



# Birkdale Intermediate School

Newsletter of the Board of Trustees

Summer 2009

## BULLETIN



**OUR NEW  
THEATRE IS A  
GREAT ASSET**

**IMPROVEMENT  
IN SKILFUL  
THINKING**

**ERO REVIEW  
COMMENTS**

## Education Review Office Comments

A strong educational research base underpins the operation of the school and local and international external review is sought to evaluate the impact of educational programmes on students' learning.

The achievement of students is monitored against rigorously constructed national curriculum level expectations. These data are moderated periodically using nationally standardised testing approaches to ensure reliability. Achievement information is clearly reported to the board so that it is informed about the impact of initiatives or interventions on student learning and progress.

Trustees are well informed about student achievement and work in partnership with staff. They encourage innovation in management and curriculum, and support teachers well with curriculum and professional development funding. They are knowledgeable about their governance roles, and board self-review practices are thorough and responsive.

## Teachers Study at Harvard University

Our Principal, Mr Coote, and two of our teachers, Mrs Adding and Mr Shearer, journeyed to Boston, Massachusetts to spend a week studying with teachers from around the World. The course was run by the Harvard Graduate School of Education at this prestigious University. World leaders in education, such as Dr David Perkins and Dr Howard Gardner, discussed current educational issues.

## New Chinese Fitness Equipment Installed in Our Playground

On a three week visit to China last year our Principal, Mr Coote, visited a number of villages near the city of Guangzhou (Canton). These villages were the same ones Chinese gold miners left in the late 19th Century on their journey to the Otago gold fields.



Fitness equipment in the village of Tong-mei, China.

The miners left the villages of Shek Ma, Pong Woo, Paak Shek, ShekHa, Tong-mei and many others to seek their fortunes in New Zealand. During his visit Mr Coote saw fitness equipment newly installed by the Chinese Government in the centre of some of these villages. When he returned to New Zealand he arranged for the school to import a set for our students to use.

As I'm sure you are aware, the incidence of childhood obesity in New Zealand is rising, and research indicates that a large



Harvard Yard in the Centre of Harvard University. The University was opened in 1653.



Young Chinese boy playing on fitness equipment in the village of Tong-mei.

amount of time spent doing sedentary activities, such as playing video games and watching television, may be contributing to the problem.



We feel that an active fitness centre in our grounds will be a positive step towards overcoming this problem. Massey University is undertaking research into the effect this equipment has on



Students from Room 18 working to improve their fitness.

students' fitness. They have been monitoring the fitness level of two classes who are using this equipment twice a week. Preliminary analysis shows positive increases in fitness. The best results were the press-ups which had improved significantly.

## Teachers in Spain Learn About Our Teaching Methods

In July last year Mr Coote joined Dr Robert Swartz from Boston, to run a one week professional learning course for a group of schools in Barcelona, Spain. The schools were interested in learning how Birkdale Intermediate develops our students' thinking skills. We are now working with the Col.legi Montserrat to develop quality teaching programmes for our students.



Mr Coote with Dr Robert Swartz and the Principal and Lead Teacher from the Col.legi Montserrat, Barcelona.

## Concluding Conversations Are Now Held in Our New Theatre

Concluding conversations are when a Teaching Team share, clarify, expand and celebrate their new insights and understandings at the end of a major Quest (social science or science unit of work). It is a learning conversation where the audience has as big a part to play as the speakers. Our students are taught to ask for clarification, share the way they value the other students research, discuss any concerns and make suggestions for improvement. Dr David Perkins from Harvard talks about this as the ladder of feedback. This is a special event in the life

## Sculptures Enhance Our Grounds

The well known New Zealand artist, Phil Price has been working with a group of our high ability visual art students. He has produced a large kinetic sculpture called Kakariki. It will be located at the entrance to our new Arts Centre. The sculpture moves in the wind and resembles the movements of the native parrot, the Kakariki. Our students visited Phil Price's workshop in Christchurch and discussed with him some aspects of the construction of the sculpture.

Next year another group of students will be working with sculptor Peter Lange to create a sculpture for a space outside our Technology Centre. We have two of Peter Lange's sculptures already in place. His works are based on childhood memories. Objects that remind him of his childhood, such

as the bell his mother rang to bring his brothers and sisters in for dinner, and the plane his father used in the shed out the back have been reproduced as large brick sculptures. They challenge the viewer to look



Our students with Phil Price in his studio, Christchurch.

at familiar materials in new ways. This reflects the goal of our technology programme where students are challenged to solve real world problems using materials in different and innovative ways.



Dragon Staff

of our school and is held in the Theatre to signal its importance. The 'Dragon Staff' is used during these conversations. It is held by a student in the role as 'Master of Ceremonies.' They tap the 'Dragon Staff' on the floor to open and close the event, or when inviting a student to speak. It is also used when we award 'Skilful Thinking' badges. The 'Dragon Staff' was created especially for us by woodcarver Ivan Wilson. Ivan comes from Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. His work can be seen at <http://www.wilsonwalkingsticks.com/index.htm>

## Students Thinking Skills Show Improvement

This year a team of three teachers conducted research into our students skilful thinking. They looked closely at how our students use skilful compare and contrast to solve real world problems. Students were interviewed and given a test where they had to identify the thinking skill needed to solve a problem. Then they worked through the problem to a skilful solution. The research showed an average test % for the cohort of 45% in Term 1. In Term 4 the average test % for the cohort was 77%, showing a marked improvement in these students' ability to skilfully compare and contrast.



## New Fish Tank for Our Library

Last year our students fund-raised for a fish tank for our library. Early this year a 540 litre fish tank was set up. It is another step towards developing a calm oasis in the school. Its focus is on providing a recreation centre with an emphasis on reading. We are grateful for the parent support we received for this project.

The tank contains fish called cichlids. They are freshwater fish from Lake Malawi in Africa. This lake is



home to nearly 500 species of cichlids. Most of these are extremely colourful. The fish are territorial and often get quite aggressive. The two main types are the Mbuna and the

Utaka. Lake Malawi, in Africa, stretches for some 600 km and is one of the great lakes of the world. The inhabitants of Lake Malawi, the Malawi Cichlids, are some of the most beautiful creatures. They live in very rocky areas allowing the males to choose their own territory which they protect fiercely.



## Teacher Volunteers at Wolong Panda Reserve, China

As the recipient of a Staff Scholarship Miss Angela Chitty travelled to Chengdu during the last September holidays. Chengdu is a city of 10.5 million people in the province of Sichuan in southwest China. After a couple of days exploring the city she worked and lived at the Wolong Panda Reserve, cleaning out enclosures, preparing food, assisting with medical care and helping to collect behavioural data on pandas. She travelled to the reserve with West China Adventures and saw the panda's natural habitat as well. The city

of Chengdu was an interesting experience – it is not a large city by Chinese standards, but there are more than twice as many people as in New Zealand! There were many interesting

places to visit and Angela collected photos for our social science quest, “James Shum’s Dilemma.”

Making friends at the Wolong Panda reserve, China

