The proactive thinking from Renmark North Primary School (RNPS) Acting Principal, Patty Panagiotopoulos has helped students at the school become World Champions in the online Language Perfect program.

Patty took it upon herself to provide content for the Greek component of the Language Perfect website. She explains, ‘I asked them why Greek wasn’t a part of their website and they asked me to supply content. In my spare time, I put the Greek Language component together and the school hasn’t looked back since!’

**Our students’ knowledge of Greek has increased. There is also a real passion for more learning, which is fantastic.**

Renmark North Primary School has achieved first place across the entire world in the small school category and second overall, on numerous occasions (in Greek).

One student, Amalia, has been third in the world and has won multiple prizes and medals over the past few years. RNPS has also consistently taken out the top school award at the State Championships. Other top students have been Nicole, Chrysanthi, Makayla, Hadlee, Penny, Ivan, Anna and Angelo.

Achieving the status of world champions has required a whole school effort and students have benefited significantly. ‘Participating in Language Perfect has enriched our Greek language program,’ Patty explains. ‘Our students’ knowledge of Greek has increased. There is also a real passion for more learning, which is fantastic.’
Aizaz Irfan from Renmark Primary School has won the national STEM Video Game Challenge with his entry in the Year 5-8 Gamestar Mechanic category, from more than 2000 entries.

Aizaz is one of seven national winners and attended the PAX Australia video game conference in Melbourne. He is pictured above (4th from left) at the PAX conference with the judges who loved his game. His prizes included entry to PAX for 3 days, a new laptop to continue with his creativity and feedback from gaming professionals.

The opportunity for Aizaz to participate came from Renmark Primary School's involvement in the National competition. Teacher Kym Diegprond explains, ‘We wanted to incorporate Excellence (one of our school values) into the areas of the Arts, Technology, Health and PE.

The STEM Video Game Challenge was introduced as a way for students to show their skill with a national audience.’

Sixteen students participated in the challenge with the help of Teacher, Kym. Students were required to commit to one lesson per week for 13 weeks to design a video game and write a game design document. The whole process was a very collaborative with students working together to play the games and share feedback.

‘This award is an incredible achievement that comes as a result of our whole school focus on the new Digital Technology Curriculum,’ Kym reflects. ‘Aizaz has only lived in Australia for two years and has had limited access to ICT previous to this. To win a national award proves that all we need to do is give students the opportunity and they will make the most of it.’
Renmark West Primary School and Renmark West Preschool have implemented an extended transition process to ensure preschool children have the best possible start to school.

‘We wanted to ensure the transition from preschool to school was smooth and settled,’ Sally Schwartzkopff, Renmark West Preschool Director, explains. ‘Even though it is just a step through the gate, it can still be a daunting. We have worked with the school to develop a process that prioritises the child in the transition to school.’

Relationships between preschool staff, school staff, children and parents are central to the transition process. Preschool staff attend the ‘new’ parent meeting at the school to support current preschool parents in their transition to school,’ Sally explains. ‘The classroom teacher also visits the preschool to meet with children in an environment familiar to them. This is an important step in building the relationship between the child and the teacher.’

A buddy program between Year 6 students and preschool children also assists with the transition to school. Year 6 students visit the preschool throughout Term 4 and become familiar faces for the preschool children once they begin school and are out in the yard.

Since introducing the extended transition process, the response from children and parents has been extremely positive. Sally says, ‘Over the six weeks of the program we see children settled and confident and happily participating in classroom activities. They learn the routines and responsibilities of school and then begin the school year calm, settled and excited.’

The introduction of the extended transition is a great example of the collaboration between two sites in the Renmark Partnership. Leaders and staff across the Renmark Partnership are introducing a number of programs similar to this to ensure children receive the support and care they need to succeed at school.

**BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR A GREAT START TO SCHOOL**

Over the six weeks of the program we see children settled and confident and happily participating in classroom activities. They begin the school year calm, settled and excited.
Renmark students of all ages share the paddock to plate experience

A group of highly motivated Agriculture students at Renmark High School are exploring the notion of paddock to plate in food production. Over the course of 2016 the students have worked hard to improve the RHS Ag block. The block is now producing food all year round.

With an abundance of food from the block, the students looked for ways to share the produce and their learning experiences. Teacher Rajender Singh came up with the idea for the Agriculture students to visit local primary schools and host a sausage sizzle. He explains, ‘I wanted to provide this group of students with the opportunity to describe the journey of food from paddock to plate. Not only does this benefit their learning; having to teach the process to others, but it also gives us the opportunity to promote Agriculture to younger students.’

The program has had a great response from everyone involved. Rajender says, ‘Everyone loves the program and it is a great example of how we work together as a partnership.’

The benefits of the program have been substantial for everyone involved. The Year 9 students are proud to be a part of the Agriculture program at RHS and look forward to sharing their learning experiences with the younger students. Teachers from the primary schools involved have highlighted the benefit of younger students experiencing a positive learning outcome from high school students.

