Renmark Primary School is a community school that builds success for all of our 360 students. I am extremely proud to publish our 2015 Annual Report. Over the past 12 months, Renmark Primary School students, staff and the Governing Council have achieved many great things.

This document is an avenue for us to review 2015 and look to the future. It provides an array of information that validates the achievement and endeavours of students at Renmark Primary School.

Situated in the heart of the town, Renmark Primary School has a diverse school community. We have 14% Aboriginal students, 11% of students with a diagnosed disability and 24% of students who have English as their second language. Over 50% of families are supported with the School Card program. We celebrate our diversity at Renmark Primary School to create a supportive, friendly community.

Three years ago Renmark Primary School was amalgamated with the junior primary school to become a Reception to Year 7 school. I am particularly proud of the work we have achieved in 2015 to build a solid platform of learning for our students whilst working alongside significant construction modifications to our buildings. Needless to say everyone has demonstrated terrific patience and resilience this year.

As principal of Renmark Primary School, I have worked hard with staff and parents to ensure we are driven by the philosophy of educating the ‘whole child.' This philosophy centres around our school values being embedded in our policies, procedures and day to day activities. Our values of respect, excellence, self-belief and trust are the backbone to everything we do.

The information in this annual report is evidence to support the culture of improvement that drives Renmark Primary School. We are constantly looking at ways to improve teaching practices to ensure our students receive the best possible education.

Our progress towards being better at what we do was confirmed during the External School Review conducted by the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) in April 2015.

The chairperson of the review panel, wrote in their report: ‘Renmark Primary School has a coherent, evidenced based leadership focus on building school culture that focuses on raising student achievement.’ The report went on to commend the staff for the work undertaken to lift literacy outcomes. Most pleasing was a final statement in the report, ‘Renmark Primary School has a strong improvement agenda.’

The External Review report validates the extensive training and development undertaken by staff over the past few year to build our knowledge. Staff were proud to read the positive comments from the review panel that highlighted this work. The report provides us with a magnificent blueprint to guide our goals for the coming years. To read the report, please visit our website.
Introduction

I want to personally thank all of the staff for the commitment and energy they demonstrate every day to educating our students. At Renmark Primary School we aim to create a challenging learning environment with the support system a student needs to flourish. Our individualised approach to learning ensures all children have a clear vision of the steps they need to take to succeed.

Our Learning Support Plans for each child are becoming more sophisticated. It is our intention to have these more orientated towards learning goals in 2016 and beyond. We encourage all parents to come in and have a look at them and discuss the evidence that shows how your child is progressing.

I am proud of our school and the unique learning opportunities we create for our students. Every day we work hard to ensure your child’s education is as engaging and challenging as possible. It is our goal to set all Renmark Primary School students up for a bright future.

Lyn Bretag
Principal
Highlights

A standout achievement in 2015 was the success of Martine Turnbull and Sarah Humble at the South Australian Excellence in Public Education Awards. Martine and Sarah were both awarded the highest honours in their categories. In a very noble gesture, both staff members are putting their prize money back into the school to provide training in key areas for staff members.

The brilliant work of many of our staff attracted further attention around the state in 2015. The judges of the SA Children’s Week Adult Award announced in late October that the Renmark Primary School Early Years Team had won an award. They were recognised for their ‘Outstanding and consistent contributions to the needs, interests and welfare of children’. The staff who attended the ceremony at Government House were extremely proud to accept the award from the South Australian Governor.

Another highlight in 2015 was the number of requests we had from other South Australian schools to come and observe what we do in our classrooms. This sort of recognition from other schools affirms the programs and plans we have in place at Renmark Primary School.

We had enormous success in 2015 through our engagement with the Renmark Arts Program (RAP). This program was a collaboration between all of the Renmark schools and the Riverland Youth Theatre to write, produce and film a short movie. The program culminated with a red carpet event at the Chaffey Theatre where our students’ film premiered on the big screen.

Our movie, The Escape Plan was a finalist in the 2016 Tropfest Junior Competition and screened at the Tropfest festival in Sydney. I note at the time of writing, our movie has had over 600 views on Youtube.

