

Fostering Learning through Dissonance at Bialik College

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As a Jewish school that is, uniquely for Australia, cross-communal and not aligned to any particular denomination, Bialik College seeks to foster and encourage a way of approaching the world and learning that is imbued with wonder, resisting of certainties and open to questioning, contradiction and dissonance. In the words of Lev Vygotsky, "Children grow into the intellectual life of those around them." On one hand, this implies that individuals are in a constant state of evolution – wholly responsive to the world around them. On the other hand, with this awareness comes the responsibility for a school to create an intellectual environment into which students may grow. At Bialik, we attempt to empower our learners to achieve excellence in "an enriching, innovative and nurturing environment" (Bialik's Mission statement). Through our various approaches

– Reggio Emilia in the Early Learning Centre, Cultures of Thinking across the school, as well as further opportunities for enrichment and extension provided by the Rosenkranz Centre for Excellence and Achievement – students are encouraged to explore their ideas through many different 'languages'.

Reggio Emilia in the ELC

Children come to school with many variances in their conceptual, verbal, physical and social skills. Not only are children at different stages in their development, but the pattern of their learning can be uneven. In our ELC, inspired by the Reggio Emilia educational approach, teachers continue to encourage children's wonder and thinking through ongoing investigations, inspired by the concept of 'The hundred languages of children.'

Cultures of Thinking in Primary and Secondary

Bialik is internationally renowned in the educational world for its Cultures of Thinking

approach, which began over 10 years ago as a joint research project with Project Zero, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Cultures of Thinking is an approach that enriches and inspires teaching and learning by encouraging both teachers and students to be curious, ask questions, and be risk takers, while engaging in thoughtful reflection that leads to construction of knowledge. Bialik's pioneering approach and learning ethos features in an acclaimed book on education: "Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners" (2011) by Ron Ritchhart, Mark Church and Karin Morrison.

Rosenkranz Centre for Excellence and Achievement

Learning is further fostered through Bialik's Rosenkranz Centre for Excellence and Achievement, which plays a critical role in helping to provide students with opportunities to develop and be challenged beyond their current level in all areas of schooling. It does so

with the belief that real learning takes place at the point of challenge. Students as young as 5 right through to Year 12 participate in purpose-crafted programs that are offered in various forms – from individual mentoring, to small group withdrawal extension opportunities right through to year-level enrichment opportunities.

From 16-18 August 2015, Bialik College, in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education, will host the 5th international Cultures of Thinking Conference, with the theme: "How do we inspire students' thinking and empower them to become leaders in an ever-changing world?" The conference is open to educators, parents and all those interested in children's education. More information may be found on the College website: <http://www.bialik.vic.edu.au/our-school/teaching-learning/cultures-of-thinking/>

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