INTO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

THE IGNITE CAMP PROGRAMME AT ABERFOYLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

Aberfoyle Park High School is one of three South Australian Metropolitan High Schools funded by the State Government to deliver the "IGNITE" programme, which is for gifted and talented students who have been identified by ACER testing.

The three core features of this programme are:

- A compacted curriculum – completing year 8 to 10 over 2 years (Though this has moved towards extension, especially in English and S&E)
- Subject acceleration where required
- Enrichment & extension opportunities

The IGNITE Field Study programme was developed to fulfil this last aim.

We sought to develop an **EXCITING, INTERESTING & CHALLENGING** programme for our IGNITE students with two of the field trips held in popular SA tourist destinations, and the third in our nation's capital.

A **'WORKING CAMP'** with a **'SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE'** that leads to **SELF DISCOVERY** and **SELF AWARENESS**

We seek to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** in the lives of our students by undertaking a range of activities in the 'GREAT OUTDOORS' designed to **CHALLENGE, BUILD CONFIDENCE, EXPLORE NEW IDEAS, INSPIRE THOUGHT & ACHIEVE SUCCESS**

OUR AIMS

- **To DEVELOP** the whole individual:

MIND	Content – Worksheets, Debates, Puzzles, Thinking Skills, Blooms, Gardiners MI
BODY	Physical – Climb Mt Mary & Mt Ohlssen Bagge, Orienteering, Walks, Beach Games, 10-Pin Bowling, Laser Games
SPIRIT	Meditate, Reflect, Solitude, Peace –Smoking Ceremony conducted by a local aboriginal man, Talks around the Campfire, Sunrise on Mt Mary, Stargazing, Emotions of the Australian War Memorial.

- **To EXCITE the SENSES**

SIGHT	So much of our world is visual that we forget to appreciate the subtlety and beauty of it – Golden glow on the rocks at sunrise, Colours of the evening sky at sunsets, Twinkling stars, Rainbow colours of the clay pit, Spotting wildlife camouflaged in the surrounding countryside
SOUND	Waves, Night Sounds, Silence in the Cave, Crackling Wood as it burns, Wind through the trees, Frogs in the water
SMELL	Sea, Fresh Rain, Dust, Earth, Frost, Curry Bush, Eucalypt, Wildflowers, Sea-lion Colony, Dead Animals
TOUCH	Ancient Rocks, Fossils, Shells, Animals at the Wildlife Park, Touch Tables, Bark on Tree,
TASTE	Snow, Rain, Salt in the Air, Dust, Bush Tucker

- **To COMPLEMENT** the existing camp structure at APHS:
  Outdoor Education
  Year 8 Get to Know You Aquatics
  Year 9 Bushwalking and Adventure
  Year 10/11 Ski Trip
  Music Trip
  Language Trips
  World Challenge
  Exchange Programmes

- **To ENRICH** student learning – thinking "outside the square" – to solve problems and develop strategies to adapt & cope with change
  - look at the 'Big Picture' and their role in matters that affect our world
  - city students becoming aware of rural issues
  - students looking beyond their backyard
  - looking at how our past affects our present and our future

- **To EXTEND** both the subject matter and the individual through their interaction with the natural world. Getting in touch with nature and the environment and appreciating the interconnections.

- **To ENHANCE** and **BROADEN** experiences
  By applying knowledge developed in the classroom to real life situations
  By using personal experience in the field as a basis for future learning
  To make connections between the classroom and the wider world
  To see relevance of learning
  Open mind to new ideas and different ways of seeing the world
  Question prejudices
  Confront issues

- **To MAINTAIN** the camp programme as an **INTEGRAL** part of the IGNITE curriculum in the 4 core areas:
  S&E