‘Everyone loves the program and it is a great example of how we work together as a partnership.’
Renmark Children’s Centre has introduced the ‘Chatty Children’ group to aid in language, play and social development of children, in particular, those with identified speech and language difficulties.

Ten children, a staff member and Speech Pathologist, Belinda Binney, participate in themed group time. Children who participate in the group are a mix of those with speech difficulties and children identified as good language models for their peers.

The benefits of the program have been noted by educators and parents. Belinda explains, ‘We have noted an increase in confidence and language usage of key children. Children who were reluctant to engage in tasks are now interacting more and using language with their peers.’

Staff feel more confident with recommended speech and language strategies after using them in the Chatty Children small group setting. This has allowed staff to develop new ideas to target themed goals around literacy, language and social play.

Parents are also supported to continue the work at home. Children are given take home packs which include activities and ideas for parents.

‘Our goal is to build a solid foundation of language skills in children before they move on to kindy,’ Belinda explains. ‘We want to develop children’s vocabulary, understanding of language and ability to share information with their peers to set them up for a lifetime of learning.’
Renmark North Primary School is off to a sizzling start in Term 4 after introducing the ‘Seven Steps to Writing Success’ process. The response from staff and students has been overwhelmingly positive with everyone excited to participate in writing lessons.

The Seven Steps writing process was introduced after staff felt like a whole school approach to writing would be beneficial to students. Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator, Ashlyn Jones explains, ‘The great thing about this approach is that it’s not just another program to add to our busy days. We are teaching the same content, it’s just delivered in a different way.’

The school has started with ‘Step 2: Sizzling Starts’ where students are learning how to capture the reader’s attention in the first 10 seconds of their story. ‘The students’ attitude to writing has already changed dramatically,’ Ashlyn says. ‘Students are eager to write each lesson because they feel as though they can be successful. We are excited to see their writing skills expand as we continue this approach throughout the school.’

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Guitar Mania builds confidence in children

Children from across Renmark are learning to play the guitar through the Guitar Mania program.

Guitar Mania was established by Wendy Cormick, Community Development Coordinator at the Renmark Children’s Centre. She explains, ‘I wanted to provide lessons to everyone, not only those who could afford lessons and musical instruments. I successfully applied to the Renmark Lions Club and DEEWR Creative Young Stars for a grant to purchase some guitars and four years later we are still going strong!’

Since establishing Guitar Mania, Wendy has noticed increased confidence in students who participate in the program. She says ‘We have performed at the Renmark Lions Club Annual Dinner along with performances at local schools. Performing takes courage and all of the participants in Guitar Mania have taken to the stage with confidence.’

Guitar Mania is open to children aged 5 - 12 who want to learn some basic guitar chords and techniques. Wendy conducts lessons after school at the Renmark Children’s Centre.
The Renmark High School Flexispace is a well-being and learning space for students to access throughout their school day. Developed from observing best practices at other schools around the state, the RHS Flexispace is continually evolving to meet student needs.

The aim of the Flexispace is to provide care, support and space for effective transitions concerning well-being and learning. It houses the school’s two counsellors, Learning Support Coordinator and other student support staff.

The Flexispace is an open space divided into smaller spaces for different activities. There is a small consultation space used by Headspace and Flexible Learning Options case managers, a meeting room, and open plan offices used by school counsellors and the Learning Support Coordinator.

The name Flexispace is a working title that encompasses the flexibility and innovation of not only the space itself but also its philosophy, processes and practice. The future development of the space will be achieved through consultation with the student body.

Together staff and students will develop a new name for the space that reflects its journey and primary focus of wellbeing and learning.

The whole school community has welcomed the Flexispace. Matt Abbott, Student Inclusion Coordinator, explains ‘Students today have different issues to deal with than past students. The encouragement we have received from everyone so far has only increased our resolve to continue to evolve this innovative program.’

‘One of the most profound pieces of feedback we have received from students is that the space feels better,’ Matt says. ‘Just walking through the door makes them feel calmer and welcome. We often have students drop in and have a chat about the world. The Flexispace is a comfortable environment for them where they can talk and be heard.’
On Wednesday 28 September the Renmark Education Partnership launched their new brand, vision and values. Not even a statewide blackout could stop more than 200 guests gathering at the Renmark Hotel to celebrate a new era for Public Education in our town.

Leaders, teachers and support staff from every site in the partnership, along with invited guests attended the function to launch the brand. ABC 1062 Morning Presenter, Stacey Lymberry was the guest speaker and spoke about the important role Public Education played in her own career.

The brand, vision and values has been developed as a collaboration between each of the six sites in the partnership. It was agreed that the values of Support, Care and Success reflect a united goal that each education provider in the partnership works towards every day.

The vision of ‘Learning for your future. Every child has a story’ reflects how the partnership works together to share knowledge and expertise to help every young person further their learning story.

The Our Stories newsletter highlights the amazing things happening across the Renmark Education Partnership.