

TEACH THE TEACHER

Improving student-teacher relationships





Absent: Tim-Li Huang



2015 has been a great first year of *Teach the Teacher* at Mount Waverley Secondary College. Through this great program, we were able to amplify and clarify student voice, have a conversation with our teachers and work with another school.

This report details every step of our journey, such as, the formation of our goals, the research behind our focus, the preparation of our Professional Learning sessions, and exciting moments like the *VicSRC Recognition Awards* and featuring in *The Age*.

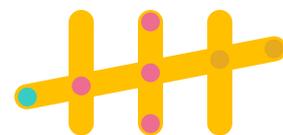
Enjoy!

Chester Ngan
Editor

Mount Waverley Secondary College is a public, co-educational school, and is an established learning community, recognised locally, nationally and internationally as having a long tradition of academic excellence. The college operates from two adjacent sites - a Junior Campus (Years 7 and 8) and a Senior Campus comprising a Middle School (Years 9 and 10) and a Senior VCE School (Years 11 and 12). Altogether, the college has around 1900 students.



WHAT IS TEACH THE TEACHER?



Teach the Teacher is a program designed by VicSRC that provides students with an avenue to voice their opinions. This student-led Professional Learning program for teachers gives students a greater say, because students are the ones at the centre of education. Students are the ones in the classroom who are able to provide a unique perspective to finding strategies to improve teaching and learning. Providing workshops and resources to help the *Teach the Teacher* team build their skills and confidence, particularly in preparation for the Professional Learning session with teachers, the support of VicSRC has been truly empowering and engaging.

Mount Waverley Secondary College is one of thirty schools that have signed up for *Teach the Teacher* since its conception in 2011. In 2014, after attending the *VicSRC Congress Camp*, a group of then-Year 10 student leaders expressed interest in *Teach the Teacher* as a program to help students develop and lead conversations with their teachers.

The *Teach the Teacher* team aims to improve student-teacher relationships and enhance teaching and learning outcomes and in doing so, create positive lasting change and truly make a difference by helping students develop and lead conversations with their teachers. By encouraging student voice, students have established a forum for students to express their opinions and truly represent them to make a difference in terms of academic success at the college.

MEET THE 2K15 MWSC TEACH THE TEACHER TEAM



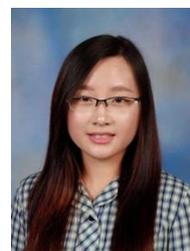
Netania Lim
Team Leader



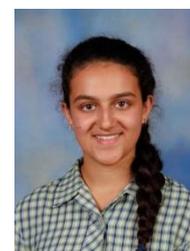
Chester Ngan
Deputy Team Leader



Madu Balashanmugan



Tim-Li Huang



Mihika de Bruyne



Liz Chiem



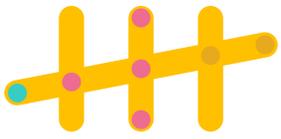
Shivani Thiyagarajah



Sanjna Chandra



Rose Han



FROM THE TEAM LEADER

“Go forth and set the world on fire.”



I have been so privileged to lead the inaugural *Teach the Teacher* Committee at Mount Waverley Secondary College. I took on this role with much trepidation, as I had never been in a leading role before. But I knew that with the support of Miss Dureau and the team, I would gain the confidence to lead the *Teach the Teacher* team effectively, and I hope I have done us proud.

The time, energy, effort, thought and passion that went into *Teach the Teacher* this year by all the members of the team was absolutely phenomenal. Working with such a passionate group of students who are so committed to giving back to our school has been inspiring and empowering. To know that we have truly made a lasting impact in our first year of *Teach the Teacher* at the college is humbling and I am honoured that I have been a part of it and led it.

It is incredible to think that not so many months ago, we barely knew each other, yet we truly have become a *Teach the Teacher* family. Each of us has not only given to the team and the college, we have also taken something away. We have become more confident, we have become more proactive, we have become independent, thoughtful leaders, we have become role models, and we have become effective representatives of the student cohort.

Much of this can be attributed to the work of Miss Hayley Dureau, the Leader of Programs and Student Leadership, whose passion for giving students an opportunity to reach their full potential and achieve their goals inspires us. Many thanks also go to the VicSRC, who has supported us immensely in our journey so far, and for that, we are so grateful.

I know that each of the *Teach the Teacher* team members will go on to do unimaginably wonderful things in the world, and I wish them all the very best.

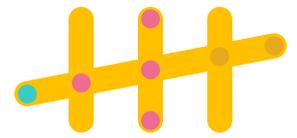
As the Year 11s continue our work with a new team, I give them my best wishes. I know that they will build even greater change upon our legacy of 2015, and I hope that this work may guide them and uplift them in the years ahead.

And finally, this work is dedicated, not only to the future students and teachers of Mount Waverley Secondary College as a reminder of what we have done in our first year of *Teach the Teacher* at the college, but also dedicated to anyone who is seeking to use *Teach the Teacher* as a framework for change within their school. I hope that this report will help you and encourage you.

And with that, GO FORTH AND SET THE WORLD ON FIRE!!

Netania Lim
Team Leader

FORMING OUR GOALS



“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

Late in Term 1, Emma Myers (VicSRC Project Officer) came to Mount Waverley Secondary College to meet the college’s inaugural *Teach the Teacher* Committee. She further explained the steps of *Teach the Teacher*, and helped us formulate our ideas with regards to our goals and specific areas of the college we wanted to focus on, namely, improving teaching and learning outcomes. Following this, we began to create surveys for Year 11 and 12 students.

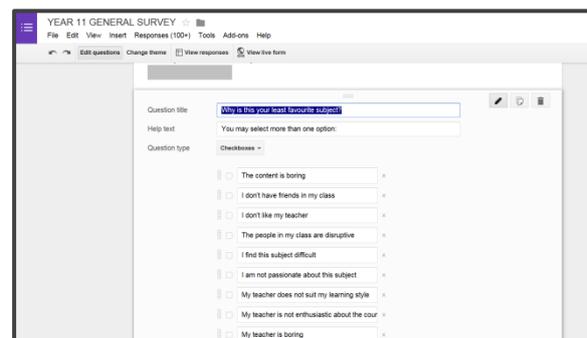


At our first meeting, we decided that we would survey students because they would know what they wanted to change at the school, opting to make a separate survey for each year level. We divided up the surveys for the Year 9-12s, working in pairs for each year level. We chose to use an online survey in Google Forms, as this would compile the data for us and enable easier comparisons as well. As we are focusing on the academic environment of the college in particular, the twenty-five questions we asked were based around this, and included:

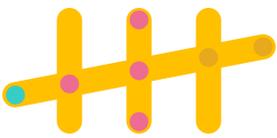
- What is your favourite subject and why?
- Think of your favourite teacher. Why are they your favourite teacher?
- Do your teachers take on board your feedback?
- Do you feel that having a good relationship with your teachers is crucial to your ability to learn?
- Do you feel that your teachers genuinely want to help you learn?
- Are your teachers approachable?