ENGLISH
SCIENCE
MATHS

- **To INCORPORATE** other learning areas where possible eg ART (Ab. Rock art, Art Gallery), LOTE (Visit embassies), OUTDOOR ED, MUSIC and DRAMA (Terry Coulthard), and place a significant emphasis on PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- **To DEVELOP** such intangible, immeasurable, incidental qualities within the individual.
  Many of these are encompassed in Art Costa's 'Habits of Mind'. These include:
  Improving organisational skills
  Living together harmoniously
  Developing sensitivity to the world around them
  Working cooperatively / working as a team
  Showing tolerance, empathy and understanding
  Developing independence
  Appreciating the talents, abilities, skills of others
  Solving problems / thinking flexibly
  Showing leadership
  Communicating accurately and clearly
  Showing initiative
  Developing character / toughening up
  Showing persistence
  Improve resilience / bouncing back
  Completing tasks
  Taking responsible risks
  Facing challenges both mental and physical
  Facing fears
  Managing their impulsivity / taking time to think
  Dealing with conflict
  Being adaptable / embracing change
  Taking on increased responsibility & increased trust
  Developing wisdom, insight and compassion
  Making a difference
  Finding humour
  Giving of ones best
  Having fun
  Learning from experience

- **To EMPHASISE** the three core values of APHS:
  RESPECT
  CARE & COMPASSION
  HONESTY

- **To DEVELOP 'ESPRIT DE CORPS'.**
  At APHS students and their HG teacher stay together for the 5 years of secondary education.

A strong bond is developed within this group and is strengthened by these shared camp experiences.
For many, the week on camp is the highlight of their school year. A memory that will last a lifetime, Something personal and unique.
Some aspects of the camps have had a profound, positive and lasting effect on some students. The development of a strong group identity and a feeling of belonging has been an important product of these opportunities.

Most importantly a bond is developed between the student and the teacher – A personal relationship based on mutual respect, that is humanizing, through your discussions, sharing opinions, ideas and experiences. Staff and students are more in tune and in touch with one another. We are 'BRIDGING THE GAP' and this has huge benefits back in the classroom.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Dreams! – Cross curriculum unit linking in with Monarto Open Range Zoo
Service to the Community – Africa, Asia

KANGAROO ISLAND

Kangaroo Island is the third largest island off mainland Australia, after Tasmania and Melville Island. Approximately 110 km south-west of Adelaide, it is just 15 km across Backstairs Passage from Cape Jervis. The population is only 4500, but the island caters for over 140,000 tourists annually

KI was first mapped separately by Matthew Flinders and the French navigator Nicholas Baudin and we ask students to think about the consequences of Baudin claiming KI for France.

In July 1836 the island became the site of the first settlement in South Australia by free Europeans who came to settle and farm. Prior to that there had been indigenous Australians, and later sealers, whalers and escapees from convict settlements.

Most of the first settlers left for mainland SA after just six months, due to a lack of permanent water on the island. Some families remained. A hundred years later only the eastern third of the island had been settled. But towards the end of World War II the South Australian and the Commonwealth governments established a Soldier Settlers Scheme, to create farms on the harsh plateau in the centre and towards the western end of KI.

Unfortunately the Lands Department advised the planting of high eostrogen, subterranean Yarloop clover, but this caused infertility in ewes, a condition called *dystokia*, which reduced lambing to about 5%. Many farmers suffered greatly as a result and the government was eventually sued for damages!
These events have very much steered the course of KI's recent history, and form the basis of the students' study. They examine the sustainability of traditional farming – feed crops, barley, cattle, and sheep for wool and meat and contrast between these and the diversification that Islanders are currently making.

KI has the world's only remaining pure strain of Ligurian bees, and Clifford's Honey Farm exports Ligurian queen bees all over the world. Emu Ridge is one of the few remaining eucalyptus distilleries in Australia. Other industries include making cheeses from sheep's milk, marron or yabby farming, vineyards and wineries, the Rare Breeds farm and plantations of Tasmanian blue gums and radiata pine planted as a part of carbon offset trading..

