REGIONAL EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS AWARD, 2011

Westdale provides a diverse array of opportunities in the arts for all students. Through engaging our students in various art experiences, each student has the opportunity to develop as a whole child, participate at performance level and develop their cultural life.

Westdale has produced and presented three School Musicals—2004 'Circus Splendida', 2007-'Little red Rocking Hood', 2010-'The Pied Piper of Hamelin.' The musicals have incorporated dance, drama and singing at public performance level. (All three musicals presented at the Tamworth Town Hall-daytime Schools' Performance and evening Public Performance)

In order to undertake this level of performance, the whole school—students, staff, families —needed to work together to commit to the production. This has been the case for all three musicals, ensuring a successful experience for every student and the Westdale Community.

The 2010 Musical ‘The Pied Piper of Hamelin’, was presented in the last week of Term 3. Westdale had every student (401 students) singing, dancing and acting on stage (in class groups), with all Year 6 students taking on lead roles. All class groups presented a dance item to one of the 20 songs included in the musical. While each group performed on stage, the remaining students provided vocal backing. The school has a behaviour class (district resource-K-3 students). The students in the behaviour class at the time were Year 1 and Year 2 level, so were integrated into a Year 2 class to be part of the musical.

The musical was written and produced by Westdale staff members-Julie Kirk and Shane Elsley. To prepare our Year 6 students for stage performance (68 Year 6 students), the school involved Mrs Jean Freer, under the Drama In Residence Program. Jean completed a workshop with all Year 6 on ‘Stage Presentation.’ Prior to 2010, the Drama In Residence program has been implemented at Westdale (2006-2010), focusing on the Drama component of the Arts Syllabus for stages 2 and 3.

Three staff members participated in a Teacher Choreographic Workshop in 2010, prior to the musical, to up skill their choreographic techniques. The staff members were then able to support classroom teachers with the choreography of their dance item—a Leading Learner approach.

In addition to staff training, four Year 12 students from Oxley High School (all very experienced dancers and choreographers) volunteered their time to assist teachers with choreography. This offer was certainly taken up, with the students working on site every week during term 3.
Staff members participated in a workshop—’Audacity-Editing Music’—to learn how to make a CD for use in dance. This training enabled one staff member, Shane Elsley, to produce a quality CD of music for the musical. Every student was provided with a costume for the musical. Over the years, Westdale has accumulated a large collection of costumes—often loaning costumes to other schools for performances. Through the coordination and dedication from a staff member, Teresa Charlton, (who is very skilled designing and making costumes) new costumes were made (for every Year 6 students) and costumes altered to suit the musical theme. Parents and other staff members assisted with costume making.

A parent, Dale Duncan, organised and produced a quality DVD of the musical, along with group and individual photographs of all the students. The DVD and photographs were available for purchase by students and families. (most families purchased a DVD and photos) Cost for the students were kept to a minimum-$5 per student (this included their costume and bus travel).

On the evening of the public performance, every student had at least one family member in the audience (a sold out show) to watch them perform—great community spirit. All students were ‘Stars on Stage’.

Enjoy our ‘Pied Piper of Hamelin’ video snapshots.