



# **GESTA NON VERBA**

**ISSUE 1 – 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014**

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## **Principal's Report**

In working towards and being successful in gaining the position of Principal of James Ruse Agricultural High School, I spent many hours reflecting on myself, the school and the future of James Ruse Agricultural High School. I was asked in preparation for my interview "How different will James Ruse be after five years of your leadership?" I would like to share my answer with you and hope that together (with our entire community) we can devise a truly spectacular shared vision for JRAHS.

"How different will Ruse be after 5 years of your leadership?"

- JRAHS will be a world leader in the delivery of a holistic education for gifted learners.

Presently the highest performing school in the State and perhaps Australia on external testing data, in 5 years the bar would be set even higher. Academically we would have moved further in front of other high achieving schools and be seen as a feeder school to the very best universities in Australia and the world.

Our students would continue to be academically successful and also be known for their creativity and innovation across all fields. Our students will be great communicators and leaders who collaborate to achieve team goals. We will be known as creators of knowledge not just users of it. Our curriculum will continue to diversify and thrive.

- All (staff, students and parents) will flourish as lifelong learners who follow their passions and become resourceful and active citizens.
- James Ruse will continue to value Agriculture but will have transferred our love of the Farm and Agriculture into the achievement of a "green school". Our completed gymnasium and state of the art science labs will all promote sustainable practices. Our infrastructure will reflect all the best learning environment of a 21<sup>st</sup> century school.
- Our students will still be at the centre of all decision making and we will see evidence of improved teaching and learning practices in every classroom or online community. Our teachers will be showcased as leaders of gifted education and their expertise sought on the global stage.
- Our community will be emotionally intelligent and staff, student and parent wellbeing, will be our focus. Committed to service and culturally sensitive, all members of our community will be included and seek to make a positive difference.
- Our school culture will be dynamic and vibrant, fostering collective capacity and systemic innovation - we will be seen as a leader of change across all fronts.
- We would be seen as a success story of the implementation of local decision making - our transition to more autonomy will have improved all areas of school life.

These are my thoughts and dreams but what is most important is that we create a vision for the future that is shared and meets our combined goals. I am so honoured to have been given this opportunity to lead this fabulous school and its community.

The ex-student, parent and staff community are a vital part of our shared vision becoming a reality. Building our community and forging stronger links across the years will benefit all.

I wish to thank all the kind students and ex-students, parents and staff that have offered me their congratulations and ask for your ongoing support as we move into an exciting future.

Megan Connors  
Principal



## Position Available

### President of the James Ruse Union

After six years of service, Paul Harris (1979) moved on from the role of President to allow some "new blood" into the position. We thank Paul for his wonderful contribution.

The President or Co-President, if two people wished to share the position, involves liaising with school and ex-student community, promoting our networks and writing a small piece for Gesta Non Verba each quarter. Student and Ex-student voice is so important to the values of our school.

If you are interested in taking on the position, please contact [megan.connors@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:megan.connors@det.nsw.edu.au)

### **2013 was a year of transition at Ruse – here are some of our highlights:**

Mr Bob Alder retired after 23 years of service to our school and particularly our talented Mathematics students. Ms Joanne McMillan also retired at the end of 2013. Ms McMillan was an exceptional Visual Arts teacher, welfare coordinator and most recently our Head Teacher Gifted.

In 2013 we also saw the retirement of three very special staff members and ex-parents - Mrs Beverly Ferguson, Mrs Effie Lee and Mrs Cindy Chong.

Mrs Ferguson, our Canteen Manager, retired after 23 years of service to the staff, students and parents of James Ruse. Mrs Lee, our Uniform Shop Manager, has spent many years serving the students, families and staff of James Ruse. Mrs Chong's friendly smile was often the first to meet new students and families to JRAHS. Mrs Chong served in our Uniform Shop. Few parents have given our school as much as these three wonderful people have.

In 2013 we welcomed our new Head Teacher Mathematics, Mrs Heather Weber and Mrs Tali Chew also joined the Mathematics faculty.

2013 was another year of fabulous successes at James Ruse:

Five students represented Mathematics and Informatics as part of the Australian teams in the International Olympiads. Jonathan Zheng and Rachel Wong achieved Silver and Gold medals respectively at the IMO in Columbia. Ray Li, Ishraq Huda and Joshua Lau achieved a Silver and two Bronze medals respectively at the IIO which was held in Brisbane.

