Every four years all schools are required to undertake a School Review. The Review provides an opportunity for celebration, professional learning, reflection and growth. There is a comprehensive process in preparing a self evaluation involving all sections of the school. The overall aim is to challenge all sections of the school to further improve its student outcomes and its overall service.

The Victorian School of Languages has a high reputation throughout Australia as a language teaching innovator. Many people who visit the school comment on the wide number of languages it offers. Academics look at the school and want to conduct research. There are those who attend our functions and say how much they have enjoyed them. The school has a steady stream of visitors – from Victoria, interstate and overseas - who are intrigued that one organization can teach 43 languages and ten languages via distance education. There are now requests from interstate students and schools who wish to access wider language choice. There has never been a better time to reflect on where we go next.

A lot of work has gone into the preparation of the Self Evaluation Report which looked at the school data and achievements in the last four years.
This was followed by the School Review which was undertaken by Leonie Dodd, an independent consultant engaged by the Department. The Review is also part of the accountability process which applies across all levels of the education system and involves a collective responsibility to work together to improve student outcomes.

Following the collating of data and other information, a ten person panel was set up composed of the Reviewer, the Principal and Assistant Principals, the School Council President and staff representatives from VSL Centres and Distance Education sections, and a Department representative. The panel met on 13 August for a full day.

The day started with an introduction that included an outline of purposes, processes and timelines. This was followed by an overview of the school’s strengths and other areas of potential improvement. The rest of the day was taken up with discussion and analysis of our goals and targets for:

- student learning
- student engagement and wellbeing
- student pathways and transition

Each of the three categories was broken down into intended outcomes, achievements, factors influencing achievement, possible improvement areas, and recommendations – goals, strategies and actions.

Ms Dodd then spoke about the need for the school to continuously collate and analyse data. The development of the VSL Student Information Portal (SIP) is a positive development which will facilitate data collection. It might also be useful to ask the Department to modify the various surveys and make them more suitable for the VSL – there would probably be a cost to the VSL. It is also essential that the VSL promotes itself more as many schools, students, and parents may not be aware of the services it provides.

At a subsequent presentation to staff and School Council members the Reviewer, Leonie Dodd, made the following observations and recommendations.

What should we develop further?

- focus on continuous student learning and sustained improvement
- data use and analysis as the basis for language learning
- differentiation strategies to meet the needs of all students
- ICT to amplify teaching and learning/online options
- staff professional learning
- communication and sharing

The following three goals were identified:

1. To improve individual learning outcomes in language for all Year 1 to 12 students.
2. To improve and ensure the positive transitions through the stages of learning for all students.
3. To provide an inclusive learning environment which challenges students and engages them in their learning.

The Next Steps are:

- Use feedback and recommendations from this meeting and the School Review Report to assist with the formulation of the next School Strategic Plan and the Annual Implementation Plan
- Continue the focus on high quality teaching and viable curriculum leading to improved outcomes for all students
- Empower students who are connected and excited by their learning
- Articulate the VSL vision within the VSL and broader educational communities

Once the final report is received it will be discussed and implemented by all sections of the school and will form the basis of our Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan.

Thank you to all staff, School Council members and everyone who has contributed to this important accountability process, a process which will assist with strengthening the VSL as a leader in language education and also as an innovator adapting to the latest developments at the State and national levels.

Frank Merlino
Principal
On 30 May 2011 a group of VSL students and their parents and teachers attended the 2011 Premier’s VCE Awards at the Melbourne Convention Centre. The Awards are in their 17th year and recognise top VCE students in all studies and include 20 All-Round Achievers.

Our VSL awards came under the banner of LOTE (not every language received an award) and were presented by the Governor of Victoria, the Hon Alex Chernov.