There is a lot to learn from participating in a unique program like this. Our staff will look at the RAP report and consult widely about how we can continue these types of programs without too much interruption. We’re hopeful that we have inspired the young people of Renmark to take on the bright lights of Hollywood and carve out a career in the industry.

In a fantastic result we had 10 ATSI students receive a Just2Deadly Award for maintaining an 85% attendance rate at school in 2015. This is a fantastic result and an area we have been working hard to improve throughout the year.

It is clear from parent feedback that you want us to continue to focus on customised learning programs to suit your child. In 2016 and beyond we will continue to ensure this approach permeates through our curriculum and student well-being programs. We will also continue to seek out partnerships with the broader community so we can improve the opportunities for your child beyond our school boundaries. This will include referrals to support agencies as required and further enhancing our wonderful team that supports Aboriginal students and families.

A terrific highlight for the year was our work with Andrew Fuller, a clinical psychologist from Melbourne, who came as part of our resilience work. Andrew is an internationally renowned specialist in child and adolescent well-being. He has worked with many schools and organisations around bullying, mental health and well-being.

The Renmark Education Community partnership of schools worked with Andrew to help us better understand the resilience of young people in our community based on data from the past two years. As a result, we now have some students in the role of children ambassadors at our school who will lead some innovative work in 2016.
A Number of Highlights for the year were:

- Watching the success of Growth Mindset across our school
- RAP (Remark Arts Program) & Tropfest Finalists Red Carpet
- Ongoing school grounds improvements, continuing on into 2016
- 2015 Excellence in Public Education Awards, 3 Finalists & 2 Winners
- External review
- Official opening Amalgamation of RPS & RJPS, attended by various officials and Minister Susan Close
- Andrew Fuller Community Student & Staff Workshops
- Review of documents – Cyber Safety, Safe use of school toilets, Student Attendance
- New Signage - entry of school
- Bus changes after school on Thursdays.
- Ongoing success of School Facebook site being utilised by many
- Successful sports days, Year 7 leaderships days, Transition of Reception & Year 7s, Science/Maths/English & IT competitions, Lets Celebrate concerts
- 10 ATSI students receiving Just2Deadly awards in Barmera
- Wonderful parent group activities and lunches
- Pupil free days
- Monthly reports from affiliated committees and teachers – reporting on events, progress and success across many levels of our school

A big thank you to everyone for their ongoing support this year.

Kylie Demtchuk
Governing School Council Chairperson
Your child is growing up in a rapidly changing globalised environment and it is vital to have skills that allow you to work anywhere in the world. We have recognised the changing nature of the society we live in and have constructed our Site Improvement Plan one to reflect this.

Our Site Improvement Plan provides a clear direction for all stakeholders for what we think Renmark Primary School students need for a successful future.

The Renmark Primary School 2015 Site Improvement Plan focused on our students being powerful and resilient learners so that they could flourish in this ever changing world.

Goals:

Reading - Support and challenge children to read fluently.

Play for Learning - Learn through play focusing on social, emotional and achievement outcomes, where children problem-solve, improvise, have dialogue and work with others.

Oral language - Focus on vocabulary development and high level questioning.

Numeracy/Mathematics - Encourage all students to learn and use the Natural Maths Secret Code. Apply Maths knowledge and strategies to problem solving in real life.

Social and Emotional Learning - Embed in all teaching and learning activities that a ‘growth mindset’ will increase the chances of students becoming more confident, resilient and self-motivated.

The 2015 DECD External Review published progress on our goals. In particular, how our teachers are designing learning activities that are relevant to our students. The report outlined our belief that a learner can be successful in an activity by helping them understand the learning intentions and success criteria of an activity. Then we must set goals and measure their success along the way.

Analysis of our literacy data indicates that a large number of our students struggle with higher level reading and writing skills. This means we need to put more focus towards helping our students comprehend and understand what they read. In 2016 and beyond we will focus on building inference and interpreting skills along with using more complex language in conversation and writing.

Our goal for numeracy is for all Renmark students to enjoy mathematics. To maintain the momentum towards this goal, all staff completed the Stanford University Online Numeracy Course in 2015.

