

HANDS ON LEARNING

Lending a hand
and feeling good

News

Quarterly

December 2020



Save the Children®



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Season's Greetings

What a year. More than anything else, 2020 has highlighted the power of connectedness, feeling like you belong, getting involved in something purposeful, something with meaning, and giving back. The very things that promote positive mental health and help us to thrive. And the fundamental elements of Hands on Learning (HoL).

Congratulations to all the students participating this year - we celebrate your achievements and your resilience. Thank you to every artisan-teacher, school leader and volunteer for your commitment and investment. A very sincere thank you to our valued philanthropic supporters for making our support possible.

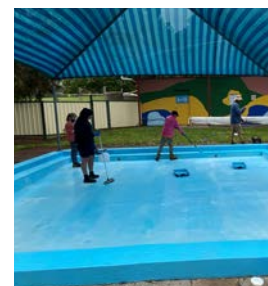
Wishing you and your family a wonderful 2021.



Russell Kerr OAM

Finally our Founder Russell Kerr received his Medal of the Order of Australia for his outstanding service and exceptional achievement. Originally awarded in January, Russell and his family celebrated with

the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria, in November. Most importantly, Russell's 21 years of dedication to the students and staff involved in Hands on Learning is recognised at the highest level.



Our cover

Connection to community on steroids. Congratulations to the energetic Hawkesdale P-12 College team on their rejuvenation of the Hawkesdale Swimming Pool. The water level of the big pool was dropped, acid washed and gurnied, and the edges refreshed with a coat of paint, while the entire toddler pool sparkles after a new blue coat of paint. A great way for the local community to welcome summer.

Latest podcasts

Don't miss our latest episodes including Mat Bowtell, 2019 HoL conference keynote speaker, and Ken Radley and Alex Strauch from the Meri River School in Warrnabool.



Mat Bowtell



Merri River School

Farewell

As 2020 closes we farewell and celebrate the contributions of the following artisan-teachers and thank them for their work and commitment to the young people they have supported over the years:

ALLISON ALBERT & KIRSTEN MORLEY, Somerville Secondary College

TOM BOYLE, Murray High School

GLENN BRADFORD, Lowood State High School

HELEN BROOKS, Echuca College

ANTHONY DARIO & TIMOTHY ROBERTS, Narre Warren South P-12 College

KEVIN DUNLEAVY, Benalla P-12 College

AARON GREEN & JONATHAN LOVERIDGE, Noble Park Secondary College

JOHN HOOGERBRUGGE, St Francis Xavier College, Berwick

DANIEL KADAOUI, Wodonga Middle Years College

JOSH MOSLEY, Euroa Secondary College and Euroa Primary School

BRUCE MILLER, Brauer College

DAVID POWER, McClelland College

JOE REMMAN, Elisabeth Murdoch College

DAVE TEITZEL & NICOLE WILLIAMS, Laidley State High School

JORDAN WANEFALFA, Swan Hill North Primary School

CAROL WOODMAN, Wedderburn P-12 College

New schools

Despite COVID-19 and extended school shutdowns, we were thrilled to welcome several new partner schools in Term 4 including:

Shailer Park State High School, Qld



Narooma High School, NSW



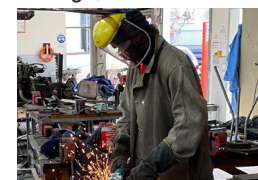
Taylors Lakes Secondary College, Vic



Rowville Secondary College, Vic



Ararat Secondary College, Vic



BORN TO BELONG

We all have a fundamental human need to belong.

As 2020 draws to a close the importance of people and connectedness is obvious. In this issue, psychologist Dr Kelly-Ann Allen highlights how a positive sense of school belonging provides benefits that extend well into adulthood, and Resilience NSW Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons talks about what really matters in life with a spotlight on belonging, valuing every member of the team, and community.



Shane Fitzsimmons, Commissioner Resilience NSW

Belonging goes to the core for all of us. It really matters. Deep down we all want to belong to something.

