

Distance Education – Whitsunday Anglican School Experience

Last week from Wednesday 15th – Friday 17th July, twenty-one Capricornia Schools Distance Education students, eleven Clermont Outreach Group students, three rural students and four teachers from the Rockhampton, Emerald, Clermont and Charters Towers catchment areas were invited to have a Whitsunday Anglican School (Mackay) experience in boarding. The group first travelled to Mackay and were initially met by delegates from the Winchester Foundation and Whitsunday Anglican School, the funding and organisational forces that made the visit possible.

The distance students and their parents enjoyed a tour of our modern boarding facility that has the ability to accommodate 76 termly and weekly boarders. They also had the opportunity to walk through the single campus' Junior, Middle and Senior Schools to have an idea of how a school of 800 students operates.

The first night within Booth House (Whitsunday Anglican School's boarding house) was started with a bus trip to the beach with the distance student's boarding buddies. This gave all students the time to get to know each other and find out about each other's way of life and way of schooling. On return to Booth House the group was met by Mrs Beryl Neilsen who excitedly gifted each distance student with their 'Winchester Shirt' that they would proudly wear for the rest of their stay. To finish the night, the boarding community with the distance students watched a movie and relaxed in each other's company and all felt quite at home. Each distance student had their own room and area to sleep in providing them (as it does the boarders) with privacy and the ability to have some quiet time if needed.

Thursday saw the first day of the main attraction, the Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Festival. The Festival had 15 authors/musicians/illustrators travel from all over Australia to present and speak about their love of literary and inspired over 5000 students who attended over the two days (Thursday and Friday). The distance students were full of excitement during the day and were also able to have their own special time solely for the Winchester Foundation students to have books signed by the authors. Directly after the book signing, all the Winchester Foundation Brigalow students, including the distance kids were treated to 4 rotational activities on the school's oval, hosted by the WAS staff and boarding students. Sack and relay racing and Soccer were enjoyed by all 130 students, though the most talked about activities on the afternoon were the inflatable obstacle course and the climbing wall.

Friday did seem to come very fast for the distance education group and also for the school's boarding community who had already made some very special bonds with each other. After attending more Whitsunday Voices sessions, the Winchester Foundation group comprised of students, parents, teachers, committee members and volunteers came together to celebrate a successful event and to thank Mrs Beryl Neilsen – Trustee and founder of the Winchester Foundation and her support team in making the occasion a reality.

I very much look forward to continuing this experience as an annual event between our distance education partners, the Winchester Foundation and Whitsunday Anglican School.

Jamie Novosel.

Director of Admissions

Whitsunday Anglican School.