Term 1, 2011

Dear Parents and Citizens,

Welcome to the Term 1 Regional Director’s report.

Well we are off to a great start. Our Principals have committed to our regional school improvement strategy *Western by design*, a strategic plan to assist each school enhance the teaching and learning programs they offer.

You will see the Western NSW Region logo at the bottom of this page. The seven hexagonal shapes each represent a School Education Group (SEG) bonded as cells in a hive, all connected and moving forward. Each SEG has one of these distinctive colours used for stationery and as an identity symbol.

As I visit schools and communities across the region I am proud of who we are and of the curriculum projects that we are developing to provide quality learning environments for our children.

**Regional P&C Annual General Meeting**

The Regional P&C AGM will be held on 30th April in the *Bangamalanha* Centre, Arthur Street Dubbo. Full details are to be advised but please mark the date in your diary.

**A unique start for Lightning Ridge**

The year started with a number of extreme weather events, not least of which was the flood arriving from Queensland. The SES were a real asset in the work to be done.

Pictured below on the first day of the year are Lightning Ridge Central School teachers Naomi Marshall, Amanda Charlton and Pam Caley coming to school by helicopter. Jack Marshall is the youngster, not wanting to miss out on his start to Kindergarten.
Western NSW shared commitment

Last year our refresh process was undertaken with all our partners across the region including principals, parents, communities, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and Parents and Citizens’ association.

This graphic or Wordle, on the left, below shows the key areas that arose from the input from the P&C the one on the right shows that of all partners combined. The bigger the word then the more frequently that it appeared across the groups.

Regional Activities

The past weeks have been hectic with Principal and Deputy Principal conferences, visits to the Region by Director-General, Michael Coutts-Trotter, Deputy Director-General Schools, Greg Prior and Manager Access and Equity, Deonne Smith. Deonne Smith studied the partnership projects in the Cowra schools and at Gilgandra High School. I just love showcasing the outstanding programs being developed in regional schools.
The Principals and I have been learning from international research about high performing systems. We are using the 2010 McKinsey Report *How the worlds most improved schools systems keep getting better* to strengthen our improvement efforts as a group. Our strategy is called *Western by Design* and its logo is above.

Pictured left, below, is Michael Coutts-Trotter at a *by design* workshop on Using Improvement Tools with some of the hardworking Warrumbungle Principals.
Regional Virtual Maths faculty supporting teachers

I would like to feature the Virtual Maths Faculty. The aim of the project is to enhance the quality of mathematics and numeracy teaching in isolated and rural schools through the creation of a virtual faculty particularly for those Maths teachers in settings without a Head Teacher of Maths or to support an early career Head Teacher.

There are fifteen active schools in the virtual ‘space’. These are;

- Dubbo College South Campus
- Baradine Central School
- Gulargambone Central School
- Walgett Community School
- Wilcannia Central School
- Cobar High School
- Goodooga Central School
- Menindee Central School
- Dubbo College Delroy Campus
- Mendooran Central School
- Coonamble High School
- Lightning Ridge Central
- Willyama High School
- Nyngan High School
- Bourke High School

A Virtual English Faculty is being established to commence in Term 2.

Students in xsel

Sixty students in Years 7 and 8 are studying English, Maths and Science with merit selected teachers in our online virtual selective school. Students and teachers come from 22 schools across the region. Students come in to a central venue for the practical requirements of their courses. The bonus for me is that these students can now remain in their communities and access this specialised learning environment.

The following photos are of their Term 1 residential school in Dubbo.

Left: In the residential dining room
Middle: Science experiment, Delroy Campus
Right: Year 7 student unwrapping her new laptop
Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association State Conference

The State ICPA Conference was held in Lightning Ridge last week. I was delighted to take Deonne Smith (General Manager, Access and Equity). On our way we stopped to visit Gilgandra High School to examine their National Partnership work. We also participated with the Walgett community in the signing of the Aboriginal Partnership Agreement on our way to the conference.

The conference itself was a very big but inspirational two days with our north-west communities. I was proud to showcase xsel our virtual selective high school and our by design improvement plan.

Our History- Education in Western Region

At the Western Region Principals’ Conference we had the launch of our multi-media presentation called Looking Back.

This video file shows a selection of key events around the faces, spaces and places that characterised the history of the Western districts and of how public education developed. This animation is available for your group. Please ask your principal to schedule a viewing session.

International Excursions

There are a number of amazing learning opportunities being provided to our students to engage with their curricula via international excursions. Planning for the following excursions is well advanced:

- Circus Arts - US and Canada
- History and Visual Arts - Greece and Turkey
- Cultural Exchange - Japan (one other excursion to Japan has had to be cancelled).
- Music Performance - Hawaii

West of the Divide Band

Fifty-seven students from Western NSW, New England and Riverina Regions combined together last week to rehearse for their upcoming tour to Hawaii to attend the Pacific Basin Music Festival. The Band are pictured below- Top; Rehearsal in Dubbo; Bottom: In Hawaii and bedecked in flowers
Our Talented Students create a regional song: *Living in the Bush*

Pictured are the talented students who wrote and produced our new regional song titled ‘Living in the Bush’. The song was written by students attending a Bourke small schools camp from Wanaaring, Louth, and Weilmoringle, and then recorded by students from Orange High School, under the guidance of Head Teacher- Visual Arts, Christine Mickle.
Reporting to Our School Communities

I’d like to commend Ready Set School 2011, a report to school communities in Western NSW Region on our performance and highlights from 2010. It is currently being distributed to a wide variety of community representatives and schools. Copies can be obtained from your local school.