Seven students of the Victorian School of Languages received these very prestigious awards:

- Napur Goyal - Hindi - Teacher Mrs Manjeet Thethi
- Erica Waller - Japanese SL - Teacher Ms Andrea Collinson
- Mina You - Korean SL - Teacher Mr Daniel Koo
- Moin Amin - Persian - Teacher Mrs Fereshteh Khavar
- Kacper Kardas - Polish - Teacher Ms Aleksandra Ballarin
- Yen Ho - Vietnamese - Teacher Kim Chuong Huynh
- Angelica Avilla Lemos - Spanish - Teacher Ms Maria Luisa Rodriguez

The afternoon was very well organised and proceeded smoothly with many interesting presenters who were all top in their fields. The musical entertainment was of a very high standard and included a jazz band from the VCA Secondary School and a brass quintet from Blackburn High School.

The presenters delivered inspirational talks by video about loving what you do, carrying out your tasks with passion, following your dreams and doing your best in whatever you choose to do.

Napur Goyal who also received a “Top All-Round VCE High Achiever” award, summed up her experience in the following way:

“When I was up on the stage collecting my Hindi Award, I felt proud to be a VSL student. For my success, a lot of credit goes to Mrs Connie Bramble (Area Manager) and my teacher Mrs Manjeet Thethi, as it is so very important for students to get the right guidance and support from their teachers.”

Napur is now studying a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Monash University.

Congratulations to all the VSL award recipients, their families and their teachers.
The focus of the 2011 Professional Development Program is student engagement, not only in the context of curriculum delivery, but also the way that it has been approached in our recently developed VSL Student Engagement Policy. It is not only the content and the method we use to teach our languages which are important, but also the way in which we manage our classrooms and student behaviour, which impacts directly on student engagement and our levels of success in teaching. All these elements are linked directly to improving student achievement. The ability to look beyond the behaviour and see the student is fundamental to this process. It is therefore imperative to know our students.

Once, classroom discipline drew on a teacher’s naturally assumed position of authority, with the unconditional support of parents. Society’s attitudes have changed. So how could the same discipline methods still work?

Many schools are changing their approaches to incorporate a focus on good learning practice rather than bad behaviour and practice, so it is important that the Victorian School of Languages with its diverse school population also puts this issue on the agenda for teacher dialogue.

During the 14 May 2011 whole school Professional Development day Centre teachers explored the following aspects of the VSL Student Engagement Policy in presentations by Area Managers and workshops. Over 800 teachers participated in Area based sessions.

What is Restorative Justice?

This term originated in the State justice system and was used in State and private welfare agencies. It came to be used in school in the 1990s when pilot programs centering on Community Conferencing were established in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and UK, South Africa and elsewhere. The Conferencing model involves a formally structured conversation between the people affected by conflict like bullying, fighting, significant class disruption, property damage and theft. All parties are involved in the conference and a resolution is not imposed by the school, rather it is arrived at by the parties involved after they have spoken about how each person has been affected and what might be done to resolve the situation. This means that there is a better chance that the solution will be honoured in the future.

Restorative vs traditional

Restorative practices focus on repairing the harm done to people rather than just punishing offenders. Its focus is on healing. The traditional response focuses on the rule that has been broken, who is to blame and the punishment. Often the victim is not included in the process. There is a growing scepticism about the adequacy of traditionally imposed punishment in response to social problems due to changing attitudes to authority, a growing awareness of group decision-making and evidence showing that punishment is often inefficient and ineffective in restoring moral balance and general deterrence.

The retributive process looks at the wrongdoers and asks what are we going to do with them? The restorative process looks at joint problem-solving.

Reporting

Another vital aspect of the Student Engagement Policy is the way in which we have open and honest channels of communication with parents. The reporting period is extremely important to this end, as are the student portfolios and the three way student, teacher and parent conference because it encourages the student to take responsibility for their learning. This is a fundamental step in the engagement process. We encourage our teachers to make contact with parents if a student has been absent for more than 2 or 3 sessions. Getting to know our students, their medical conditions and special needs is also very important. Ensuring that this process is done well, supports our responsibility to the school community.

Teachers were encouraged to foster the Whole School Values presented in the Student Engagement Policy with their students.