Students look at environmental issues – platypus breed on the island but are very hard to find! Koalas were introduced in the 1920's and are now in plague proportions, literally eating themselves to death. This provokes some very lively discussions. Similarly the island is teeming with half a million Tammar wallabies. Farmers can get a licence to shoot wallabies but not koalas, yet the koala is doing far more serious and permanent damage.

No visitor to KI would choose to miss Seal Bay. Here the students learn about the habitat of Australian Sea-Lions and their behaviour patterns. Unfortunately the numbers of sealions are slowly but steadily declining. Students also get the opportunity to see Australian and New Zealand fur seals at Cape du Coeudic on the south western tip of the island.

Students inspect and compare lighthouses at opposite ends of the island – Cape Willoughby in the east and Cape Borda in the north-west. They also compare accessibility of these structures, and the different methods used to deliver stores to the lighthouse keepers up to 150 years ago. As an English exercise students write poetry based on themes of the sea – survival, lighthouses and short stories.

At Remarkable Rocks students draw and write about rock formations which resemble animals. Here creativity is encouraged, with some fascinating results.

A step back in time also takes place when students visit the Old Wisanger School.

Evening activities include a compass bearing exercise using a map of KI, a quiz about the island and debates on contentious issues, such as "Is it appropriate for all KI waste to be shipped to mainland SA?", "Given the high number of tourists, should rate payers be footing the bill for local infrastructure?" and "Should Islanders have to pay the River Murray levy?" We were also fortunate that the bus-driver was the son of one of the original soldier settlers, and he happily spoke about life in the Parndana settler’s camp. This tied in perfectly with the visit to the War Settlers Museum next morning.

The science focus is on issues associated with coastal ecology and the adaptation of plant species in a marine environment.

Along with this highlight are physical challenges: trying to ski down sand dunes at Little Sahara, bushwalking in search of the elusive platypus and an afternoon strolling along Vivonne Bay – recently voted Australia's most pristine beach. Students love the adventure caving at Kelly Hill Caves, an activity which really challenges those with a tendency for claustrophobia!

CANBERRA

In Canberra the first focus is the history of Federalism and the choice of Canberra as the site for the National Capital.

We visit the National Exhibition, Mount Ainslie and the Telstra Tower on Black Mountain so that students can appreciate the layout of the city as designed by Walter Burley-Griffin.

The National Exhibition also looks at the history of the area, and this is supplemented by a guided tour through Blundell's Cottage, to appreciate the harsh realities encountered by the early settlers.

Systems of Government is our next core focus and it is no surprise that the Houses of Parliament feature prominently in our programme. At Old Parliament House students sit in the Lower Chamber and learn about the procedures followed in a sitting of parliament. They also hear about prominent figures and events in Australia's parliamentary history – in particular, Edmund Barton, John Curtin, Edith Cowan, and the dismissal of the Whitlam Govt.

At New Parliament House students are frequently fortunate to observe a sitting, and may get to meet and talk with their local Federal Member of Parliament. In either case they see and learn more about how both houses operate. They discover how important design features of the building reflect Australian identity.

A highlight for students is the opportunity to dress up and actively participate in a mock parliamentary debate in the Education Room. They learn to appreciate the ceremony of parliament and follow the processes involved in discussing and passing a bill.

In addition, we look at aspects of Australia's legal system when we visit the High Court.

No trip to Canberra would be complete without a visit to the Australian War Memorial. As a lead up, we walk the students along Anzac Parade, which features a number of memorials to Australia's participation in wars. Here the Art teacher takes the opportunity to focus on principles of the design of memorials. At the War Memorial students enjoy the Discovery Room, where they have the opportunity to dress up in period costume and role play life in the trenches or in the hospital tent.

Our focus is on World War I, but students have the opportunity to visit other galleries and to experience the Sound and Light shows about the Japanese midget submarine and G for George – the Lancaster Bomber.