The 2013 HSC cohort once again achieved fabulous success with 6 students received the highest ATAR of 99.95: Gary Xu, Niroshan Jeyakumar, Steven Luu , Michael Hong, Sumedh Jayanti and David Hu. Three students achieved 1<sup>st</sup> in the NSW in their subject area; Sing Young Chen in Biology, Dana Song in Agriculture and Radman Zhang in Mathematics. It is lovely to see the Mullavey Shield return home.

Students achieved state rankings across a large number of subjects including Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry, Drama, Mathematics, Mathematics Extension 1, Mathematics Extension 2, Physics and Visual Arts. Two students, Ben Chen and Elaine Dong, had their work selected for Art Express. Two students have been asked to participate in the Drama Showcase Onstage - Robyn Lu and Jack Zhong. Keith Yang and Eugene Wang were also nominated for Encore. Rarely have we seen such success across a range of subjects.

James Ruse again topped the honours list in the HSC with 826 credit marks of 90 or above in 2013.

We achieved significant success in sport, with Erny Tsao and Sarah Tan represented Australia on a number of occasions on the International Table Tennis Circuit. Mudith Jayasakera achieved a Silver Medal in the National Pole Vault Championships and two students, Radman Zhang and William Liang, represented Australia in The Maldives as part of the Australian Badminton team. Jessica Guo, incredibly talented in Athletics, achieved first place in regional and state Cross Country.

Jumana Abdu, wrote a moving story of a young Syrian child, to win the What Matter's Writing Competition. Five students were selected to attend the Shout Out - student voice program - after producing 30 second videos on the change needed in Education. Students represented JRAHS in the Model United Nations, Evatt Model UN, NSW Youth Parliament and the Philosophon. Our team at the Ascham Philosophon was selected to compete in Perth in 2014 and Brendan Ma won the medal for the best contributor to discussion. Our debating teams once again achieved the highest levels in all divisions and Brendan Ma was selected to become part of the Western Sydney Regional Debating Team.

Social Justice continued to thrive at James Ruse. Emily Mo (12) received the Marie Bashir Peace award for her fabulous implementation of Ruse's Cloud 9 positive psychology and her contribution to Social Justice. Eight students were awarded a Commendation for their contribution to community service and Fiona Ma, Thanya Sritharan and Madeline La, all of Year 12, were invited to NSW Government House to receive their awards. High Resolves, our student leadership program, continued to flourish with the Year 10 team completing Project ME (bringing happiness to the Parramatta city centre) and all Year 9 classes completing successful school action projects.

Late in 2012, our newly formed Robotics club, led by Mrs Sheila Pooviah, were successful in achieving the honour of representing Australian in St Louis, USA, in the 2013 Robotics

World Championships. This exciting competition was a highlight for all students that attended.

Tanya Han (11) was successful in applying for a NAB grant to initiate a recycling program at school. Rural Youth, Cadets, Interact and Duke of Edinburgh continued to thrive. Combined with the SRC and Cadets, thousands of dollars were raised for charities.

We once again showcased our many programs to visitors from overseas and rural NSW - Principals from Singapore, teachers and students from Yanco Agricultural High School and Peel High School.

In 2013, we conducted a number of surveys to evaluate programs offered at JRAHS. After an extensive language survey, the Curriculum Committee, decided to offer Latin as an elective in Year 8. The Curriculum Committee have also offered a Global Education, Stage 5 course, to be offered outside the timetable to interested students in Year 9 and 10. Year 9 completed our first year of PASS (Physical Activity and Sport Studies) and will move into Preliminary PDHPE in 2014 (while in Year 10).

We are now two-thirds of the way through our three year school plan and have made considerable progress on our targets to increase creativity, collaboration and communication. We have successfully programmed for the introduction of the national curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and History in 2014. Collaborative technologies via the intranet, edmodo and google docs have increased and in 2014 we will implement a Bring Your Own Device policy across the whole school to better meet the technology needs of all students. Our focus on student and staff welfare, remains a priority and our camp program continue to thrive in 2013. Our building enhancement program continues, with renovation and rejuvenation occurring in Cameron Block and the Library. Plans have been drawn for our new Science labs and we hope to begin building early in Term 1, 2014. The multiple learning space / gymnasium is very close to starting, with architects developing plans at present.

In 2013 we trialed the new "Local Schools, Local Decisions" model for the Department of Education. This has given us more decision making authority in terms of our staffing, resource management and governance.

Looking forward to another wonderful year in 2014.

Megan Connors  
Principal

## Communicating and Connecting with the Ex-student community.

As times change and the size of our ex-student database has grown we have moved to new avenues to connect with each other.