The questions were either checklists, choosing from 1-5, or open-ended.

After checking the survey with Miss Dureau, we sent out the Google Form during Home Group for Year 11s and Mentoring Group for Year 12s, with a *Teach the Teacher* team member present to encourage students to fill out the survey and help them if need be.



We then began to compare the results for the Year 11s and 12s. We found that giving students the option to choose from 1-5 was not very helpful, because students could simply



choose to 'sit in the middle'. For the Year 9 and 10 surveys, we changed this to 1-4. We also made the Year 9 and 10 surveys shorter, as students said that the surveys were rather long.

We then asked the Year 9 and 10 Student Leadership Team members to help us in conducting the surveys for their respective year levels in Home Group.

During this time, we also presented to staff at a staff meeting in July. We used some data from the Year 11 and 12 surveys to show the teachers what we had been doing and what we hoped to achieve in a short PowerPoint. We focused on the positive results from the surveys in an attempt to ensure that teachers did not get defensive and think that we were attacking them. Many teachers spoke to Miss Dureau or the *Teach the Teacher* team members, saying they were very impressed with our courage to speak at the meeting.

We compared the results of the Year 9-12 surveys, as shown below.

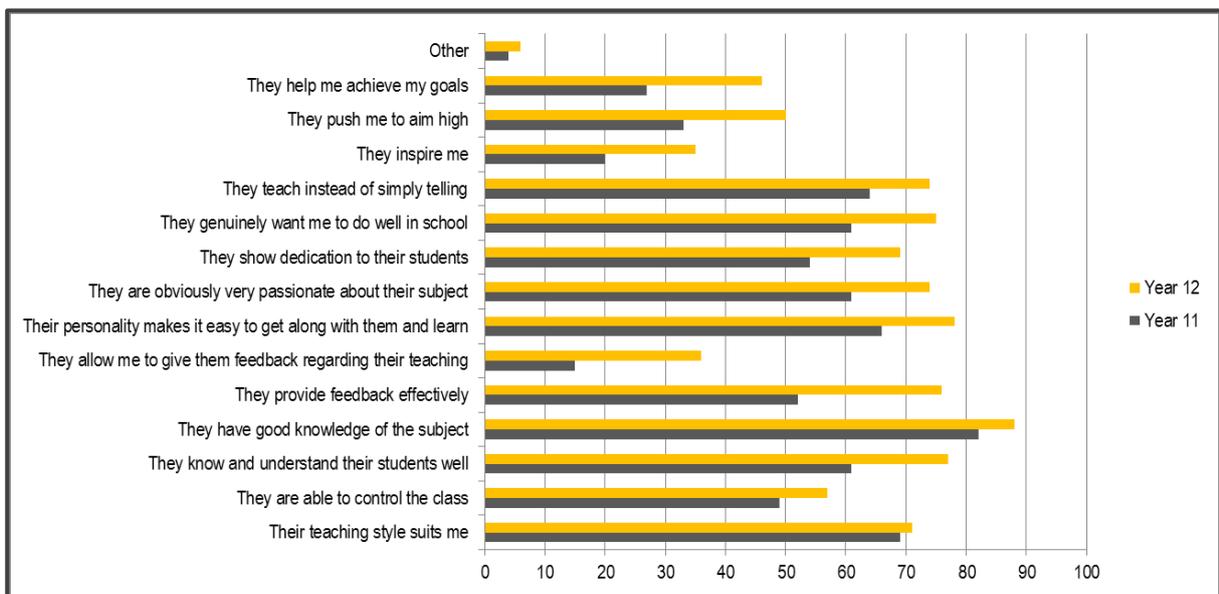


Fig.1 Graph showing Year 11 and 12 students' responses to: *'why is your favourite teacher your favourite teacher?'*

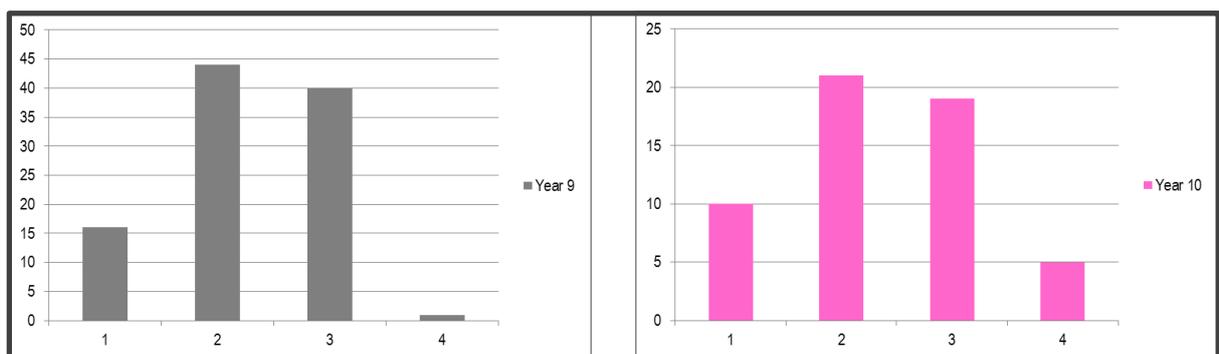


Fig.2 Graphs showing Year 9 and 10 students' responses to the question *'do your teachers take on board your feedback?'*, with '1' being 'no' and '4' being 'yes'.

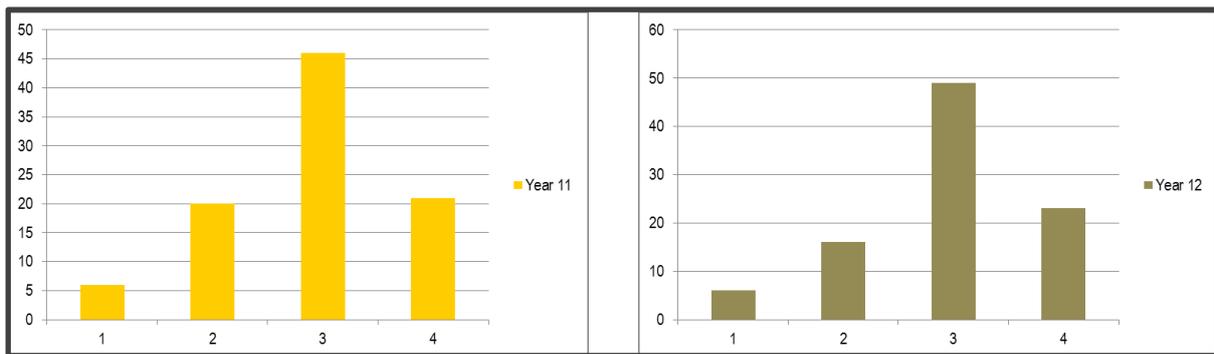
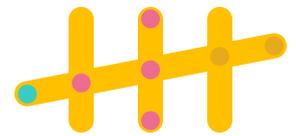


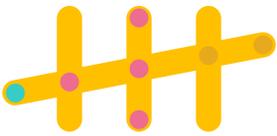
Fig.3 Graphs showing Year 11 and 12 students' responses to the question *'do your teachers take on board your feedback?'*, with '1' being 'no' and '4' being 'yes'.

