

# Inspire

Issue 4 ~ May 2011



Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development

## MEET THE FINALISTS

Introducing the talented  
contenders for the 2011  
Victorian Education  
Excellence Awards

## THINKING BIG

Researchers aim high for  
improvements in the early years

Inside the school that makes  
bullying everyone's business

How the burqini is bridging the  
cultural divide in Shepparton

Andy Lee inspires students  
at Westbreen Primary

# Secondary school nurses in Singapore

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has partnered with the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital to support the introduction of a new student health advisors program in Singapore.

THE STUDENT health advisors (SHA) program has been running in Singapore for the past 12 months. While the nurses have undergone professional development about adolescent health issues, the Singapore Health Promotion Board recently became aware that the nurses also need training in managing the challenges of working in an educational setting, and approached the internationally recognised Centre for Adolescent Health (CAH) in Melbourne to help implement the program.

Given the similarities between the SHA role and Victoria's Secondary School Nursing Program, which has been operating for more than 10 years, CAH program manager Andrea Krelle says it made sense for an experienced school nurse to accompany her to Singapore to assist with the program's preparation and delivery.

"The CAH already has a strong relationship with adolescent health professionals in Singapore hospitals and this was an excellent opportunity for us to broaden our engagement with those working in schools," she says.

"Schools are an entirely different environment and working culture to hospitals, and adjusting to that takes time and a new set of skills. The nurses wanted to know about improving the practice of working with adolescents in schools, as some found the transition difficult. So, we thought it best to take an experienced school nurse with us to share her knowledge first hand," Ms Krelle explains.

A selection process was undertaken and the successful candidate was Jenny Muir who



Secondary school nurse Jenny Muir (pictured on the far right in photo above left) with fellow school-based adolescent health workers in Singapore.

has been a school nurse at Mordialloc and Bentleigh secondary colleges since 2003. She and Ms Krelle delivered a week-long training program to 15 nurses who had been practicing in two different hospitals before taking up their new roles as student health advisors.

"Nurses employed in the Victorian Secondary School Nursing Program utilise a social model in the delivery of health education, health promotion, health counselling and referral to specialist services, they are not responsible for administering first aid," Ms Muir explains.

"It's a huge role and completely different to nursing in a hospital, so the Singapore health advisors needed strategies to assist their successful integration into schools," she continues. "We did a needs assessment and had conversations around the importance of having good interpersonal skills, as the role is about building relationships, and we ran a range of sessions on nursing practice in schools, working with individual students, problem solving and program planning.

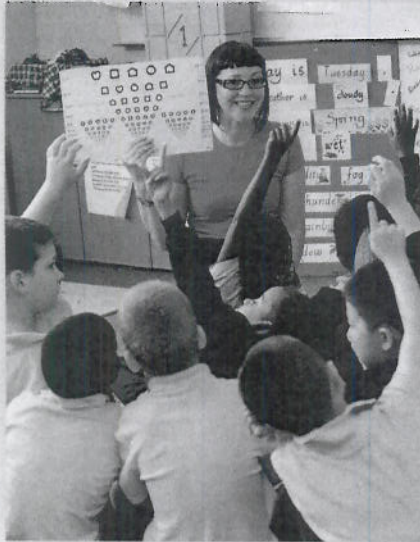


"Although it was an intensive program, it was extremely rewarding, and the knowledge exchange between Victoria and Singapore has been invaluable. One of the major differences is that Victorian school nurses work in two schools, in Singapore they work in just one school. Some of the issues are also a little different," she says.

"Obesity, for instance, has been identified as a priority for school-based intervention programs in Singapore where overweight children are targeted for behaviour change. There are legal sanctions around what they call BGRs or Boy-Girl Relationships and sexual behaviour. They also have very stringent rules about smoking, and school nurses spend a lot of time with kids who they know are smoking to help them to give up.

"They have a fine-tuned focus on smoking intervention programs. Counselling and support in this area is extremely strong, and they really do get students to stop smoking. It's amazing and I really hope we can use those skills here," Ms Muir says.

## Brigance Secondary Screening in primary schools



Primary school nurses use a range of screening tools in their clinical practice to identify children at risk of health, wellbeing and learning difficulties and to identify service pathways. A key tool is the parent-completed School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) that assists primary school nurses to assess the health, development, behaviour and wellbeing of children in their first year of school. This health assessment provides opportunities for children and their parents to be linked to appropriate school-based and community health and wellbeing services.

The Victorian Primary School Nursing Program recently introduced and trained nurses in the use of an additional screening tool, the Brigance Secondary

Screen, for children who have been identified through the SEHQ as being at risk of developmental delay. This tool is widely used by MCH services and the Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

The Brigance Screens are a series of age-appropriate developmental screening tests that have been standardised and validated to detect children likely to have developmental or academic delays. Children identified should be further evaluated in more detail and considered for more comprehensive assessment unless other available information indicates the referral is not necessary or appropriate.

The basic assessments provide a sample in time of the child's learning, development and skills in a broad range of areas, such as fine motor skills, body awareness, general knowledge, language development and gross motor skills. The Brigance Screens also allow for consideration of factors that may influence the results, such as the child's previous educational experience, developmental disabilities or the presence of psychosocial risk factors to assist and guide the referral process.

## Mary-Ann Hope Scholarship

The Mary-Ann Hope Scholarship was established in 2001 to support secondary school nurses to undertake higher education in Adolescent Health and Welfare. The scholarship is awarded in memory of Mary-Ann Hope, an adolescent health nurse who made a significant contribution in establishing the Victorian Secondary School Nursing Program and in the field of adolescent health more broadly.

This year's scholarship winner is Keilor Downs Secondary College and Taylors Lakes Secondary College school nurse Kristina Bergin, who has commenced a Graduate Diploma of Adolescent Health and Welfare through the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital.

**For more information on the Mary-Ann Hope Scholarship for secondary school nurses, visit [www.paediatrics.unimelb.edu.au/pgrad](http://www.paediatrics.unimelb.edu.au/pgrad)**



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