Our website <http://union.jamesruse.nsw.edu.au/home>

The website is the most important source of all information. If you subscribe to the website you will receive notifications of any updates.



Our Facebook Page: James Ruse Union

Please "like" our page on Facebook for more immediate requests / posts.

Email lists: our email address [union@jamesruse.nsw.edu.au](mailto:union@jamesruse.nsw.edu.au)

With over 4000 email addresses it is a very slow process to send emails. Unfortunately our database does not have information for specific year groups - therefore a message to one year needs to be emailed to the whole database.

To advertise reunions etc the best method is to email us and we will post on our website (which will send a message to all subscribers) and on facebook (will share with all that have liked our page).

### Congratulations to Mrs Karen Johnston and Mr Eddie Woo

Mrs Karen Johnston, a much loved member of staff, has achieved the promotion position of Head Teacher of Agriculture at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. We wish Karen well and look forward to enhanced links with Hurlstone.

Congratulations also to Eddie Woo, not only a highly valued member of staff, technological leader and superb teacher, but also a former Rusian himself; Eddie has achieved the promotion position of Head Teacher Mathematics at Cherrybrook Technology High School. We wish Eddie wonderful successes at CTHS and thank him for his valuable contribution to setting up the Union website and Facebook page.

## **Leaders of the Future: Order of Australian Youth Awards**

I was fortunate enough to attend a ceremony at Government House in the Botanic Gardens. The ceremony was to present the Order of Australia Youth Awards to outstanding young leaders who have worked tirelessly for the community. Three of our year 12 students, Fiona Ma, Thanya Sritharan and Madeleine La were awarded this prestigious prize for their work in their local community. The Governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir, presented these awards and invited all of the students, their families and school representatives to an afternoon tea. It was a lovely ceremony with the afternoon tea on the balcony overlooking the harbour. Congratulations to Fiona, Thanya and Madeleine, our most recent graduates.



**Annetta St Louis**  
**Deputy Principal**

## Save the Date:

Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup>, Friday May 30<sup>th</sup> and Saturday May 31st 2014

James Ruse Musical

The Gypsy Baron

Produced and Directed by Mr Alan Best

This is Alan's 40<sup>th</sup> Musical and we wish to make the three performances a wonderful celebration of his career and many successes. We would like to see record numbers of ex-students in attendance - please get together with friends and come along. Tickets will be available later in the year.



## Talented Year 9 Student

Below is an article written by Jumaana Abdu of Year 9, 2013. With this article, Jumaana won the 2013 What Matters writing competition. She has been highly active in our social justice committee and IF (Ideas Forum). Jumaana is a second generation Russian.

### Where Are The Children? By Jumaana Abdu Year 9 2013

An ABC foreign correspondent asked a young Syrian boy if he was scared of the air strikes constantly bombarding his home town, Aleppo.

"I removed my heart with my own hands and threw it away. I don't want this heart. I have become used to not having a heart at all," said the boy as a thunderous rumble echoed in the distance. "Do you hear the sounds of the planes?"

These are the words of eleven-year-old Ibrahim. It's shocking at first to think that these words were spoken by a child, at an age of supposed innocence and blissful ignorance. But if you know that only a week before saying this, Ibrahim saw his best friend die in a ballistic missile attack, then it comes as no surprise.

This boy, Ibrahim, is not a child. His youthful essence disappeared with his home, his education and his safety. And the appalling reality is that Ibrahim isn't the only victim of a stolen childhood. Around the world, thousands of young people see their home destroyed and their families and friends suffering from some sickness, or worse, simply because they can't find enough food to eat.

And we watch from a distance, commenting on how unfortunate the little orphans on our HD, flat screen TV are. We pity them, saying how sad it is that these people are so isolated from the rest of the world. But isn't it the Western mass that is isolated? Isn't it the millions of middle class men and women that are shut out from the real world?

But what is the real world? It is the Somalian mother that had to leave her crying baby on the side of a dirt road so that she could have the strength to take her other five or so children to a place where they can have maybe one meal a day. It is the children in Cambodia who can't even play a simple game of soccer outside without the fear of maybe losing a leg due to an unexploded landmine. It is Ibrahim, who draws victims, soldiers and blood on spare pieces of paper instead of flowers and soccer balls.

But we turn our faces away from the real world. Ask an average citizen in a developed country what first comes to their mind when you say 'reality' and they will probably say something like 'TV shows'.

And in a country that has the privilege of, not only, educational resources for every child but also selective schools for the gifted and talented, you would think that we would be able to put our heads together and do something. Do something about the reality that is staring us in the face, and that we so blindly ignore.