We also created a survey for the teachers, so that we could understand their perspective, and included questions like:

- How do you present content to your class?
- What strategies do you use when students are having difficulty understanding a concept/skill?
- Do you explicitly state the 'learning intentions' to your students at the beginning of each class?
- How important is it to you that students enjoy being in your class?
- Complete this sentence: "I am passionate about teaching because..."

Again, these questions were either checklists, choosing from 1-4, or open-ended (in the form of "complete this sentence").





Once we had received responses from the teachers, we also compared the teacher survey results to those of the student surveys, as shown below.

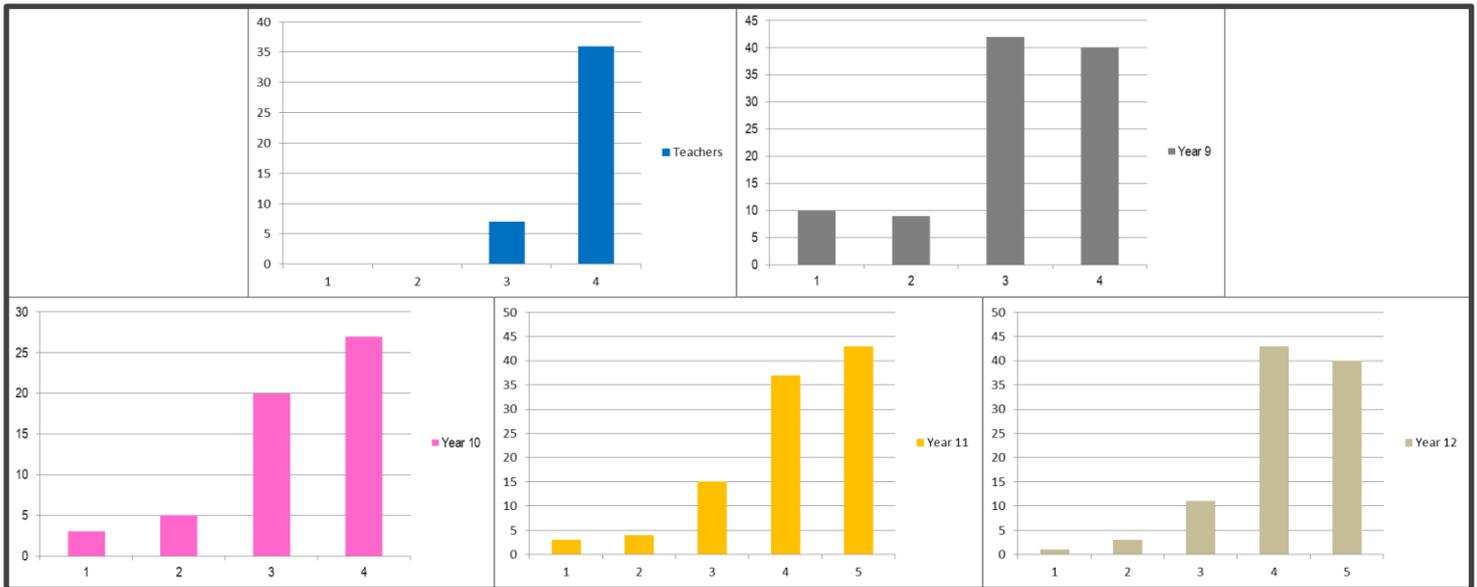


Fig.4 Comparison of teachers' and Year 9-12 students' responses to *'do you feel that having a positive relationship with your students / teachers is crucial to your ability to teach / learn effectively?'*, with '1' being 'no' and the highest number being 'yes'.

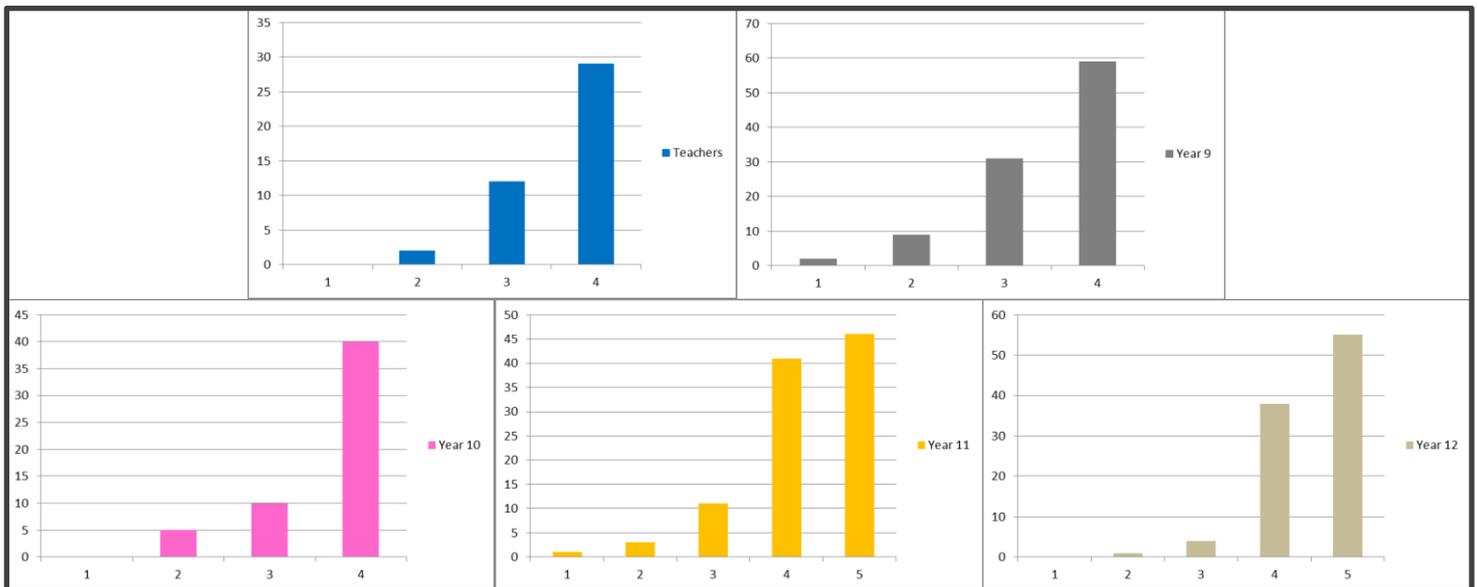


Fig.5 Comparison of teachers' and Year 9-12 students' responses to *'how important is it for a student to enjoy being in each class?'*, with '1' being 'not important at all' and the highest number being 'very important'.