One of the most moving moments occurs when some students are able to place a poppy alongside the names of their great-grandfather or relative on the Wall of Remembrance. On the recent trip to Canberra many students placed poppies along side the name of James Martin – thought to be the youngest ANZAC and the subject of Anthony Hill's 'The Soldier Boy' which students study prior to the trip.

Many students these days do not experience occasions of solemnity and ritual. The Pool of Reflection with the Eternal Flame and The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Hall of Memory provides one such opportunity. Students are able to reflect on the lives of the fallen and on the sacrifices made 'by the few, for the many'. All students are extremely moved at the

sight of the Changing of the Guard ceremony involving the Catafalque Party who guard the tomb and honour the dead.

We examine the shaping of our Australian identity by incorporating visits to the National Art Gallery, the National Library, the Portrait Gallery, the National Museum, the Royal Australian Mint, the National Archives and the National Film and Sound Archives. We also take a tour around the embassies of other countries, visiting when possible those representing the languages studied by students at APHS.

Another popular site is the Australian Institute of Sport, where students meet and watch elite athletes training in their chosen events and then have the opportunity to participate in a coaching session (wrestling, soccer, volleyball, basketball) conducted by one of these sports men or women. Here the students thoroughly enjoy testing their skills in the activity room.

The initial catalyst for the Canberra tour was participating in National Science Week. Due to heavy bookings we found it easier not to go during that week! We do, however, maintain a spotlight on science by visits to the CSIRO where students participate in hands-on experiments relating to contemporary issues (Climate Change, Genetic Engineering, World Food Shortage), and Questacon, where students work their way through a series of galleries with a science focus.

A highlight is always the half day at the NASA Deep Space Tracking Station at Tidbinbilla, where Glen Nagel's highly energetic and inspiring presentation has even prompted some of our students to pursue later studies in aeronautical engineering. Students are able to view moon rock, track the movements of the Mars Explorer and progress of Viking, and link to astronauts in the space station.

To supplement the concept of team building and enhancing group interaction we book students into night time activities such as 10 pin bowling at Belconnen and Zone 3 Laser games.

THE FLINDERS RANGES

This mountain range is the largest in SA, extending from Crystal Brook, about 200 km north of Adelaide, to points roughly 500 km further north. We stay in the central Flinders at a location called Angorichina, which is halfway between Parachilna and Blinman. Angorichina was originally built in 1927 as a sanitarium for soldiers, sailors and airmen recovering from tuberculosis.

The remoteness of this area is a real challenge for some students. No mobile phone contact! Electricity is generated on site, and goes off when the caretaker goes to bed. There is no mains water supply.

We ask our students to walk in the footsteps of the Adnyamathanha people – the local Aboriginal people, the explorers and the first European settlers.
On the first day we usually arrive after sunset, so next morning, while it is still dark, we drag the students out of bed and climb Mt. Mary (not to be confused with St. Mary's Peak). Sitting on a mountain waiting for the sun to rise is a magic experience – all the students comment on just how amazing it is.

As the sun rises, the panorama lights up, and students are often awestruck by the majesty of their surroundings, as expressed in the poetic and reflective writing they produce later.

Another experience which has a profound effect on many is lying outside at night looking at the stars. Anyone who has experienced the Australian outback night sky will know what I'm talking about. For many these are significant spiritual experiences.

Most of the first day is spent with Terry Coulthard, an Adnyamathanha, whose family has set up an eco-cultural tourist resort (Iga Warta) of international standard further north. Terry talks about Aboriginal burial customs, performs the smoking ceremony and discusses the giving of totems. He also leads students on an exploratory walk indicating sources of bush tucker and native medicines.

At night there are songs and stories around the campfire. Terry points out the importance of this tradition, and challenges students to think about the time before the white man came. The Adnyamathanha believe the Flinders Ranges are the centre of the universe. He explains that when white men first arrived they were well received, because the aborigines thought these white people were the spirits of their ancestors returning home.