This is our world, and it is the responsibility of those more fortunate to give boys like Ibrahim a childhood. It is our responsibility to help that Somalian mother who arrived at her destination with only two of her children having survived the journey. It is our responsibility to give those kids in Cambodia a place to live and play as the children they deserve the chance to be.

When we open up the newspaper and see a picture of our favourite sports team on the front page, we ask ourselves, "How are they going this season?"

But when we flip to the back page and we see a picture of the ruins in Aleppo, Syria, there is one vital question we are forgetting to ask; "Where are the children?"

Because, despite the numerous boys and girls present, there are no children left.

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### **Reunion 1959-1963**

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October we had over 25 ex Ruse students come to school for a visit. They had organised a reunion and were very keen to see the physical changes in the school. Year 10 students acted as guides for these visitors and were impressive with their warm manner and interesting stories.

In 1959, James Ruse only went to year 11 and it was so good to hear that these visitors had such fond memories of Ruse. They also told many stories about getting the cane for small misdemeanours. The tour of the school was to last one hour but it was heart-warming to see our visitors here at 5 pm still telling stories of their school life.

**Annetta St Louis**  
**Deputy Principal**



**Ms St Louis in the middle of the class of 1963**



**Year 10 students, 2013, presenting to our ex-student group.**

## **Social Justice @ James Ruse Agricultural High School**



In 2013, the Social Justice Committee wanted more autonomy to firstly, choose their local and/or global issues and secondly, to facilitate campaigns that they believed would inspire their peers to both listen and act. It was an interesting journey with the students leading the way and there was much learnt in terms of social justice and leadership. Here are a few of our highlights –

### R U MAD?

The R U Making a Difference Campaign was a successful whole-school program. Each student was given a laminated business card that asked them the question R U MAD? The other side provided a list of what students could be actively completing every day in order to make a difference in the lives of others. All students now keep these in their wallets to remind them about being active citizens. The R U MAD? Award was also created and this allowed students in each roll call class to nominate their peers for great work they were completing in the community and then the school acknowledged these efforts at our Sport's Assemblies.

### LGBT CAMPAIGN in conjunction with UNICEF

The LGBT Campaign led by Renee Zeng and Brittany Xu (Year 12) was fantastic. It was all about raising awareness and letting staff and students know that JR is an environment free from LGBT discrimination. The students provided two information sessions in the Lecture Theatre with the aim to raise awareness on how LGBT youth are targeted as victims of bullying and also provide information on some of the issues that LGBT youth face. Students were presented with well-researched and up-to-date information that hopefully led to them make informed decisions and have sophisticated discussions on the prevalent and important issues surrounding LGBT people. All students who attended the information sessions were provided with a beautiful rainbow ribbon and encouraged to sign the Homophobic Language Pledge which aimed to reduce the homophobic language used in our school. We thank the girls for the legacy they have created.

### RED CROSS BAKE SALE

This really was the bake sale to end all bake sales! Students wanted to demonstrate their flair and creativity in baking while also supporting the Red Cross and their programs and services that help some of the most vulnerable people in Australia and Overseas. The students had three categories, Aesthetics, Taste and Cupcakes and as the photos reveal, it was quite a wonderful day for those who ate and those who baked! The Social Justice Committee managed to raise just over \$900.00 for the Red Cross which was absolutely fantastic.

### IDEAS FORUM

The Ideas Forum made a fabulous appearance in 2013 and was bigger and better than ever. IF is a GAT turned Social Justice event that allows students to speak about issues which are important to both their hearts and minds. Facilitated by Richard Tong (Year 11), we had an entire day of passionate speeches and panels that demonstrated the complex emotional intelligence that all Ruse students have. Topics included 'Empowering Women and Youth Apathy', 'For the Love of Learning', 'Upgrade Please' and 'Asylum Seekers'. The panels represented a cross-section of society and all social justice groups were asked to create questions that would challenge students to think differently. It was an amazing day that truly demonstrated JR as a school that promotes curiosity, innovation and deep thinking.

### NAIDOC WEEK

Now an annual event, our NAIDOC Week assembly was once again a celebration of our Indigenous peoples. It honoured the Dreaming of our Dharug Nation and also the achievements of young Indigenous peoples for the year. Ms Connors spoke about her time in Central Australia (2012) and how wonderful it was for our students to learn from the Plenty Pathways boys. Other activities throughout the week included face painting, chalk drawing of Indigenous symbols from the Mutujulu Community and bracelet making. The 2013 NAIDOC Week demonstrated how far JR students had progressed in terms of their acknowledgement and understanding of the need to celebrate our Indigenous peoples.

