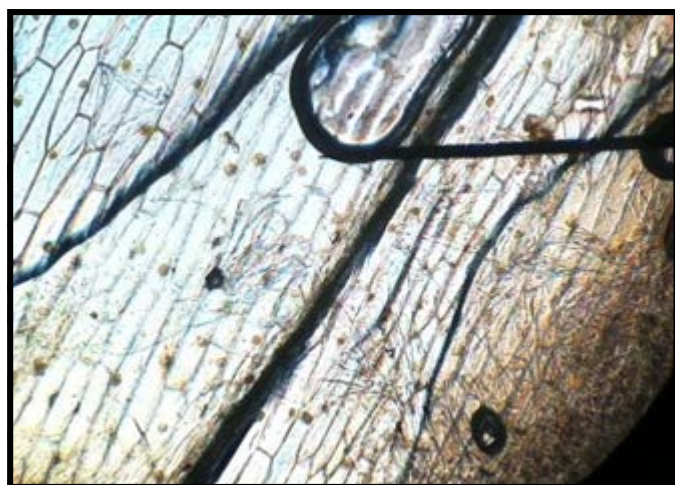
Year 7 science students were introduced to the dark art of specimen preparation as we revisited cell biology. As a researcher in a microscopy laboratory (ACMM) I cannot stress enough the importance of producing a good specimen in order to retrieve useful data. It turns out that year 7 students are naturals.

Extracting a thin sample of onion skin, then mounting and dyeing it, proved to be a challenging task, but students were able to produce several slides of an excellent quality. Onion skin cells were able to be viewed up to a magnification of 400 times their original size allowing us to clearly see some of the cellular features which have formed part of our studies. In particular, the iodine dye highlighted beautifully the nuclei and cell walls which students were able to sketch at various magnifications.

Following our success with microscope sample preparation, students were introduced to the wonderful world of experimental error, in which we clumsily attempted to measure the acceleration due to gravity timing the descent of tennis balls. As results varied between gravitational comparisons to small asteroids all the way through to Jupiter, it became clear that our errors and variables need to be managed more conscientiously.

Year 7 seem willing and able to take on any such design challenges in the future.

Josh Watts
Year 7 Science Teacher



Onion skin cells, photo credit: Ellita Hunt.

Sample prep: Ellita Hunt and Katrina Wiatkowski

Term 4 Residential: English

I lay my eternal curse on whomsoever shall now or at any time hereafter make schoolbooks of my works, and make me hated, as Shakespeare is hated. My plays were not designed as instruments of torture.

George Bernard Shaw

Sorry, Mr George Bernard Shaw....you forgot to tell the xsel English staff about 'instruments of torture' when they set the assessment task for the study of "Romeo and Juliet".

Yes...poor Year 9 were divided into 5 groups and were responsible for presenting one of the Acts from Shakespeare's play. The task required that they summarise their Act and produce a 10 minute performance. This meant that the groups had to look at the important aspects of their Act, the characters, the themes and the language. As well, costumes, props and body language/ acting/ roles needed to be discussed. Production meetings were held in chat rooms (Moodle) or in Adobe classrooms as no two students from the same school could be in the same group.

This activity took drama from the pages and made it come alive. The students learned about

memorising lines, having to play more than one role, co-operating and supporting each other, playing as a team and playing to individual strengths. The experience provided a taste of what drama companies do on a daily basis to provide thoughtful, provocative and entertaining theatre.

When students write about drama /plays in their HSC it is always obvious which students have 'lived' the experience and those who never escaped from the book.

Our Year 9s have lived "a story of more woe.....of Juliet and her Romeo".

Jo Ryan

Year 9 English Teacher



Year 9 English students

Term 4 Residential: Science

Year 8 has just completed their topic on Plants. For the Indigenous perspective of the use of plants as resources, we received a special guest at camp. A Kamilaroi elder, Aunty Beth, presented a large variety of plant species from the surrounding districts that were traditionally used by the local people and described their use. Many of the plants species were familiar to the students from across the West of NSW, but the uses they were put to were quite new.

It was explained that each region had its own knowledge, so for example, what was practiced inland was not necessarily practiced on the coast. Often an individual species would provide several uses at different times – one nut with age passed from flour source to spice to 'deep heat' treatment with the passage of time. Plants were not just used for food, but for medicines, hunting aids (to hide scent) and even baby rattles. In many cases, a plant sample was available for the students to pass around to smell and look at, and in between Aunty Beth shared entertaining and informative stories.

Many aspects of Aboriginal culture were explored and it is certain the students left with an increased respect for the knowledge and expertise of the Indigenous people of Western NSW.

Our deep thanks to Aunty Beth for sharing her knowledge.

Robert Turner

Year 8 Science Teacher

Fun at work and play – Term 4 Residential School

2013



Year 7 Entry to Selective Schools 2015 Closing Soon

Applications will close on 18 November 2013 for current Year 5 students to apply to sit the placement test in 2014 for entry into a selective school in Year 7 2015.

Parents and carers are encouraged to seek further information on the Selective Schools website at the following link and to discuss this application with their local principal.

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/k-6assessments/shsplacement/index.php>

In addition to the application form above, students wishing to enter the virtual selective provision need to print out the form on this link, complete details and hand to the local principal for completion.

Important dates for your xsel diary



- ◆ **Saturday 16 November 2013** Orientation Day for incoming Year 7 students
- ◆ **Wednesday 18 December 2013** Semester 2 reports issued
- ◆ **Wednesday 18 December 2013** Final day of synopps
- ◆ **Thursday 19 & Friday 20 December** Staff Development Days
- ◆ **Tuesday 28 January** School resumes for Eastern Division Schools
- ◆ **Tuesday 4 February 2014** School resumes for Western Division Schools

Residential Schools Arrival

Departure

Term 1 2014	Wednesday 26 February	Friday 28 February 2014
Term 2 2014	Wednesday 4 June 2014	Friday 6 June 2014
Term 3 2014	Wednesday 20 August	Friday 22 August 2014
Term 4 2014	Wednesday 5 November	Friday 7 November 2014

Vacations

Commence

End

Autumn Vacation	Monday 14 April	Friday 25 April 2014
Winter Vacation	Monday 30 June	Friday 11 July 2014
Spring Vacation	Monday 22 September	Monday 6 October 2014
Summer Vacation	Monday 22 December	Monday 26 January 2015