The results of the surveys demonstrated to us that students felt they were unable to give feedback to their teachers and felt uncomfortable doing so. The survey data showed a weakness in feedback across all year levels, so we decided this was something we would take up as a team, advocate for and work towards finding ways to improve this. Hence, we designed our Professional Learning session around feedback.

356



STUDENTS
SURVEYED

91

ARE



LEARNERS

106 PREFER
COMPLETING
WORKSHEETS

KINAESTHETIC



A good teacher is...

PASSIONATE

DEDICATED
APPROACHABLE

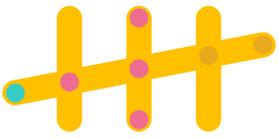
INTELLIGENT
IMPACTFUL

FUN



INSPIRATIONAL

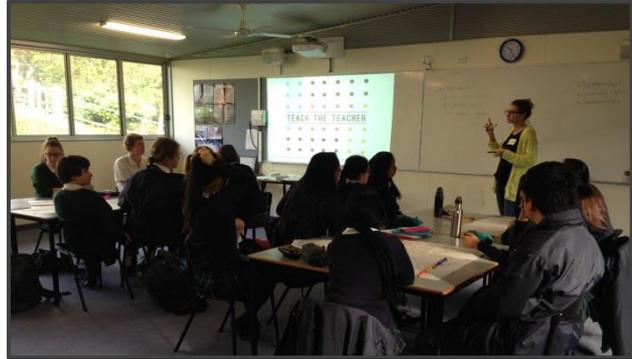
ENGAGING



OUR FIRST WORKSHOP

“In life, you are either a passenger or a pilot. It’s your choice.”

On the 2nd of June, Scoresby Secondary College students and VicSRC’s Emma Myers came to Mount Waverley Secondary College for our first *Teach the Teacher* workshop. We brainstormed what student voice and representation means to us, and looked at the strengths and weaknesses of our school so that we could develop the topics for our Professional Learning session further. We finalised our expected outcomes as well, to guide our future meetings and discussions. We also collaborated with Scoresby students to explore ways to increase teacher and student awareness of student voice, including the possibility of displaying quotes from the student and teacher surveys around the college for students and teachers to see.

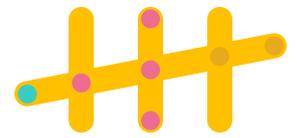


Certainly a daunting thought, we also gained confidence and skills that equipped us with the ability to run a successful Professional Learning session. We discovered the benefits of an ice-breaker, and thought about what we were planning to show teachers and how to convey our message. By demonstrating that students genuinely believe that their teachers want to help them and are approachable, we could show that we, as students, were not attacking our teachers. We planned what we needed to do in preparation for the Professional Learning session, allocated jobs and created a timeline.

We role-played the Professional Learning session ourselves, some representing teachers who were ‘bored’ or ‘uninterested’, allowing us to practice our responses to such examples. This enabled us to experience a Professional Learning session beforehand.



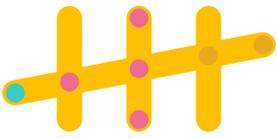
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSION 1



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Much preparation went into our first Professional Learning session. We had a meeting after school the week prior to the session in order to create a PowerPoint and plan for the activities. We created an outline of the session:

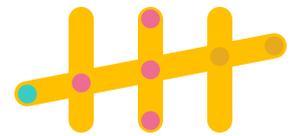
Before 3.30pm	Afternoon Tea <i>Cupcakes, lollies, biscuits, chips</i>
3.30 – 3.35pm	Intro & Icebreaker (Netania) <i>We introduced the team, welcomed everyone and thanked teachers for coming; as an icebreaker, we asked teachers to think about their favourite past teacher and why they considered them their favourite before sharing with the entire group</i>
3.35 – 3.40pm	What is TTT & what have we done (Mihika, Sanjna) <i>We explained our journey of surveys, quotes around the school, speaking at the staff meeting and attending Workshop 1 with Emma Myers and Scoresby Secondary College</i>
3.40 – 3.45pm	Key findings (Chester, Tim Li) <i>We continued with the results of the Year 9-12 surveys and compared them to the results of the teacher survey</i>
3.45 – 3.50pm	Activity 1: ‘How do you give feedback?’ (Shivani, Rose) <i>Teachers brainstormed in groups on butchers paper how teachers give students feedback and how students give teachers feedback, demonstrating to them that how students give teachers feedback is lacking, as we asked them to share with the entire group</i>
3.50 – 4.00pm	Activity 2: ‘Effect Size’ (Madu, Shivani) <i>Using Professor John Hattie’s research, we printed out every factor that can influence student learning outcomes, put it in an envelope and asked teachers to pick their top 5, before sharing this with the whole group; we then showed them the answers, and many of the teachers were surprised to find feedback was the most important factor; Madu had read Professor Hattie’s book, ‘Visible Learning’, so she gave a short speech about some of his studies and observations.</i>



4:00 – 4.05pm	Video 1: ‘What Every Student Wants their Teacher to Know’ (Netania) <i>We found videos online and picked the most poignant ones to show teachers</i>
4.05 – 4.10pm	Our Goal (Liz) <i>We presented our goal – to establish a college-wide approach to feedback using a feedback pro forma that all teachers can use for any of their classes from Year 7-12</i>
4.10 – 4.15pm	Activity 3: ‘Establishing an effective feedback form’ (Liz) <i>We wanted teachers’ input into this pro forma, so we asked them to write down some questions they would like to see in the pro forma on sticky notes and collected them</i>
4.15 – 4.20pm	Video 2: ‘Bill Gates: Teachers Need Real Feedback’ (Netania) <i>We showed a second video to end the session, only playing the first few minutes.</i>
4.20 – 4.25pm	Conclusion & ‘where to next’ (Netania, Chester) <i>We then thanked everyone for their participation and explained what we hoped to do in the coming weeks</i>
4.25 – 4.30pm	Feedback form (Tim Li) <i>We asked teachers to fill out a feedback form so that we could improve our Professional Learning session skills</i>



We presented to approximately 30 staff on the importance of feedback in the classroom, using data from the survey results and Professor John Hattie’s research on effect size, which demonstrated the importance of feedback, as well as various videos (<https://youtu.be/5nH6Pq93C1c> - ‘What Every Student Wants their Teacher to Know’ and <https://youtu.be/81Ub0SMxZQo> - ‘Bill Gates: Teachers Need Real Feedback’). Miss Dureau was fundamental to us using Professor Hattie’s research, telling us about his research in



education that demonstrated that feedback has the biggest effect size on students' learning. Thus, we incorporated this into our Professional Learning session as part of Activity 2.

As can be seen in the session outline above, Liz presented our goal of establishing a college-wide feedback pro forma that all teachers can use for any of their classes from Year 7 to 12, so we asked them to write down questions they would like in the pro forma.



