

Bialik's solid foundations lead to VCE success

BIALIK COLLEGE

In 2016, Bialik was the number one, top performing VCE school in Victoria and for 19 out of 20 years, the college has been in the top five. How is this phenomenal academic record achieved? The answer starts in the early learning centre and filters through every subsequent year level.

From the earliest years, students at Bialik are exposed to exciting programs that complement their education and help shape a child's positive attitude towards future learning and participation in group activities. These curricular and extra-curricular opportunities allow young children to enjoy discovering their own learning style.

At the same time that the young students are developing as learners, they are also evolving a sense of community and a spiritual identity. In the ELC and primary school levels, Bialik students are exposed to a range of Jewish practices. They enjoy a weekly communal Kabbalat Shabbat, and as they grow, they learn birchat hamazon, the Shema, Modeh Ani, brachot and so on. In this way, the young child is given a solid grounding in traditional Jewish practice.

Bialik is a Zionist school, with Hebrew spoken frequently among the staff and students. A love for Israel is fostered in the many activities that take place during the year, designed to keep Israel in the hearts and minds of our students. The four-year-old kinder class has an ongoing relationship with children from the Arava in Israel, using Skype to communicate with their Israeli friends and sending artwork and cards at festival time.

The sense of community strengthens in prep when every young student is mentored with a year 12 'buddy', with whom they develop a close bond. They get together during the year for fun activities and at the chagim (festivals).

A highlight for both the preps and the year 12s is the prep-year 12 model seder. Always a delightful event, the students sing, read from the Haggadah and laugh together, enhancing the social and learning experience for all involved.

Many other curricular and extra-curricular programs enrich the minds of the junior students at the college. The "Dogs for Life" program is one such example. Now in its fourth year, this exciting program brings service animals into the classroom and is geared towards building social and emotional intelligence by teaching students key concepts such as verbal and non-verbal communication, rights and responsibilities and conflict resolution.

Creativity and the arts are important for building positive attitudes towards learning. In 2017 the year two students will learn woodworking skills from Bialik's artist-in-residence, Bruce Bellman. The program provides both a means of creative expression and also a chance to explore the physical science of forces. The year three performing arts program was launched in 2016 and was a huge success. In 2017, the program will continue to enhance skills like performance, viewing, speaking and listening and all students in year three will get a chance to participate in an



Freddie Strauch and Gilad Silverstein at the year 12 and prep buddy Seder.

end-of-year production.

Creativity is also encouraged with exciting lunchtime electives like art club, dance cub, woodworking and makerspace – a space to make, tinker and play. Here, students get to pull things apart, put things together and improve and develop their ideas and designs. Some areas that are explored include circuits, programming, 3D printing and gaming.

A primary robotics club has also been added to the line-up of lunchtime activities during which students will collaborate in an enriching and inspiring environment, using Lego to personalise and program all sorts of robotic creations.

Back in the classroom, the years four and five students have the opportunity to join the Hebrew-English bilingual class, in which 40 per cent of the curriculum is taught in Hebrew. Also, in 2017, the year four cohort will be focussing on digital literacy and in year five, students will be engaging with neuroscience.

Years two to four will continue the amazing workshops with the Resilience Project's Hugh Van Cuylenberg. Hugh visits the college regularly, working with the students to develop healthy social skills, mindfulness and positivity.

Finally, in order to excel in future learning and growth, all students are given the opportunity to lead their peers. Every year 5 student at Bialik is given a role in our Manhigut program. Students can select from six leadership portfolios – Jewish life and Zionism, social action, sports, science and sustainability, technology and assembly – something to suit the needs and passions of each individual.

From the start of a Bialik student's journey, the college focuses on developing the whole person – academically, spiritually, creatively and on the sports field – and this leads not only to outstanding VCE results but also encourages well-rounded graduates who are socially conscious, community-minded and confident.