

Report from ARSCESTA and WARRAH SCHOOL Associate member/s Representative
RSSA Delegates Meeting 17-19th March 2007

Dear RSSA Colleagues,

Please find below the written report for the Associate Members ARSCESTA and Warrah School.

WARRAH SCHOOL REPORT

Warrah School continues to be a small, stable community with 5 F/T teaching staff, and 4 P/T therapy and support staff. Current enrolment is 17 students K to 12 in 4 classes.

This year we commenced a small Junior Primary class with 3 students, including one kindergarten student aged 4 ½ . Historically Warrah, as a residential school, only enrolled students over 7 year of age and with later trends for younger students to attend mainstream classes at least for the first few years, this is the youngest student ever enrolled at Warrah. His parents have made a clear choice to have a Steiner Curative Education for their child. He attends sessions with his mainstream peers in the Little Kindy class at Lorien Novalis School 1 day per week. There are now several enquiries from similarly aged students, and it is hoped this will grow into a viable junior class. Generally enrolments across the School are younger than in previous years, with only one High School class, with students aged 15 to 18 and two transition mixed aged classes aged from 10 to 13+ years.

So far this year my position as Education Director, a “teaching principal”, has stabilized at .5 face-to-face. This has created a better balance between teaching and administration time than in previous years and has allowed more scope to move beyond the day-to-day running of the School to again being involved in the important issues facing Steiner Special Education into the future.

In October last year the School Collegiate began a process of review and appraisal, starting to look at the issues raised for Warrah School specifically and Curative Education generally by the aging of the current collegiate (with almost all within 5-10 years of retirement), and the training needs for current and new Curative teachers in the light of Teacher qualification and accreditation requirements. As several teachers have chosen not to meet the new NSW requirements for teacher qualification, it is likely there will be a need for at least 2 new teachers/therapists in the School as soon as 2010, when Warrah School is due to apply again for registration.

Warrah School continues to network within the Steiner and general educational and special educational fields, and is an active participant in the National Independent Special Schools Association (NISSA), and the AIS, as well as RSSA and ARSCESTA. The National Disability Services (NSD formerly ACROD) Subcommittee for Children and Young People has expressed a desire to again embrace educational issues for children and young people with a disability. In the past 5 or so years the focus of this group has been predominantly on residential, respite and OOSH care, and it is heartening that this move will potentially bring support to educational issues from another peak disability body.

Funding for students with disabilities is a major issue for families with a child or children with a disability and the schools they attend and with the upcoming State and Federal elections this year NISSA and AIS have targeted the need for NEW funds in this area, not the continuing spreading of existing funds across a growing number of children with disabilities, especially in the Independent sector. Funds available for children with a disability in the Independent sector are clearly inadequate, and this is an area where the RSSA could consider adding their support for the benefit of member schools.

ARSCESTA REPORT:

1. Curative Education:

ARSCESTA is aware of the main issues for Curative Education which have been outlined above, and is looking to support future directions and needs as possible.

2. Training:

The training in Curative Education and Social Therapy, commenced by ARSCESTA primarily for workers at Inala, Warrah and Miroma in 2004, continues to be presented in regular modules, and there are now 3 training groups (rolled into 2 groups for course presentation) undertaking the course.

The ongoing difficulty noted in our last report in identifying available and suitable module / topic deliverers for ARSCESTA to develop its schedule of courses that will meet both their own member organisation needs and the needs of the school-based teachers and therapists, continues to hamper the development and availability of the course.

While discussions continue with Parsifal College to establish an accredited Steiner disability training covering the mainstream Certificate 3 and 4 courses in Disability work, this availability of suitably qualified and experienced presenters is again the major limitation to progress.

It is noted that the training needs for Curative teachers requires a different liaison, between the Steiner Teacher training courses in Australia (including State recognized B.Ed or equivalent) and the ARSCESTA Course. If these are studied sequentially in Australia, it would currently require at least 7 years of study. At present it is not clear if the 4 year Aberdeen University Bachelor of Curative Education meets Special Education qualification standards for NSW and/or Australian regulations.

ARSCESTA appreciates the work done by RSSA over the last year to establish the online PD calendar for members, teachers and schools to access available professional training courses and will try to coordinate with this for available training possibilities.

3. Other Matters:

ARSCESTA continues to participate in the international sphere of Curative Education and Social Therapy.

There is current investigation of sending a representative to the upcoming Camphill Teachers conference at Ochill Tower, Scotland at Easter 2007. There had previously been discussion of hosting one of these biennial conferences 'Down Under', but, while there is definite interest in the idea, so far organizers have not felt it possible to justify requiring the majority of attendees (UK, Ireland, Europe and USA) to travel so far. It may however still be a possibility in the future.

Martin Porteous attended the International Konferenz in Dornach in October 2006. The theme of this conference was "Life turning out well", with lectures and workshops dealing with the theme of biography and aspects of the destinies of persons with disabilities.

ARSCESTA website address is: www.arscesta.org

Warm regards,
Toni Wright-Turner
Delegate for Warrah School and ARSCESTA
12th March 2007