Liz and the team also arranged cupcakes and food, with each teacher receiving a cupcake with their name and an adjective that starts with the same letter as their name, as in 'Wise Wade'. Liz also sorted out the table groups so that there was a mix of gender, faculty and from both the Junior and Senior Campus.



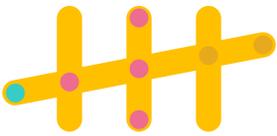
The feedback form looked like this:

Teach The Teacher PD Session

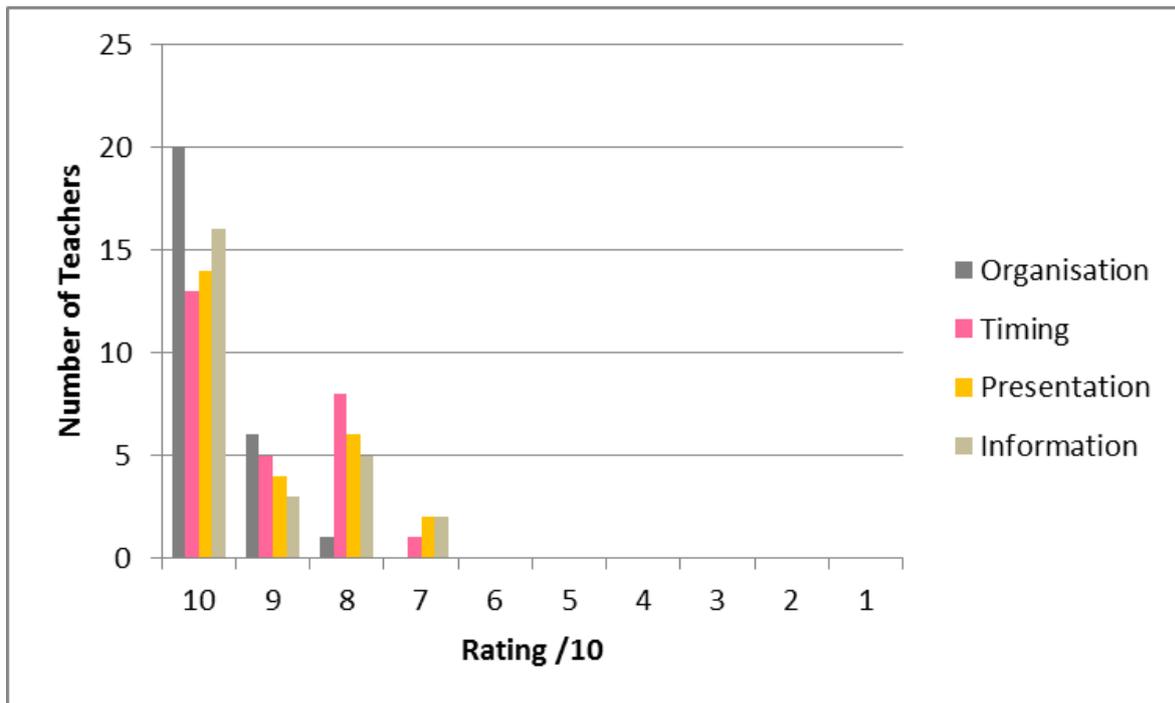
TIME FOR FEEDBACK!

- 1. ORGANISATION** /10
Cupcakes, posters, colour teams etc
- 2. TIMING** /10
Activities, speakers, entire session etc
- 3. PRESENTATION** /10
PPT, time table arrangement etc
- 4. INFORMATION** /10
Too much, too little information?
- 5. IMPROVEMENTS/ FEEDBACK**
What else would you like to see at our future TTT sessions?

Thank-you for completing our feedback form ! 🍌



As well as categorising the questions which teachers had requested, we collated the results from the feedback form. The results can be seen below:

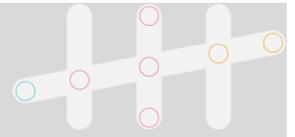


Feedback regarding the Professional Learning sessions was very positive, with teachers saying it was 'hard to fault', 'they felt important', they were 'very impressed with everything' and they'll be back for more. Teachers came up to us at the end with tears in their eyes. It was truly wonderful to know that as students, we can have a real influence on our teachers.

We are immensely proud of what we achieved, as both students and teachers have realised how important students are to education, not just as recipients of it, but as facilitators of change.



THE POWER OF FEEDBACK



What is feedback and how was it examined in the Professional Learning sessions?

“Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. But research has also shown that this impact can be either positive or negative. Although feedback is among the major influences, the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective.” – Professor John Hattie

Feedback has been identified as one of the top 10 influences on student learning. It has greater impact on students than their working environment, peers or even homework tasks.

Feedback in itself is important, but as Professor Hattie says, it's more important to focus on the type of feedback that is exchanged as well.

Feedback should be something useful to students, something very specific that addresses the issue obstructing their performance. It should not be a new instruction, but something that points out where the student has not been successful in carrying out the current instruction.

Our task was to show the audience, our teachers, where exactly they need to improve in terms of feedback.

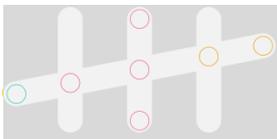
Some examples of the questions raised were:

- *Are test scores the only feedback your students receive? And then an answer sheet?*
- *Could such generalised Feedback have an impact on individual student performance?*
- *How much Feedback is given by the teachers, and how much of it is actually received by the students?*

We also focused on the issue of students having a chance to give feedback on their teachers, to communicate learning styles they preferred and the type of classroom environment they expected to learn in.