Workshop by Dr Bill Rogers

On August 4 Dr Bill Rogers ran a very successful workshop on Behaviour Management / Restorative Practices at the VSL Head Office for all Area Managers and Distance Education staff.

Dr Rogers is an Education Consultant and a teacher by profession who has worked in all three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary.

He lectures widely on discipline and behaviour management issues, classroom management and colleague support.

His workshop was inspiring, challenging and extremely practical and he was enthusiastically received by the staff.

Dr Rogers will be our key note speaker at our annual VSL teachers’ conference to be held on 4 February 2012 at University High School.

Pandora Petrovska
Assistant Principal
The 2011 Conference of the Australian Network of Government Language Schools (ANGLS) was held in Darwin from 4-5 July. The national President, Mr Frank Merlino, welcomed delegates from Government Language Schools like the VSL from across Australia – NSW, NT, SA, VIC, and WA - and introduced the theme of the national curriculum. Keynote speakers provided meaningful insights into language learning from varying perspectives.

Professor Michael Christie, from Charles Darwin University, provided an overview of the teaching of Aboriginal languages in the Northern Territory and in particular into the Yolngu language. An interesting comment that is applicable to all language learners is that language should not be taught in isolation but as a living vibrant culture that links everyone.

The keynote address was made by Associate Professor Angela Scarino (picture insert). She has had the daunting task of writing the Languages Shape paper for the National Curriculum and updating it following Australia-wide consultation. She brought the conference participants up to date on the latest development and the implications for Australian language learners, schools, and services like the ANGLS members.

Some shaping concepts that she presented were: catering for diverse learner backgrounds; the move from skill driven learning to a dynamic developmental view of learning; language, cultural learning and literacy as relational; the distinctiveness of learning specific languages in Australia; and contextualised achievement.

Ms Amanda Day from the Federal Department of Education spoke on “National Developments: The Recent Past and the Future” giving everyone an update on the national picture.

The reports provided by the school leaders revealed a flurry of initiatives in language teaching and the important role that Government Language schools play in their States. It is clear that language study is not doing well across Australian primary and secondary schools. There were also concerns expressed about cuts to services. On the positive side, it was good to hear that the W.A. Education Department is considering establishing a Government language school.

Discussions were also held on how the States can co-operate to assist small candidature languages from losing their VCE accreditation. Another major challenge for all schools is to improve language teaching in rural and regional Australia. A stronger collaboration between all distance education schools would be ideal but there are obstacles to overcome. Individual schools should share their ideas for collaboration. There was interest from some language groups to facilitate interstate meetings of teachers (e.g. Croatian, Polish, and Macedonian).

Obviously, ideas about the growing use of technology were shared, with all schools being involved in ICT development in their respective State.

Given that resources and budgets will always be tight, the move towards collaboration and sharing must accelerate.

At the end of the day the challenge for our language schools is to improve the capacity for the Australian curriculum “to develop Australian students into active and informed citizens, working together to build harmonious local and regional communities, and build Australia’s social, intellectual and creative capital.”

Angela Natoli

Dr Amanda Day, Director National Curriculum Branch Curriculum
The new Australian curriculum has a cross curricula priority on Asian languages, with Korean being one of the four recommended priority languages.

A one day conference was held during the Term 2 holidays at the University of NSW, organised by the Korean Research Institute and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education (DEEWAR).

The theme of the Australia-wide Conference was “Korean Language and Studies Education in Australia: Assuring the Future”.

The main participants were:
- language managers from all Australian state-based Departments of Education;
- Korean language officers and teachers from all States;
- Dr Gi-Hyun Shin and nominated academics from partner Australian and overseas universities;
- Australian school principals;
- Korean Studies and Humanities academics
- relevant Australian and Korean government officials.

The Conference was given an update on the Korean NALSSP project which is concentrating on the development of teaching and learning materials for Korean language studies, teacher support, and the promotion of Korean language and studies education. The project is near completion and at the Conference the team:
- provided an overview of the project outcomes
- discussed how the developed learning and teaching materials can contribute to Korean-related education across the national school curriculum
- shared ideas and strategies about further developing the promotion of Korean language and studies in schools.

