

Taste the difference

Ms Jo Fischer *, Wesley College

Abstract

Victoria has a diverse population made up people from more than 200 countries, speaking over 150 languages, celebrating around 100 faiths. In excess of 40% of the Victorian population was born in another country or have a parent born overseas. This diversity includes more than 83,700 students from overseas who are studying in Victoria. Victoria exemplifies the diversity of the Australian population. Because we are not mono-cultural, we need to be aware of the importance of transmitting an international or multi-cultural education. The principles of internationalism must be integrated into the wider administrative and academic structures of schools. We need to be teaching an international curriculum with values and attitudes underpinning our pedagogy and practice that confirm an international and multi-cultural audience. All teaching and non-teaching staff needs to appreciate and practise internationalism. Internationalism needs to be accountable feature of schools at all levels including administrative structures, education related and extra-curricular activities as well as institutional services.

One of the ways to promote internationalism within the wider community is through the extra-curricular activities. The celebration of International week has become an annual event and gives students and staff the opportunity to 'taste the difference', to celebrate this rich diversity so characteristic of Victoria and clearly reflected in our own student body. It gives us the chance to share this diversity and enjoy the differences. However, these activities are more than simply a celebration, they also gives us the chance to understand difference, to nurture our commitment to social justice and spirituality, to affirm the personal worth and potential of all people irrespective of ethnic and cultural origins.

We have developed a successful model for integrating the principles of international education into the structure of the school, for heightening awareness of and celebrating the diversity of our community.