Benalla P-12 College partners with SMP Kristen Citra Bangsa to BRIDGE intercultural understanding

For the last two weeks, students, teachers and families from Benalla P-12 College have enjoyed getting to know and hosting both Ibu Tince and Ibu Surya from our sister school SMP Kristen Citra Bangsa, Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara. Benalla P-12 College was one of 16 schools around Australia in 2016 embarking on a new sister school relationship.

Ibu Surya and Ibu Tince visited various classes across the college, and enjoyed sharing about their city, school, family as well as a science lesson on the making of Palm Sugar in Kupang. They also brought letters written by their students in English and students from Years 3-9 have also started replies to these letters in Indonesian. Ibu Surya and Ibu Tince also collaborated on professional teacher practice and developed strategies to make the most of and maintain their international school partnership.

Head of Indonesian, Bu Perry says she is extremely excited about the endless possibilities this sister school partnership presents for both schools and she commented that her students are equally excited about connecting with their pen friends and sister school via skype and in the future meeting them in Indonesia.

School education needs to equip our young people to resolve global issues and, in particular, breakdown stereotypes,’ Barbara O’Brien said today. ‘To do this we need to work with our closest neighbours, speak each other’s languages, understand our similarities and differences. BRIDGE aims to go beyond the classroom and develop meaningful and long-lasting people to people connections.

Bu Worley, also commented that “having the two Indonesian teachers from our BRIDGE school partnership come and stay with teachers and families from Benalla P-12 College created a wave of excitement around the school. The Indonesian teachers shared stories with our students about their school and home life in Kupang, Indonesia. Our students had many insightful questions and I was proud to see their intercultural understanding expand. This experience has made learning a language a real life experience and given students the opportunity to connect with Indonesian students from our partner school.”

Despite their two week stay, both teachers Ibu Surya and Ibu Tince formed long lasting relationships with their teacher counterparts, school leadership, students and families and as Heidi Perry commented, “ties between the two schools will become closer over the years through the wonderful collaborative projects planned.”

Family and Student Reflections:

“It was great having Bu Surya to stay we had steak and vegetables for dinner. In the morning we took Bu Suray on a tour of our farm she liked the sheep because they don’t have many in Indonesia”—Tom Wilkinson

“I enjoyed having Bu Surya at my house because I learnt more Indonesian words. We ate Mexican food for dinner an apple and pear crumble for dessert. Bu Surya met our dog Cocoa. It was very fun”—Aria Winkler

“We hosted Indonesian teacher Surya to stay during her time at Benalla P-12 College earlier this month. The experience was terrific for our school and family. Surya shared details of her life in Kupang, West Timor, including language, geography and culture and we were able to share ours with her. Tom and James were very excited to show Surya our farm and meeting her has given them greater meaning and enthusiasm in learning Indonesian language and culture at school. We look forward to keeping in touch with Surya and perhaps visiting her one day!”—Felicity and Peter Wilkinson