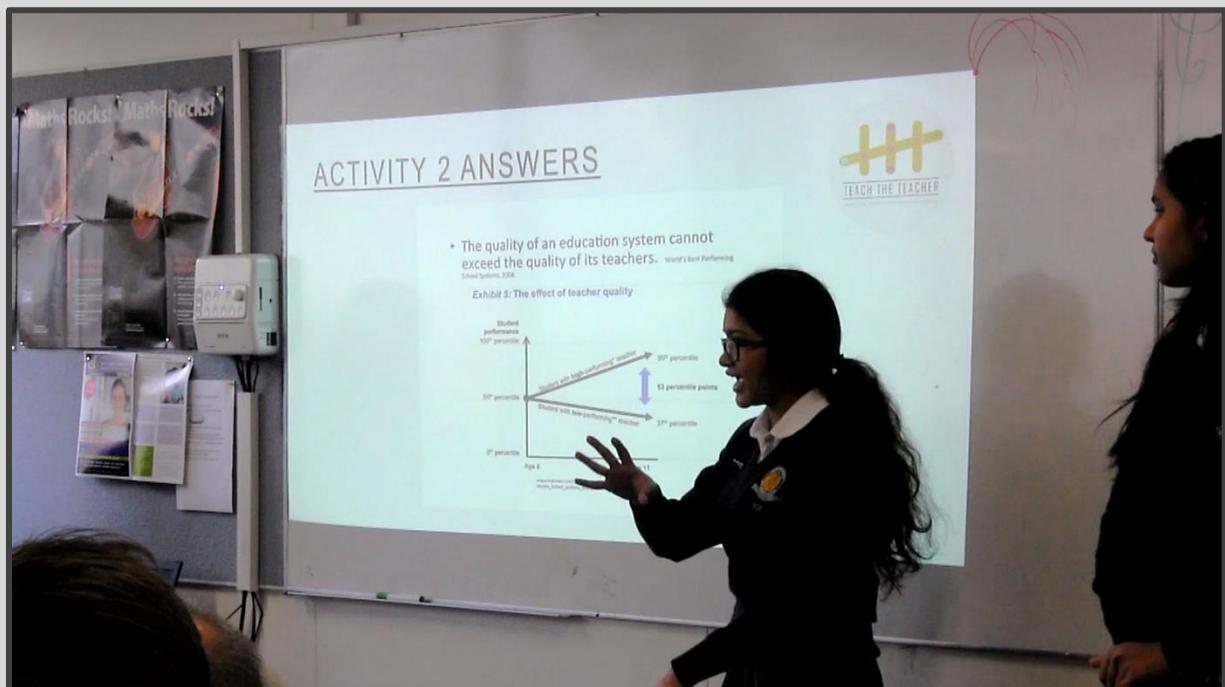
How exactly does feedback work?

Feedback is essential in the process of “identifying discrepancies between current and desired understanding” as stated in *‘The Power of Feedback’* by John Hattie and Helen Timperley. That is, feedback helps identify areas where students do not perform as well as they want to, or where they think they have grasped the concept but there are gaps in their understanding that they are not aware of.



How much influence do teachers really have on student learning?

Teachers, according to research, have the most impact on student learning, after the students themselves. Whereas it can be hard for teachers to help students who have no intention of learning, their ability to influence students was generally higher than any other factor, such as parents or the school environment.



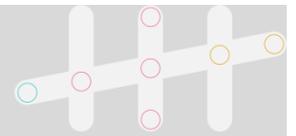
Fascinatingly, the socioeconomic variables of different subjects of the study that we referred to did not seem to have a significant impact on student learning at all. This reinforced our belief that the key factor in the learning equation is the teachers themselves.

Although the school is a building made of brick and cement, it is the people who give it life.

How did our surveys help?

Our surveys helped determine the general attitude of the students towards the project initiated by our team. We are, after all, representatives of the students, and it is on their behalf that we are trying to implement a platform that facilitates better student-teacher relationships.

The results from our surveys consolidated the fact that students feel that a healthy relationship with their teachers is crucial to their success, and even though they feel their teachers are there to help, they do not feel comfortable enough to approach them.



Our teacher surveys were also of great help, as they highlighted the passion teachers possess towards their job and their overwhelming desire to help their students. They also echoed back on the students' message about the need for healthy student-teacher relationships.

There was also some dissimilarity between the survey results of the students and the teachers. For example, teachers said they try to be approachable as possible, yet students feel they were not in many cases.

Teachers said they regularly change teaching styles; however, lots of students felt like the teachers' approaches did not suit their learning style.

The right intentions are present on both sides; however, the ultimate end result is not reached. How did this happen?

Our mission then became to find answers.

Were our survey results similar to the studies done by the wider world?

Yes they were! The students' responses regarding the definition of an excellent teacher were exactly the same as the three key identified features of a high end teacher: inspirational, impactful and passionate.

The students identified that being passionate about a subject is more important than mechanical things like being on time or being organised (although that is necessary). This also echoed back wider studies done by other people globally.

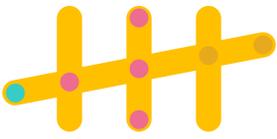
The similarities between our results and the results that we actively researched on the Internet and other resources supported our belief that the learning equation is universal. The biggest variable is the people who actually facilitated the learning, and no other physical factor has a significant impact on student learning.

How do we plan to further extend our study of teaching and feedback?

In Professor Hattie's words, "education will excel when teachers see through the minds of students and when students are taught to be their own teachers".

We intend to do exactly this. We will delve deeper into the concept of feedback: the quality, quantity, types of feedback and the general attitude surrounding feedback at our college will be our next areas of exploration.

Madu Balashanmugan



SPREADING THE WORD

“Education is not a passive process.”

Following the first Professional Learning session, we created a draft feedback pro forma:

 **TEACH THE TEACHER**
MOUNT WAVERLEY SECONDARY COLLEGE | IMPROVING STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS



SAMPLE FEEDBACK PRO FORMA

In class, I:
(You may tick as many responses as you like)

- Talk too much
- Give enough instruction
- Give you too many resources
- Need to provide more examples
- Make you feel valued
- Include enough technology
- Allow enough group work
- Let you give me feedback
- Give you enough feedback
- Treat you fairly
- Respect your opinion
- Motivate you to learn through my enthusiasm
- Make the learning intentions and success criteria clear for each lesson
- Other (please specify):

What can I do to improve the above?

What strategies / activities / instructions were most helpful in your learning?

Using a scale of 1 = most effective and 10 = least effective, rank the following in order of the most effective way to deliver content.

- Writing notes
- Reading the textbook
- Giving examples
- Using technology
- Using diagrams
- Providing hands-on activities
- Working in groups
- Repeating content
- Verbally presenting content
- Providing worksheets

What type(s) of feedback would be most helpful in your learning?

 **TEACH THE TEACHER**
MOUNT WAVERLEY SECONDARY COLLEGE | IMPROVING STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS



For the following questions, please tick the best response and provide an explanation where required.

	1	2	3	4
	Not			Very
	Very			

When you don't understand something, or when you have any concerns in the class, how comfortable do you feel coming to speak to me?

How effective do you find my method of teaching?
Explain your answer:

	1	2	3	4
	No			Yes

Do you understand the content?

Does my teaching style suit the way you learn?
How can I improve this / what should I continue doing?

Do I communicate my instructions clearly?
How can I improve this / what should I continue doing?

Do you think I treat everyone equally and that I am fair?
Why / why not?

Do you feel energized, motivated and eager to do work?
Why / why not?

Do you enjoy my class?
Why / why not?

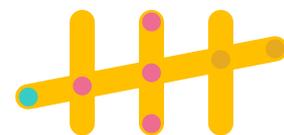
Describe a good teacher.

Led by Chester, we also created a video to document our journey. We showed this to Year 9 to 12 students at their respective Year Level Assemblies to share what we had achieved with the students.

Students have discussed the positive impact that we have had, saying that they “can see a huge improvement in the way teachers teach now”, “it has made everyone realise that it is possible for students to talk to teachers and give them feedback and it doesn’t have to be in a negative light” and “it’s nice for the teacher to hear the good stuff once in a while but constructive criticism is good too”.