"When I joined the bush fire brigade at fifteen, and even though I followed my dad into the organization, I met up with a whole different peer group and I found a real sense of belonging. We were all experiencing and experimenting with different things at the same time. We had different backgrounds, and we all had different skills and experiences. Some were good at reading, some were good

at operating pumps and chainsaws, and some were just good at thinking through options to solve complex situations.

I found a real sense of belonging, but it was more than belonging, it was an ability to achieve, to succeed, an ability to connect with others, and rely on each other knowing that individually you might not get everything done, but boy if you pull together with a few others ...together we can actually get this done ...and ultimately I ended up staying with the Rural Fire Service for over 35 years."

According to Shane, not everyone is good at the same thing, not everyone is good with a hammer, but there is incredible power in teamwork.

"Everyone having a sense of purpose and a part in the end result.. there is something special about building or creating something that is special. It is the clear visual that marks progress."

Shane is the NSW Australian of the Year 2021. Hear more of his take on never giving up on anybody, and how much community matters, during his recent chat with HoL Founder Russell

Kerr, and Save the Children's Head of School Education Engagement, Cam Wiseman in our latest DOING Podcast.



@ShaneFitzAU



Dr Kelly-Ann Allen, Monash University

School belonging plays a key role in school success, yet one in three Australian secondary school students do not feel a sense of belonging at school. Even more troubling is that the figures have worsened over the last decade (OECD, 2019).

Dr Kelly-Ann Allen is an educational and developmental psychologist whose research focuses on belonging and its translation into education contexts. Kelly-Ann is the codirector and founder of the International Belonging Research Laboratory.

According to Kelly-Ann, [the Belonging Lab](#) is a research collaborative driven by the desire to raise awareness about the science of belonging and translate it to everyday gains.

"Right now, we are working on an international school belonging project. We know that belonging is important for the mental and physical health of students as well as their wellbeing, but now we want to find out what we can do about it. My research team is partnering with the Melbourne Children's Research Institute's Australian Temperament Project, which is Australia's oldest longitudinal database. Here we get to track the long-term outcomes of belonging over three generations. We now know, through our preliminary analysis, that a sense of belonging to school at 15 years of age can predict mental health outcomes well into adulthood – 15 years later."

You can read much more about the science of belonging in Kelly-Ann's book ['The Psychology of Belonging'](#).



@drkellyallen





☞ *My son Logan absolutely loves Hands on Learning and the day before he's also a lot happier and comes home from school a lot happier.*

"Hands on Learning has had a huge impact on Logan. He was very socially distant at his old school. Growing up Logan didn't involve himself in sport or social interaction much. He started at Kuranjang Secondary College two years ago and it took him a while to fit into school. Logan doesn't find it as easy to make friends. He suffers from severe anxiety. Hands on Learning came along, and it boosted his self-esteem dramatically. Logan became a different child. Sitting in the classroom he finds it tough to put pen to paper and has difficulty concentrating.

You can see the difference in him now. Every week he looks forward to going to HoL, being able to learn with his hands in a way that works for him. It is being able to see the end result, to see what you have achieved, that is really important. Logan is a much happier child within himself.

Bob and Bec, the HoL staff, have been absolutely fantastic. It has just been such a positive experience for Logan. There are a lot of children out there with underlying mental health issues. If it works, it works. Getting the chance to learn hands on, doing something positive, looking back at a job you have done, it is so good for a child's self-esteem. HoL helps with mental health, self-esteem and learning to socialise and work as a team.

Not everyone is made to sit in a classroom, to go to university or to be a doctor. But everyone needs to know how to work in a team, and every child deserves to have the chance to feel good about themselves at school."

Damien Fooks, parent



SAFETY, SECURITY AND STABILITY A place to belong

Over in Melbourne's north west, the team at Kuranjang Secondary College used ingenuity and hard work to create their HoL sanctuary.

Sleepers were upcycled into bench tops, and big caster wheels added to a statement table built so it can be moved readily, and used as a trolley too. Lots of energy has also gone into creating an area for meals, with donated kitchen cabinets, a fridge and sink, along with repainting the shed inside and out. Tool shadow boards add order, and PPE gear is front and centre.

