Learning and giving back

By MATTHEW, DUKE, AARON, AARON and BRAD

THE wider community enjoys a variety of arts to George Anderson Walpole School and the teaching staff and students are happy to espouse those benefits.

Mutual benefits provide a win-win situation, according to resident vocational educators Rose, Ray and Tex. Gosford City and Landcare will be long-term beneficiaries of an ambitious horticultural program running at the school.

The program is propagating seeds and growing plants to be used for regeneration projects. The Anglican Church at East Gosford was a big winner when a request was made for students in the ceramics program to provide examples of their work for a recent display.

Visitors to the Regional Art Gallery at East Gosford would have feasted their eyes on the many pieces of indigenous art the students supplied for display. "Providing real-life skills in horticulture, bricklaying and property maintenance is helping the boys to thrive personally and providing many varied opportunities and skills for future employment," Ray said.

Many of the students are involved in all the programs but five students who claim to be the hardest workers — Matt, Duke, Aaron, Aaron and Brad — say they are all the better for it. "We are out in the open working with our hands," the boys said. Ray said that "building teams and sharing the workload is all part of the day" while Matt "complains" that he is doing the teachers' work. "They even use me to mentor the newbies," Matt laughed.

The difficulties of teaching maths and science are well documented in the teaching world but with some creativity and integrated programs, the students at GAW learn about micro-climates, the eco-system and the effect society has on the environment. Current and important issues facing the world are demonstrated daily to students as they go about their studies.

"Valuable maths skills are developed during the bricklaying course with the students involved in the planning and ordering of materials," teacher Ray said.

"How can they fail to learn when they are doing jobs that they see results for and they are appreciated for," teacher Rose said.

Sending a message to our families

By AARON, DAMIEN, ERNIE and BRAD

STUDENTS in the George Anderson Walpole School Aboriginal art and cultural practices program have been on a journey back in time to design and construct a traditional message stick.

The message stick has travelled to Sydney and will deliver its message to young people in Dubbo this month before a 12-month journey around Australia.

Uncle Tex and Moz, the school’s indigenous leaders, said that the message to all people was to “raise awareness of child protection in Aboriginal communities.”

The message is burnt into the stick around the circumference, starting from the bulb and continuing down.

"The stick is made using turpentine timber and decorated with ochre colours and emu feathers. The message stick has travelled to Sydney and will be delivered to young people in Dubbo this month before continuing to other parts of Australia. Uncle Tex and Moz, the school’s indigenous leaders, said that the message to all people was to “raise awareness of child protection in Aboriginal communities.”

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The difficulties of teaching maths and science are well documented in the teaching world but with some creativity and integrated programs, the students at GAW learn about micro-climates, the eco-system and the effect society has on the environment. Current and important issues facing the world are demonstrated daily to students as they go about their studies. "Valuable maths skills are developed during the bricklaying course with the students involved in the planning and ordering of materials,” teacher Ray said.

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Making great music from the inside

By ERNIE and NATHAN

ERNIE, a current student at George Anderson Walpole School, proclaims that music and lyrics are the most powerful and effective outlet for his self-expression. "I use it to draw me out of mood swings," Ernie said.

He said that spending time confined in a cell gives the mind much scope for mood swings and this was when thoughts of loved ones flowed. To control the flow, Ernie uses his pen to develop lyrics for songs and poetry. "I hear just four blocks, Ernie said. Writers’ block is a common challenge, even with the best writers, and Ernie is no different. "To emphasise this, he said that he can only write poetry when “inside”. "My young son, mum and dad and friends psyche me up, memories come and words flow.” Ernie said that he was influenced by many different people, which becomes obvious when reading Ernie’s current works.

The biggest influence on him, Ernie said, was the position he is in. Other students also said they use music to improve their mood.

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Our jail school is a goals school

Editorial
By STEPHEN and AARON

WHAT does society think about or do with young men with personal histories of violence, physical, emotional and sexual abuse or drug and alcohol problems who then become involved in violent crimes?

How does society deal with not only the current problem but the propensity for recidivism of these young men if they don’t retain a link with society?

George Anderson Walpole School is no ordinary school. It provides solutions to many of society’s challenges. Located within Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre, it is a haven for young offenders who reside there.

Despite the school’s location, it functions like most schools, but in a way which makes students feel comfortable, perhaps even bringing them a touch of normality.

Contrary to the beliefs of some sections of our society, incarcerated young men are in the system as punishment, not to be punished. The school’s staff live and breathe this belief.

The school provides a daily respite where the norms of society are mentored to the students by all male and female role models are presented by teaching staff to the diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the school population; something many “mainstream” schools lack.

Beyond the teaching of social and communication skills, the school offers students a diverse range of academic options such as general education, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. There are also many vocational education training courses such as horticulture, ceramics, Aboriginal art and cultural practices, occupational health and safety, bricklaying and hairdressing. They are provided within a safe and secure educational setting, and for many students this is a totally new experience.

Friday afternoons present the opportunity to do a sporting program, an outlet for young men to learn and demonstrate sportsmanship and teamwork.

The young men are also empowered to build decision-making skills. Five weekly school assemblies and end-of-term sports carnivals are organised by the students. Award certificates recognising achievement across all spectrums of school life are presented and speeches delivered, all under the guidance of students.

It’s very easy for society to scream “look him up and throw away the key”. But shouldn’t they be thinking that one day the same, but very different, person is going to be released back into society?”

If not for the forward thinking of George Anderson Walpole School students put their heads down for some hard work. — Picture by Sam and Kane Foster said.

The areas has been occupied by various people over the years, with the Durban community as the traditional owners of the land. In 1914 a home farm for wayward juveniles was built, using the boys as labour, on 618 acres.

The home housed 74 boys aged 16 to 20. In 1980, Juvenile Justice took control and renamed it Mount Penang Detention Centre.

“Since 1991 teachers have been adapting to the centre’s changes in an effort to ensure all the young men here receive a level of education, an accommodation in many cases previously denied”. Mr Foster said.

In 1981 Kariong maximum security centre was built, including the current school. The years 2000 to 2003 saw some troubled times in the maximum security centre and, in a bid to bring firmer discipline, Correctional Services was handed control.

Mr Foster likens the current school to “a private school, enrolling selective and single-sex students living in dormitory-style environments”.

Students’ aid to Africa is no small change

By THE BIBLE STUDIES CLASS

AUSTRALIANS are very generous and six students from George Anderson Walpole are among the largest donors as a percentage of their wealth, according to the school’s chaplain Martin Parish.

Personal stories are a powerful thing and a story from an inmate in South Africa provided a catalyst for a truly remarkable fund-raiser.

“Students within the GAW centre are only allowed to earn a maximum of $33 a week but six boys raised $200 to assist a cause in a South African jail,” Mr Parish said.

“It was so inspirational.”

Mr Parish said that part of weekly pastoral care was the students’ prayer at the end of his sessions.

“They pray for each other, their families and their victims,” Mr Parish said.

“Many of the students had never attended church before and many can recite John 3:16 by heart when they leave.”

Opinions expressed in this newspaper are not necessarily those of the competition sponsors.