### BUSHFIRE RELIEF EFFORT

The traumatising fires that ravaged Western Sydney made the Social Justice Committee act at a rapid pace. The team wanted to create positivity and be resourceful for these vulnerable people in their time of need. A positivity mural was created so that students of Winmalee High School could be uplifted by our hopes and dreams for their courage. A stationery drive was also held where Year 12 were asked to donate all of their unwanted stationery resources after they completed the HSC and these were sent to schools in the area. Interact also led a brilliant JR and Hurlstone Agricultural High

School Music Concert where all funds raised were donated to the relief effort. There was a beautiful sense of compassion and spirit demonstrated by the James Ruse students in this time of need.

#### WEAR IT PURPLE CAMPAIGN in conjunction with UNICEF

Students ran the extremely popular 'Wear It Purple Campaign' which was a follow-up to our LGBT 'True Colours Campaign'. All students were asked to wear a purple item to show their support for LGBT staff, students and community members. The students also sold rainbow cupcakes and painted coloured canvases for others to write positive and supportive messages on. The money raised will be spent on LGBT resources for the school library.

#### SELECTIVE SCHOOLS SOCIAL JUSTICE NETWORK

In Term I, students from James Ruse, Girraween and North Sydney Girls High School organised the first ever Social Justice Schools Conference. The focus of the conference was 'Empathy – In their Shoes' which challenged over 100 participants to walk in others' shoes. The Honourable Linda Burney and John Bush (High Resolves) were our inspiring keynote speakers. Students participated in workshops led by Joy Smithers (Hope for Cambodian Children), a team from the Salvation Army and myself who focused on Augusto Boal's techniques used in community theatre. It was an extremely successful initiative that taught students about effective communication, collaboration, creativity and informed them about the working cross-culturally.

#### GATE CONFERENCE

In August, I took Richard Tong and Jayne Kwon (Year 11) and Danica Hui (Year 11 – NSGHS) to the GATE Conference and we presented on the JR Social Justice Model focusing on HOW important the development of and drive for social justice in our school has been for our GAT learners. The presentation which ran for 90minutes was received well and we have since made contact with other schools who want us to present to their staff and get our program working in their educational environments.

In conclusion, it was another successful year for the Social Justice Program. We tackled different issues and educated the school in creative and innovative ways. It is important to realise that all staff and students sit on a spectrum when it comes to social justice – some are only willing to listen, others listen and acknowledge, a few listen, acknowledge and respect and more people are beginning to act. It is inspiring and uplifting to know that other schools want to achieve what we have and are seeking our advice in regards to how they should approach it in their own educative communities.

Social Justice in 2014 will have some new faces! It will be led with a team approach which will simply allow the program to flourish even further. Adrienne Steele will lead the Social Justice Committee who have decided that they need a balance between complete autonomy and teacher control. Jenny Burgess will lead the High Resolves Program and will also work in conjunction with Kate Boatswain to organise and run our Indigenous Immersion Experience. Trent Wilson will provide an enrichment experience in the form of the Global Education Course to interested students in Stage 5. It will be an exciting and invigorating program that will continue to grow the emotional intelligence of our GAT students.

Amy Murphy  
Social Justice Coordinator

(Amy is presently on maternity leave until October 2014 having just given birth to a beautiful baby girl, Indiana.)

## Upcoming Events:

Reunion      Class of 1969 - started 1964.

50 year reunion

Getting together at the Kiama Leagues Club.

February 8 2014

Book early, partners welcome.

All enquiries to:

Noel West: [nwest@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nwest@bigpond.net.au)

Ross Burns: 0416 259 898 for accommodation details

David Forsyth: 0432 909 476

John Mullavey: [jandaagencies@netspace.net.au](mailto:jandaagencies@netspace.net.au)

Reunion      Class of 1994

20 year reunion

Date: Saturday 13 September 2014

Venue: Exchange Hotel, Beattie St, Balmain

Time: 7pm-midnight

For further details, contact Christine Daniel (nee Anandarajah) at

[cdaniel@trinity.nsw.edu.au](mailto:cdaniel@trinity.nsw.edu.au)

### Upcoming Editions of *Gesta Non Verba*

**We would love to include news, information, pictures and stories from our ex-student community. Reports on reunions would be wonderful.**

**Also if you would like to advertise an event or visit the school please let us know.**

**Please send along reports to be included in *Gesta Non Verba* to [union@jamesruse.nsw.edu.au](mailto:union@jamesruse.nsw.edu.au)**