And the hard work hasn't stopped at the HoL shed. Bench seats and stumps have been removed and Bunnings helped supply materials for the new garden beds that have added colour to the school grounds.



SHARING WINS TOGETHER

People to belong to

After spending 2020 as part of the HoL crew at Kerang Technical High School, Teesha is certain she wants to be a builder, and is now determined to stay at school to gain more skills and qualifications to lock in an apprenticeship.



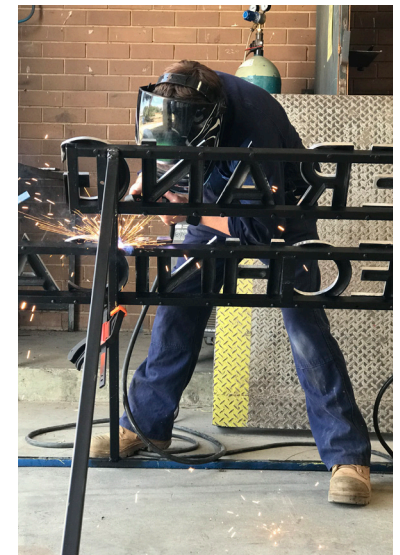
It is the job-ready collaboration, problem solving and leadership skills that Year 10 student Teesha feels she has developed most in Hands on Learning.

When she started, Teesha lacked self-confidence, especially to contribute in a group, and to voice her ideas. According to artisan-teacher Danida Ferres, Teesha has moved forward in leaps and bounds, project managing the transformation of an historic, but very dilapidated school sign, into a prominent feature of the school entrance garden.

"Being in HoL with all boys scared me a little at first, but I've learnt how to interact and not work on my own, but as part of a team. I've been able to put across my ideas and they listened to me and I got to have my say," Teesha said.

"Problem solving and OH+S were huge parts of the job. We decided to cut the original sign into three pieces and then we had to figure out all the measurements, wearing full PPE gear and glasses when we were grinding layers of the old paint off. We also had to consider that the sign would be installed in a public place off the ground so we had to work out how it could be secured safely and with no sharp edges.

I love that the learning is hands on, it is practical, and in a team. I don't really like being stuck sitting all day listening. I would much rather be doing. My confidence has gone way up. Being part of a team with lots of males helped me understand what it's going to be like in the construction industry. There's always going to be holes and bumps in any project, but having the chance to be a leader this year gives me the confidence to know I can do it and I can hold my own. And when I walk past the sign it makes me feel really good to look at it and say we did that."





PURPOSE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Real things to do

“Sorell is really proud of the work HoL has done this year, both for the quality of the projects the students have completed, and how the program has kept so many students connected with our school during such a hard and unusual year. Without this program, I honestly believe some of our students would have completely disengaged from learning. Now, some of them have enrolled in our VET Construction course for next year and are facing an optimistic future,”
Jenny Cowling, Principal



Get a load of the energy at the Sorell School in Tasmania during 2020. Three new HoL signs are now proudly displayed inside and outside the HoL hut. Inside the team has expanded their tool area and built a room to house their kitchen, lining the walls, replumbing the sink, and cutting a window to their work area. Outside the pizza oven and a fence around the HoL precinct has been completed .

Lending a hand across the school has also been big this year. The team have maintained the school bikes, installed two pine picnic tables, and built a hardwood table to be auctioned off as a fundraiser by the school association. They have also worked on multiple shelving projects, built a shed for the school farm's goat, and repaired a boat in the primary school sandpit.

CONNECTEDNESS, COMMUNITY AND A MEANINGFUL LIFE

A chance to give back



Big thanks to local firefighting volunteers

Koroit and District Primary School, Victoria

After the bushfires the HoL team from Koroit and District Primary School wanted to recognise the work of local fire volunteers. "Normally when they get back, they're hot and want to sit outside, have a drink and de-brief, but they had to sit on the grass. We came up with the idea of a table and the brigade thought it would be perfect. Bunnings stepped in donating all the materials and the kids had a great time building the table and presenting it to the volunteers," artisan-teacher Leon Carey said. "Everyone has changed their focus to COVID but our fire brigades are still here for us."