Knowing that students care about what the *Teach the Teacher* team, as their representatives, has been doing has also demonstrated to us that participation and partnership with students is crucial to improving student connectedness to their peers, teachers, school and community. Collaboration is the key.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSION 2



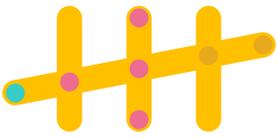
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.”

With news of a reporter from *The Age* wanting to visit the college and see the *Teach the Teacher* team in action, we decided to run a second Professional Learning session for around 20 teachers who had been absent from the first session.

We based the second Professional Learning session on the first one with some changes:

Wednesday, October 14, 2015

Before 3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30 – 3.35pm	Intro & Icebreaker (Netania)
3.35 – 3.40pm	What is TTT & what have we done (Mihika, Sanjna)
3.40 – 3.45pm	Key findings (Chester, Tim Li)
3.45 – 3.50pm	Activity 1: ‘How do you give feedback?’ (Shivani, Rose) How teachers give students feedback; how students give teachers feedback
3.50 – 4.05pm	Activity 2: ‘Effect Size’ (Madu, Shivani) Madu’s Speech on Professor John Hattie’s research
4.05 – 4.10pm	Video 1: ‘What Every Student Wants their Teacher to Know’ (Netania) TTT Video
4.10 – 4.15 pm	Our Goal (Liz) and Activity 3: ‘Establishing an effective feedback form’ (Liz)
4.15 – 4.20pm	Video 2: ‘Bill Gates: Teachers Need Real Feedback’ (Netania)
4.20 – 4.25pm	Conclusion & ‘where to next’ (Netania, Chester)
4.25 – 4.30pm	Feedback form (Tim Li)



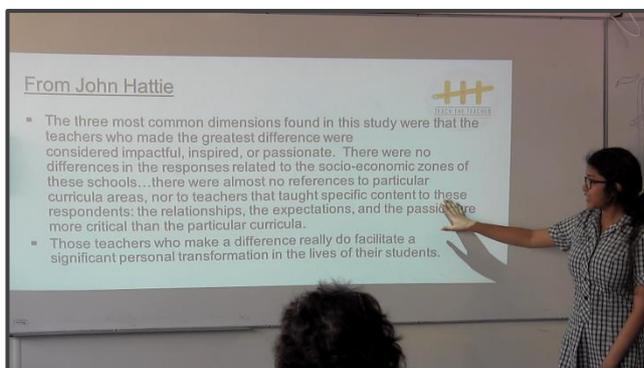
The first difference was Madu's expanded speech, as we had new evidence and support from Professor John Hattie. We also showed the *Teach the Teacher* video to the teachers to show them what had occurred in the first session, before moving on to giving the teachers our draft feedback pro forma, and asking them to give us their opinions on it. The teachers said that they were extremely happy with what we had produced. We had helpful, productive discussions with our teachers regarding certain aspects they believed we could improve, which we have taken into account. The feedback pro forma will be sent out in coming weeks.

Again, we also collated the data from the feedback teachers gave us regarding our second Professional Learning session itself, for which we received comments like "Fantastic! Very impressive!", "You were polite, mature and inspiring. Thoroughly enjoyable", and "Amazing!!! Well done TTT team, you are so inspiring, brave and engaging. Thanks so much!"



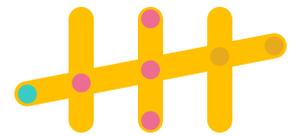
PROMOTING TEACH THE TEACHER

"Teachers who make a difference really do facilitate a significant personal transformation in the lives of their students."



Miss Dureau provided Madu, who had read Professor John Hattie's book (*Visible Learning*), with an opportunity to email Professor John Hattie himself. Madu told Professor Hattie of our vision and how we had used his research to translate that vision into reality. He wrote back a long, inspiring email, encouraging us to go further and saying, "to see the

action in the schools, and in your case led by students – wow, that is impressive. Your future as researchers, thinking as evaluators seems assured and this is among the most powerful ways of thinking".



He also demonstrated to us how we could take our theme of feedback deeper, looking specifically at “how much and the nature of feedback *received*, rather than how much is *given*”.

Professor Hattie said that, “the teachers who made the greatest difference were considered impactful, inspired, or passionate”. This was certainly what we had found with the student surveys and in the Professional Learning sessions, so knowing that researched backed up what we believed about teachers have the ability to change the world by making a difference in their students’ lives was truly empowering.

We were also fortunate to have an article about *Teach the Teacher* at Mount Waverley Secondary College published in *The Age* (article can also be found at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/tables-turned-students-are-teaching-the-teachers-20151030-gkn8va.html>).

Students teach their teachers

■ Kathy Evans

The setting is familiar but the juxtaposition is new. A student stands at the whiteboard explaining a set of statistics to her class, which is made up entirely of teachers.

The year 12 Mount Waverley Secondary College student has clearly learnt well over the years how to sweeten some hard truths. She and the rest of her team have made cupcakes for everyone, labelling each with a fun, personalised moniker.

And so Mesmerising MacLeod, Kooky Krezel, Bubbly Brighton and 13 other teachers sit at their desks munching appreciatively while digesting something slightly less palatable.

A survey of year 11 and 12 pupils by the school's student Teach the Teacher Committee revealed only 16 per cent felt all of their teachers were “very approachable” and only 15 per cent felt they all genuinely wanted to help them learn. On the plus side, 83.7 per cent of senior school teachers questioned felt having a good relationship with students was crucial.

Of course listening to stats being regurgitated can be deadly dull. A few continue talking among themselves as the team at times struggles to make their young voices heard. Both parties are learning what it feels like to be either side of the great divide.

It is this invisible, seemingly impermeable barrier that the Teach the Teacher Program, an initiative of the Victorian Student Representative Council, hopes to tackle. While there has been a paradigm shift in pedagogical techniques over the decades a sense of “us and them” lingers between teachers and students.

This professional development program, designed by students for teachers, aims to bridge the gap by exploring ways to improve learning styles, engagement with the curriculum and student-teacher relationships in a way that is non-threatening.

Despite the fact that teachers are far more approachable these days, they still wield enormous power. It can be hard for pupils to let a teacher know when their message is not getting through.

During today's 45-minute session, students invite teachers to

workshop different ways to ensure they know that pupils understand what is being taught. “This is a way to present information feedback to teachers without them becoming defensive,” says year 11 student Liz Chiem, a member of the VicSRC.

The students' research was inspired by the works of education guru John Hattie, whose seminal book, *Visible Learning*, reveals the single most effective way to improve education is to boost the interaction between teachers and pupils and to raise the quality of the feedback they get.

Professor Hattie, director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute, reached this conclusion through the synthesis of more than 800 meta-analyses encompassing the experiences of more than 80 million school-aged children across the English-speaking world. He identified 136 classroom interventions and listed them in order of effectiveness.