Tony Kyoong, one of our VSL Area Managers, represented the Victorian School of Languages and presented a paper on the contribution our school was making in Victoria.

Our Blackburn HS Centre is the oldest existing location and main centre for the teaching of Korean. Blackburn has classes ranging from Year 1 to Year 12 VCE. One of the current challenges is that the Blackburn buildings are undergoing major reconstruction, a process which will continue next year.

At the Year 12 level the VSL offers classes in both Korean First Language and Korean Second Language.

In April 2011 the VSL opened new Korean classes at Galvin Park SC Centre in Werribee, an outer western suburb of Melbourne. About 50 primary school students enrolled initially and it is hoped to expand this program in the future.

It is also pleasing to report there are now three primary schools in Victoria that offer Korean as part of their school program. Mordialloc PS has now joined Ormond PS and St Brigid’s PS (Mordialloc). Ms Insun Chang has been appointed as Korean Language Advisor to assist the three schools and it is hoped that the students will continue their Korean studies, once they finish Year 6, at either the Bentleigh or McKinnon VSL Centres.

The latest Korean activity, which the VSL partly sponsored, was the Korean Choir competition which was held in Prahran on 3 September.

Mr Kyoong reports that the Conference was very intensive, with 23 speakers, making presentations, followed by round table discussions. All participants left the Conference with lots of ideas to implement.
At the end of Term 3 a number of student performances or concerts were held in VSL Centres around Victoria.

These concerts have both educational and social benefits for students.

They provide the students with the opportunity to demonstrate their oral skills in front of a friendly audience so that they gain in confidence and are not fazed at performing in public, or for that matter, in front of examiners and at interviews. In addition, our Centres encourage a range of dance, cooking and other activities.

The students, learn to work together as a team and appreciate the fact that in any endeavour practice is essential. The activities also assist to improve their cognitive learning skills and concentration. The performance allows them to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills.

Performances are also a celebration of culture and this provides the students with a greater appreciation of the language that they are studying.

The performance could not be successful without the tireless contribution of the teachers who prepare the students and the many parents who assist with costumes, programs, prizes and organisation.

Additional concerts will be held in many centres towards the end of this Term and parents are invited to attend.
Key 2011 Term 4 Dates

8 October    First Day of Centre Classes for Term 4
18 October   2012 student enrolments commence
17 October   Maltese public meeting - Taylors Lakes
6 November   Last Day VCE classes
20 November  Last day for all Year 1 - Year 10 classes
3 December   Distance Education Awards Day

2012 Term 1 Dates
4 February   VSL State-wide Teachers Conference, University High School
6 February   Distance Education classes commence
11 February  Centre classes commence

TERM 4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>22 October</td>
<td>Incorporating ICT into VELS Dimensions</td>
<td>Keilor Downs Centre</td>
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<td>E5 for everyone - incorporating the E5 model</td>
<td>Haileybury</td>
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<td>29 October</td>
<td>Planning a VELS unit of work - part 2</td>
<td>North Geelong Secondary College</td>
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<td>5 November</td>
<td>VCE PD on SAC Preparation, Student Engagement</td>
<td>Shepparton</td>
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<td>Professional Learning Teams, presented by Figen Mustafa</td>
<td>Haileybury College</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 October</td>
<td>Using ICT in LOTE “Web 2.0 Technologies” presented by Kerry Law</td>
<td>Brunswick Secondary College</td>
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Other New Language Publications or Initiatives

- Turkish 7 - 8 Student textbook
- Turkish VCE Guide to Text Types

Other initiatives
- New VSL ground floor reception and videoconferencing / meeting room under construction
- German Teacher Assistant arrived

Dr Bill Rogers on the topic of Behaviour Management/Restorative Practice in relation to our Student Well Being policy.

The Education Show 5-6 August 2011
Teacher Flora Osario answering questions