A win win at Lake Albacutya

Rainbow P-12 College, Victoria

Lake Albacutya adjoins Wyperfeld National Park, in far North West Victoria. It is a popular camping spot, but during lockdown campsites started to creep further into the Park. Rainbow P-12's HoL crew teamed up with Parks Victoria to install bollards keeping visitors within the campground to protect the park. "The kids had a ball and every one of them could tell you the recipe for cement. They not only engaged with the project, but the purpose. It was such a win win – good project and the kids just loved doing it and making a difference," artisan-teacher Mal Smith said.



Food and hope for those doing it tough

Cosgrove High School, Tasmania

Apple crumble, along with potato, cauliflower and pea korma curry are just two of the dishes Cosgrove High's Café of the Grove created this year by transforming rescued fresh food into ready-to-eat nutritious meals. The café team partners with local charity Loaves and Fishes Tasmania who distribute the meals to those doing it tough. According to artisan-teacher Kellie Adams, "The students also donated meals to school families, enjoying the work and feeling very proud of themselves for giving back to our community."



EMPOWERING STUDENTS WITH THE SKILLS TO THRIVE

Students and parents talk outcomes

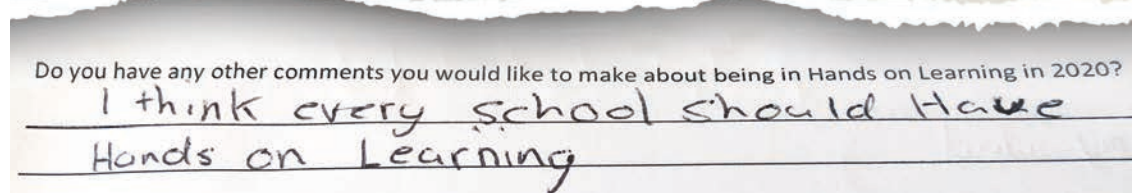
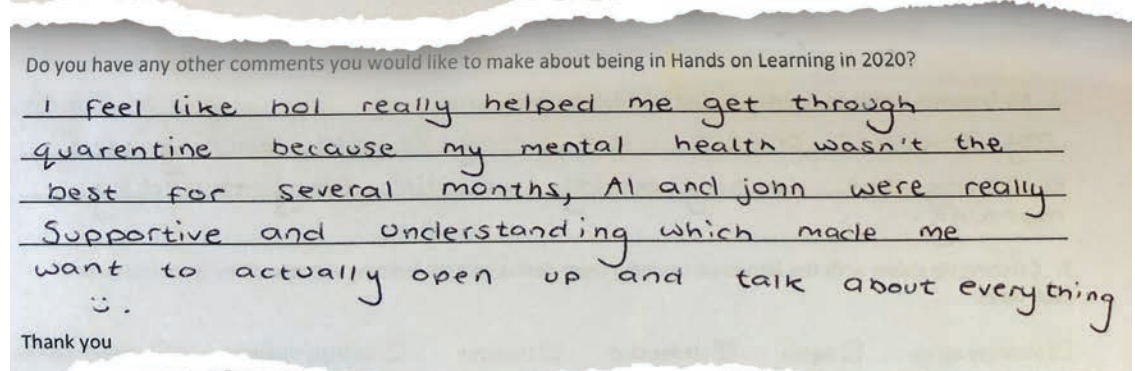
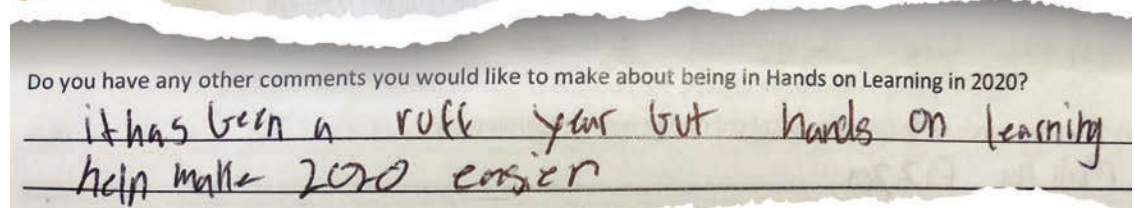
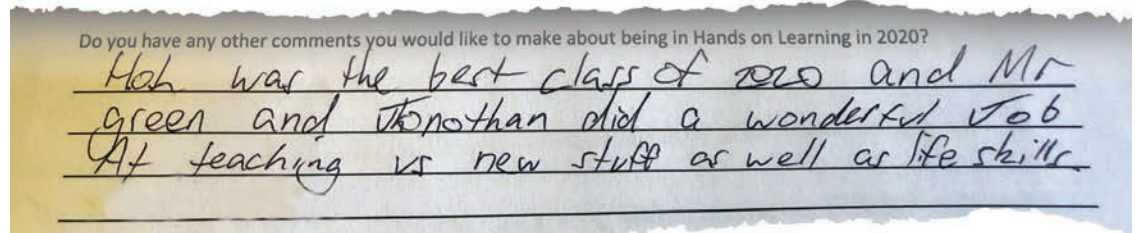
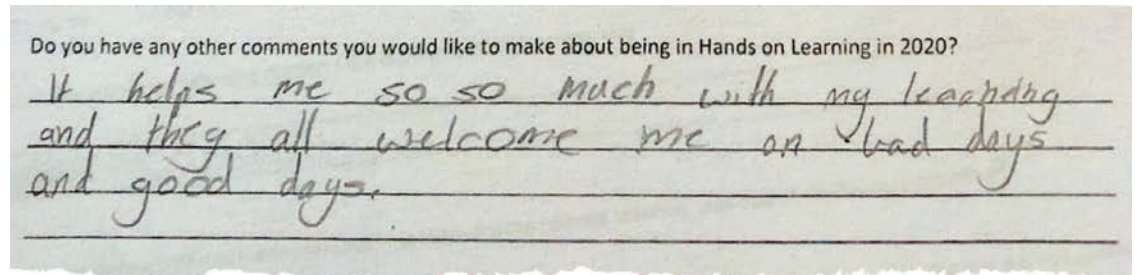
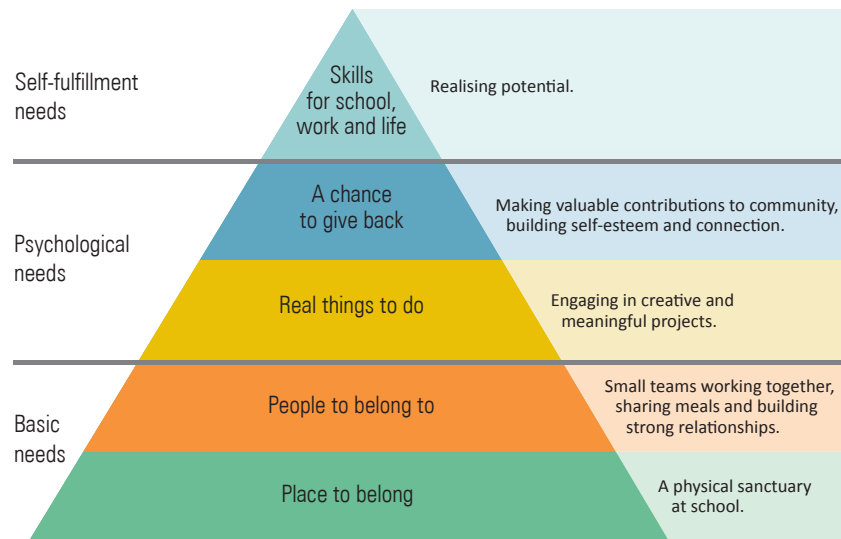
Hear from former Elisabeth Murdoch College student, Caleb



Watch a summary of what parents have to say



HoL is an enabling space that fosters positive mental health by creating belonging, support to stay connected, a sense of purpose for school tasks, and the development of capacities to help students thrive and reach their potential.



Students have their say