

INSPIRING A LOVE OF READING AMONG SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Doing things a little bit differently has become a hallmark of the senior library at Mentone Grammar. Catering to around 300 students in the Year 9–12 senior campuses, they are always on the lookout for new ways inspire in their students a love of reading. Head of Library Miffy Farquharson and Teacher Librarian Bev Novak were inspired by the National Year of Reading and have been keeping up the momentum ever since.

Motivated by the 2012 National Year of Reading program, in which Reading Ambassadors were appointed across Australia, we decided to initiate a similar program in our school. Publicising school-wide, we encouraged students and staff as well as parents and members of our wider school community who loved reading and were keen to get involved in events to promote reading, to nominate themselves as Mentone Grammar Reading Ambassadors (MGRAs).

With an enthusiastic group of 40, a host of literary-based events were held throughout 2012. By the time 2013 got underway, the number of keen MGRAs has doubled to more than 80. Clearly, we concluded, we had hit on a program that worked! With a core group of interested and committed senior students, the program continued into 2014.

When it came time for the 2014 Book Week Celebrations, our team of committed teacher librarians again put their heads together to come up with a wide range of inspiring programs that would pique the interest of our senior students.

One event, Read Around the World was a standout. Working on the philosophy that literary pursuit should not just be confined to English, we invited students of French, German, Japanese and Chinese – the four languages taught at the Mentone Grammar senior campus – to share the joy of the languages they study with all of the senior campus community. Over a lunch period, every corner of the library was filled by books, music, displays and (most importantly) food which related to each of the four languages. It was indeed a sight to be seen. With a cacophony of music in four different languages at the same time, the library was transformed from its usual quiet space to the kind of sight normally seen at an expo.



Senior students engrossed in French story reading during one of the many Mentone Grammar's 2014 Book Week celebration events.

In amongst the food and music, it was a delight to see many students wandering around to the different language stations to catch a glimpse of languages taught at our school. It was thrilling to see a group of students pulling up some floor space so they could listen to a proficient French student read a simple story in French. One of our Chinese students, who is learning German, entertained another group of listeners by reading to them in German. Speakers of Japanese, German, French and even one of our students who comes from Singapore, along with many of our 'just English speakers' were mesmerised by a talk given by Bihai (Luke) Sun about the construction of written Chinese.

Thinking outside the box to initiate events and activities that inspire a love of reading is an essential ingredient for senior school library programs and we're expecting our 2015 program to be bigger and better than ever, in our efforts to encourage all our students to be lifelong enthusiastic readers.

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