Forget class sizes, socio-economic background, homework and choice of school, what he found was that it is pupils' ability to assess their own performance and to discuss progress with the teacher that makes the most difference.

Committee member Madu Balashanmugan, 16, wrote to Professor Hattie in preparation for this session, and was delighted to receive a lengthy reply. “Imagine, he took the time to respond in depth,” she said.

But what do teachers think of this shift? Many already feel undervalued and face possible ignominy through websites such as RateMyTeachers.com – could this leave them feeling more undermined?

Assistant principal Jane Carter believes there is no “them and us” any more. “We all want the same thing.” While she acknowledges that some teachers may feel defensive at having their methods scrutinised, “it's hard to put a mirror up to yourself” – she adds: “I don't think we need to be afraid.”

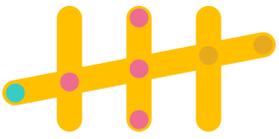
“Sometimes it is a bit confronting because it confirms or changes your perceived view. You squirm a bit in your chair,” says junior campus principal Ian MacLeod. “You can have an emotional response, which is that you feel they are having a go at you, but then you think, ‘maybe there is some truth to what they say.’”



We were privileged to win the Second Runner-up Award in the Group Action category of the 2015 *VicSRC Recognition Awards*, celebrating best practice in student voice, leadership and participation in Victoria.

We have also been privileged to be a part of VicSRC's *Teach the Teacher* videos.

Each of these celebrates our achievements this year, and we are so proud of what we have done to unlock the power and potential of student voice at Mount Waverley Secondary College.



WHAT HAVE WE GAINED?

“It’s amazing how one little spark in your mind can change the rest of your life.”



I have learnt so much about the hardships of teachers, the challenges they face, and the art of teaching.

I have also learnt so much about the behind-the-scenes work of educators, the research behind all the learning and teaching techniques implemented and the complex field of education research.

This project has been a wonderful experience, as I got to do what I've always wanted to do: researching and analysing. Conducting surveys, comparing results, analysing them, reading a wide variety of sources, examining concepts and drawing conclusions – all of this has been done by our team, and it was a vastly enjoyable experience for me. I am eager to launch further into the concepts behind our project, read a few more books and get to know more professionals in the field of education research.

To me, this year was a spectacular beginning. Next year will be even better, as we now have our ground work established, and we can investigate further into factors that have an impact on student learning, both in our college community and in the wider world.

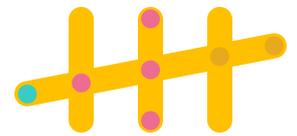
Madu Balashanmugan



Teach the Teacher has taught me so much about the education system and teacher practice that I didn't even know before I started the program.

The level of influence that a teacher has on a student’s education is rivalled only by the student’s own influence. This leads to a substantial amount of importance placed upon the practice of teachers and how the education system can support students and teachers to maximize the potential of both parties. So in that respect, *Teach the Teacher* taught me to never underestimate the value of teachers and in fact, it's a major point of contention, to improve the quality or even the efficacy of teaching in Victoria and hopefully even more broadly.

But through *Teach the Teacher* I have learned so much more about the world and leadership, because it's a delicate topic to approach teachers and suddenly open a conversation about their methods of teaching, without confronting or criticizing them. So I learnt a great deal of patience and how to diplomatically approach the topic without intimidating the teachers. It was vital that if we were going to go through with this project, it would have to be fair and



two sided. The teachers and students needed to work together, to discuss improvements and issues within teacher practice and how changing those things could improve the state of education in our state. I have learnt what it means to have an open discussion that is not just about one person or group projecting their ideas or values, but is truly about gathering the opinions of many people and coming up with solutions that are realistic and fair.

We surveyed teachers, students from across our college, so our data was not just conceptual or abstract ideas that the *Teach the Teacher* team thought of. We acquired our data and worked from there, and we strived to solve issues based on that data. I have learnt that students have the most incredible power to bring about change.

Everything we did, taught me a little bit more, from problem solving to managing stress, from organization to team work. *Teach the Teacher* has been the most amazing, insightful and heartwarming journey I've been on, in my entire, admittedly short, life span. I look forward to continuing our work next year and for future students to help improve our education system.

Shivani Thiyagarajah



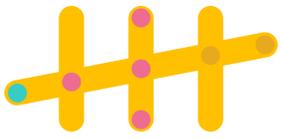
Every step we took in our *Teach the Teacher* journey this year has given me more than just a voice.

It's given me understanding, knowledge and skills. Our focus this year was on the exchange of feedback. Throughout our journey, I learnt that feedback is important. But what's more important is the purpose and type of feedback. I learnt that the purpose of feedback is to get a person from where they are now to where they should be; otherwise it's not helpful and not constructive – and potentially destructive.

Moreover, being involved in *Teach the Teacher* has shown me that student voice is powerful and when it is unlocked and amplified, there are endless possibilities. But what is even more powerful is a strong relationship between students and teachers. There is a lot more potential when students and teachers work together to achieve a common goal.

As a student leader, *Teach the Teacher* has given me many invaluable skills. From our workshops with *VicSRC* and *Scoresby Secondary College*, I gained extensive teamwork and communication skills. From the Professional Learning sessions, I grew confident in conversing with my teachers. And from the program as a whole, I was able to strengthen my purpose and aim as a student leader: to advocate for and act on student voice.

Chester Ngan



MAKING A LASTING IMPACT

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

We hope to build on what we have achieved this year, with a new team of Year 11 and 12 students continuing every year into the future as an executive team, working together with all students, not just student leaders, to represent student voice. Advocating for student voice and representation is an incredibly powerful tool that, when combined with collaboration between teachers and students, we can use to achieve previously unimagined progress.

We envision *Teach the Teacher* continuing as a forum for engaging the school community and amplifying student voice to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Whether this means continuing with our 2015 theme of feedback and becoming more specific or expanding into other areas of improvement, the 2015 *Teach the Teacher* team is simply the beginning of change in the college. We hope that we have created many ripples of change, so that future Year 11 and 12 students have the opportunity to help the college make progress and influence and inspire others.

We hope that in the future, Year 7 and 8 students at the Junior Campus are represented by the *Teach the Teacher* team as well, and that all students are able to attend meetings that the *Teach the Teacher* Committee runs, so that student voice is truly represented.

Teach the Teacher at Mount Waverley Secondary College in 2015 has truly embodied the truth that, ‘youth are not just leaders of tomorrow, but most importantly, the young leaders of today.’

We wish all future *Teach the Teacher* teams at Mount Waverley Secondary College and at any other school running the *Teach the Teacher* program the very best.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, the *Teach the Teacher* team, would like to acknowledge several people who have played a part in our journey this year:

- Miss Hayley Dureau (Leader of Programs and Student Leadership)
- Emma Myers (*VicSRC* Project Officer) and the *VicSRC*
- All the staff who attended our Professional Learning sessions and who have supported us along the way
- And the students at Scoresby Secondary College