The idea behind this was for all staff to improve their knowledge in this area and identify some of the barriers learners have towards maths. We also focused on the importance of mistakes, struggles and persistence. This linked beautifully with our work on Growth Mindsets. We will appoint a part time Maths and Technology Coordinator in 2016 with a goal to work with students and staff to increase their confidence and competence in maths.

Our overarching goal for Renmark Primary School is for our students to demonstrate pride in themselves, others and the school. It is vital that we build the skills for our students to self regulate and self manage their learning as they progress through school. This means to be able to solve issues as they arise, meet deadlines, show teamwork and articulate their needs and feelings clearly and calmly. We want our students to be optimistic, enthusiastic and resilient.
RPS Students who meet the National Minimum Standard for numeracy.

YEAR 3
69%

YEAR 5
93%

YEAR 7
98%

IT PAYS TO STAY AT RENMARK PRIMARY SCHOOL!

Results from Year 3 RPS students are almost 30 points below similar schools. By Year 7, RPS students are within 10 points of similar schools.
Student Achievement

We are very excited about our case management strategy. This approach means all students at Renmark Primary are monitored regularly to provide timely and targeted intervention to ensure student success. We take a team approach to analysing student work and progress. This has become our strength and staff now say they would not go back to any other way!

Our data system follows your child through their schooling and is proving vital in strengthening student progress. In 2016, you will see an updated version of the Learning Support Plan. This will include comprehensive information and evidence showcasing your child’s progress. This will be complemented by a revised and simpler student report card.

NAPLAN

The annual NAPLAN test is used to track how individual students are progressing and to identify areas of improvement for the school. The ability to monitor student progress every two years is a key reason as to why we test all students unless there is a significant reason not to.

In 2015 we had 95% participation in Year 3, 100% in Year 5 and 88% participation in Year 7. As a smaller school with 12% of our students identified as having a learning disability, it is difficult to make broad comparisons between Renmark Primary and other schools across South Australia and the nation. That is why we take the time to analyse our individual student results and identify what their needs are.

Our 2015 NAPLAN results indicate that many of our students start out at a low level but progress well as they move from year to year. This highlights that good attendance at school and staying enrolled in one place makes a huge difference to student achievement. For example, our Year 3 results in all learning areas are almost 80 points below schools nationally and 30 points below schools in towns and suburbs similar to ours. However by Year 7, are within 10 points of similar schools and only 45 points below schools across the nation.

Overall, we are very pleased with our individual students results but there is always work to be done! We have a great deal of work to do in spelling and writing where our school results did not meet the expected target. Our work in developing more complex oral language skills in our students has been successful but at the moment this is not transferring to a student’s writing and this will be a focus in 2016.

Our NAPLAN results show steady progress for students at Renmark Primary School and highlight the areas we need to improve. I encourage all parents to make the time and come discuss your child’s NAPLAN results with us to find out more.

To complement the NAPLAN test we also participate in the standardised PAT Reading and Mathematics tests. These tests provide us with even more data to personalise our learning strategies for students. We drill down into the data from these tests to see what questions a student got wrong and then our teams design activities to address the gaps. We will schedule the PAT Spelling test in 2016 to help us identify ways to improve student writing.
THE FUTURE FOR RENMARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

STUDENTS
Focus on individual learning needs through evidence based planning.
Continue to build growth mindsets in learners.

WELL-BEING
Build student resilience and leadership, being mindful of transition points in our school, in particular for our Aboriginal students.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH
Create spelling curriculum agreements for assessment and differentiated learning for individual children.

LITERACY FOCUS
Increase daily practice of independent writing
Strengthen inferencing skills in reading.
Client Opinion

The results from our feedback surveys in 2015 are very pleasing. In our staff survey we received a score above 4 out of 5 in every category. In the parent survey the score is above 4 in all sections bar one and our score in the student survey is above 3.8 in all categories.

The strongest responses from parents:

- The school looks for ways to improve (100%)
- My child feels safe
- I can talk to my child’s teacher
- Teachers expect my child to do their best.

