



Year 5 leaders representing the Jewish life and Zionist portfolio for 2016. Ayana Dagan, Toby Grodski, Alex Frenkel, Bella Black (back row left to right) and Niv Glazer, Jack Karro, Leahy Eylon, Bella Israel, Joel Krongold and Toby Hearst (front row left to right).

Student leadership programs with a difference

BIALIK COLLEGE

The provision of student leadership opportunities at Bialik College is paramount to its mission.

Student leadership provides the opportunity for the students to become the “change agents” their future requires them to become.

“Not only do their future universities and workplaces look favourably on these skills of our graduates, but more importantly, our students require these skills to enact their communal responsibility for tikkun olam (repairing the world),” said Dan Sztrajt, head of Jewish learning.

It is this focus on leadership that has seen the college provide compulsory leadership courses at years 5 and 10, together with optional courses at years 9, 11 and 12.

Principal Jeremy Stowe-Lindner said: “Our leadership offering at Bialik includes being Australia’s first school to introduce ‘self-selected’ leadership roles. There are no elections, no hustings and leaders are not selected based on popularity amongst their peers. This model infuses inclusion and personal development.”

In the Primary manhigut (leadership) program, students can choose from six portfolios – Jewish life and Zionism, social action, sports, science and sustainability, technology and assembly – something to suit the needs and passions of each student.

One of the year 5 students explained: “I like that we can choose a portfolio that we are interested in. I think it is important to help people in need so I chose to become a social action leader.”

Primary teacher and co-ordinator of the year 5 leadership program Dalia Gurfinkel said: “The student leaders are mentored by a great team of teachers. Each child is kept very busy throughout the year – the assembly team will co-ordinate and run assemblies, organise guest speakers and running schedules, the Jewish life team organises Shabbat and chag activities for the primary students and so on.

“There is always something to do, giving them a sense of responsibility

and accountability.” The year 9s are the seniors of the middle school and they

work closely with staff, who help them along their learning journey as young leaders. Fundraising and social action are the main features of the year 9 leadership program and many community building initiatives that are run in the school have been implemented by the year 9s.

Throughout the senior school, leadership deepens to ensure real hands-on opportunities for practical leadership roles. The year 10 students participating in the hadracha leadership program are madrichim or mentors to younger students.

Head of informal education Brad Rychter said: “We work with the year 10 leaders to foster strong communication and relationship-building skills.”

The students assist the informal education team in the running of select classes for the primary school. In this way, strong bonds are formed between the year 10s and primary students and the leaders will accompany their junior friends on annual school camps, where they run group activities and are an integral part of the camp experience.

In year 12, the Mazkirut program is the culmination of the leadership programs. The program is different because students self-select to become overall leaders of the entire school.

Their appointment is not dependent on a popularity vote from their peers. The year 12 leaders have portfolios such as health and wellbeing, arts, tikkun olam, Judaism and Zionism and more. They run events, theme days and fundraising initiatives within their portfolios and volunteer their time to improve campus life for all students.

Leadership is highly valued at Bialik because, although it may not be required to be a good person or to become successful in the workplace, it is absolutely integral if we see the role of graduates to be a doogma, an example for all others.