After the arrival of Europeans, settlers moved sheep onto the lands, effectively driving off local wildlife. Hungry aborigines, who don't believe in ownership, helped themselves to a few sheep, and were arrested under white man law for stealing. It is not surprising that there is a clash of cultures. There is also much discussion about the stolen generation and about the effect that missionaries had on inland Australia.

The Flinders provide ample physical challenges for students. At times it can be very hot, but at night can be sub-zero. Students do several quite long walks and also climb Mt Ohlssen-Bagge, some 940 metres above sea level. This is an ideal location for them to see inside Wilpena Pound.

The rocks of the Flinders Ranges are estimated to be one thousand million years, some of the oldest known rocks on Earth. Students follow a geological pathway through Brachina Gorge, noting the different layers and differing angles on the rocks. They also look at fossils of stromatolites. This area is famous for fossilized burrowing worms, trilobites and archeocyathas. Students also postulate how pieces of meteorite have landed in the Flinders. Through story-boards they discover that the meteorite actually hit Lake Acraman, on Eyre Peninsula, 300 km to the west.

As a day of contrasts students are taken further north, firstly to Beltana (almost a ghost town) and then the Leigh Creek coalmines. They leave the pristine mountains for the dusty western plains. The Leigh Creek mines are like a moonscape. Students are challenged to think about the environmental effects of open-cut mining, necessitated by society's endless need for energy.

Another environmental issue for students is to consider sustainability. They study the Angorichina Hostel, considering factors such as power supply, water supply and waste disposal. Students also become aware of Operation Bounceback – a government initiative aimed at eradicating pests such as foxes, rabbits, goats, camels, oleanders and prickly pear, more

correctly known as the wheel cactus. They see first hand the effects of the pear and oleanders, especially in the creeks around Angorichina.

Apart from the Terry Coulthard evening, other night activities are a compass bearing task based on a Flinders map, a night hike with star-gazing and listening to birdcalls, and a fairly gruelling night orienteering exercise.

In all, the students experience physical challenges, develop spiritual awareness and gain environmental knowledge. They move out of their comfort zone and learn about other places, other peoples, the effect of the coming of Europeans and the efforts being made to overcome the associated invasion by non-indigenous plants and animals.

CONCLUSION

In our opinion planning is the key to a successful and rewarding experience students. You need a team of staff who are committed and energetic, who operate well together and who can be relied upon.

The field trips need to be linked to the core curriculum, with focal points clearly defined in the planning stage. You need input and follow-up in the designated learning areas directly related to the camp.

We have found from experience that it is significantly better to plan and organize your own itinerary rather than have outside agencies do it for you because:

a) you can fit more in
b) it becomes more relevant
c) it is almost certainly more cohesive
d) it works out more economical
e) it enables you to develop your focal points and link them to your curriculum

There is a definite need for reconnaissance as part of your planning for the following reasons:

a) suitability of locations, accommodation layout and availability of facilities
b) timing of activities, distances and travel times
c) developing and setting appropriate activities
d) safety considerations and contingency plans
e) special needs
f) local contacts and public relations.

Evaluation is very important as it provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences and personal journey.
It also allows us leaders to review the camp experience, to examine those elements that were successful and to identify elements that require change or improvement.

We have collected an extensive range of resources on all of our venues including local histories, stories, poetry, photographs, maps, works on natural ecology and the environment, magazine and newspaper articles, fact sheets and DVD’s. We have generated camp booklets for student information and to record notes and journals.

On camp we maintain a degree of flexibility to cater for the unexpected and to make the most of opportunities as they arise. Often the most memorable moments arise from the unplanned. Spontaneity, fluidity, creativity and originality are factors that result in our programme continuing to evolve, always with the ultimate aim of providing experiences worthwhile for all.

I hope this provides a stimulus for you and your school to do likewise!

Our closing thoughts from a colleague…..

"For all the years I went to school, and all the lessons I sat through, the only things I actually remember are the camps I went on!"

Lindsay INGHAM and Diane MUDIE
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