‘My child has grown in confidence over the last two years and is now in a positive mindset to start high school. This is largely due to the support and encouragement she has received from her teachers to give things a go!’
- Parent, RPS Feedback Survey 2015

The strongest responses from students:

- My teacher expects me to do my best (4.6 out of 5)
- I like being at my school

‘RPS is a fun school, great for helping and learning and has lots of friendly kids to play with.’
- Student, RPS Feedback Survey 2015
Staff Qualifications

Staff at Renmark Primary School are all fully qualified professionals who commit their time and energy to educating your child. We continue to dedicate significant time to professional development to learn the best ways to support our students.

We have adopted many whole school agreements to reduce variation in how we go about things. This minimises confusion for our students as they move from teacher to teacher.

It is always our intention to maintain a safe and secure environment for students at our school. All community volunteers and parents are screened and inducted before working with students as required by DECD.

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Destination Data

Students leaving Renmark Primary School fall into three categories: moving interstate, transferring to another South Australian government school or transferring to a non-government school.

As a rural school, families often need to move to urban areas to seek employment. Parents frequently inform us that they would prefer their child to remain at Renmark Primary School but cannot due to extenuating circumstances.

The Riverland has experienced vast changes over the last decade with many schools experiencing lower enrolments and Renmark Primary is no exception.

Attendance

The 2015 attendance rate at Renmark Primary is 89.4% which falls below the 2015 DECD target of 93%.

Over the past few years we have focused on improving our communication with parents. We thank all of our parents for their assistance in improving school attendance. We can’t reach the DECD target without working together. It truly is a joint effort to get kids excited about coming to school.
Renmark Primary is founded on strong values. Our values are embedded across the school and evident in our day to day activities. We begin each year with a whole school focus on our values and what it means to uphold them. These values are shared with the wider school community through class presentations at our regular assemblies.

Our strategic approach to resolve conflict when it occurs is through restorative justice practices. This empowers Renmark Primary students to work through frustrations and issues on their own and in small groups.

Our approach is to bring students together in small groups to talk, ask questions and air their grievances. This proven approach has helped strengthen our campus, reduce bullying and reduce student conflicts.

The benefits are clear: through our early adoption of restorative justice practices we have seen drastic reductions in the number of students suspended and students say they are happier and feel safer at school.

We still have a lot of work to do with a handful of students who are highly represented in our behaviour data.

A caring culture permeates through Renmark Primary School and is a key factor in how we go about solving issues. As we encounter incidents our aim is to ensure they don’t amplify into something bigger. We are quick to intervene and bring in experts to assist us when a case is complex.

We conducted our annual bullying survey which identified hot spots and issues that we were not aware of. The School Counsellor has the analysis and an action plan will be developed for 2016.

We thank the community for the open communication we have and how we take time to work through any issues, keeping the child’s needs in mind.
Better Schools Funding

As a medium sized rural school with students at different points in their learning growth cycle, it is important that we design programs that fit the needs of our students.

In 2015 we received $142,659 from the Better Schools Funding. This funding was a major contributor to the progress we made at Renmark Primary School over the past year.

To ensure we directed this funding in the best way possible we analysed our student data. This enabled us to direct resources to the areas that mattered most, with our students the ultimate winners.

We employed School Service Officers (SSOs) to deliver personalised learning programs to support students. In an outstanding accomplishment, we were able to place an SSO in all Reception to Year 3 classrooms four lessons per week.

In 2016, we will look at introducing a Learning Support Class to assist the handful of children we have identified as not school ready (unable to follow instructions, abide by routines, work in teams, self regulate and comply). This will be an alternative to mainstream classes and it’s hoped will assist these children to get on track for a successful education.

In 2015 the $11,934 we received in Early Years funding was directed towards supporting students to develop their reading skills and oral language through structured play. We believe that this program must continue and there will be a major push to have a 0.2 Reading Support Teacher in 2016.

Our kindy to school transition was further strengthened in 2015. We developed a team of staff to support children prior to enrolment. We also met with parents to personalise the child’s entry to school and ensure that any support required was ready for day one.

Financial Report

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Renmark Primary School
2015 Annual Report

Lyn Bretag
Principal

Kylie Demtchuk
Governing Council
Chairperson

Government of South Australia
Department for Education and Child Development