

Satellite Class success - innovation at work

In 2002, in conjunction with Mater Dei School, John Therry Catholic High School, Rosemeadow and the Catholic Education Office, Wollongong, a Year 11/12 Satellite Class was established.

The aim of this class is to provide senior students with intellectual disabilities, the opportunity to obtain a Life Skills Higher School Certificate in a unique learning environment that fosters academic achievement, independent living skills and personal care and social skills.

The success of and the ongoing commitment to this very special partnership was recently celebrated with a visit to the class by Bishop Peter Ingham, Bishop of Wollongong.

Following is a report on this event written by our Satellite Class students.

On Wednesday, March 7, Bishop Peter Ingham visited our class at John Therry. Before his visit there was lots to do to prepare for this very special occasion.

The first thing we did was to discuss what needed to be done. We asked our music teacher, Mr Davidson, if he could help us organise a song. We chose 'Lean On Me' and Sam, Jess and Alex were given guitar chords to practise. We started practising 3 weeks before the big day.

Next we started to organise our classroom and put in a request to get the carpet cleaned. We even came in on the John Therry pupil free day and cooked slices, put finishing touches to our room, rehearsed our song and speeches and videoed some footage for our video presentation for the Bishop and the Satellite Review Team. This team is all the very important people, VIPs from the CEO, Mater Dei and John Therry.



Bishop Peter Ingham warmly greets Satellite Class student, Karley, while Sam and Sarah look on with Netty Broekman from the CEO.

On the big day some of us had butterflies, some were excited, some were a little bit nervous and even some were worried about everything going to plan.

After the Bishop attended the review meeting he came to visit us in the woodwork room. Bishop Peter had his Bishop clothes on. He was very friendly and he had a tight hand grip. He recognised Debbie because he had confirmed her last year. He walked around and spoke to every one of us. The other VIPs did too. We felt very proud and liked to tell them all about the class and how it is like a big helpful family.

Jess, Karley and Alex escorted the Bishop and all the VIPs back to the meeting room and one by one gave a talk to the team about what it means to them being in the Satellite Class. Jess said it was extra stressful because of them actually being Very Important People. We then watched the video we had made.

Everyone was impressed! Mrs Patrick, our teacher, was embarrassed because she didn't realise the camera was on and she saw herself dancing while we were practising our song on the big screen!

Lastly, Bishop Peter and the Team came to our classroom. We performed our 'Lean On Me' song. It was pretty good except we got a bit mixed up with our dance moves. We don't think the audience noticed or we hope they didn't. Mrs Merlino, our teacher's assistant, had been very busy organising the morning tea and we helped her serve our guests the delicious slices we had made and some other yummy food and beverages. This was a chance to show the Bishop some of the great skills we have developed in the Satellite Class.

It was a wonderful morning and we all felt special, especially when Bishop Peter blessed us when he was leaving.