Renowned mental health expert Professor Ian Hickie presents IGS’s first PTF Thought Leadership Forum for 2015

Special Report: Thought Leadership Forum

MENTAL HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE 21STC

He emphasised the importance of the ‘social architecture’ in schools such as IGS, in supporting student connection. He also stressed that it is vital to ensure that as much importance is placed on social structures and strong communities in schools as is placed on student academic achievement.

“Ione of the great virtues of IGS is the social architecture within the School which is why we are so keen that IGS be a lighthouse school [for good mental health]...”

- Professor Ian Hickie

Critical points were made about the importance of early intervention in dealing with mental health in children and young people, to support the building of mental capital across the lifecycle. Continued...

More than 160 parents, teachers and friends of IGS from the local community, including staff from other Sydney schools and universities, gathered this week to hear Professor Ian Hickie, Director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute at the University of Sydney speak about youth mental health and technology.

Dr Kimberley Pressick-Kilborn* writes ...

IGS’s Leadership Team and the PTF have worked together successfully for more than five years to create an annual program of presentations on topical education and parenting issues. The aim is to stimulate informed discussion within and beyond our school’s community, and the first forum for 2015 was no exception.

Professor Ian Hickie challenged those present to consider the roles we might play as parents and educators working together in ensuring that children and young people are connected and active participants in the societies in which we live.

*Dr Kimberley Pressick-Kilborn, an academic with UTS’s Research in Learning and Change Group, is PTF Forums Co-ordinator - and a parent - at IGS
Comment

Professor Ian Hickie* spoke at the IGS Thought Leadership Forum about the latest research and initiatives in youth mental health and technology being undertaken at the University of Sydney, several in collaboration with other organisations. Summary points follow ...

- Adolescence is a challenging period where the brain is changing rapidly.
- If you do not successfully transition out of school to university or work, you will not participate successfully in life.
- [In recent years] social structures outside of schools have declined (churches, social groups…etc.), the only thing that’s stayed constant [in terms of social structures] is schools.
- One of the great virtues of IGS is the social architecture within the School which is why we are so keen that IGS be a lighthouse school [for good mental health].
- People are concerned [about technology] … but what are the opportunities associated with technology?
- Regulating your sleep/wake cycle can affect your mood [positively] There are ‘apps’ which can do this.
- We don’t have medicines such as vaccines for mental health. The most important thing is early intervention.
- Exploring technology – as a positive input versus what might be the risks …we are actively working at looking at technology around the country and its capacity to do good versus harm.
- To be mentally healthy you need to be autonomous (in control of your life) but at the same time socially connected and physically active. You’ve got to be physically well to stay mentally well.
- ‘Headspace’ is creating youth-friendly centres.

* Professor Ian Hickie was CEO of beyondblue: the national depression initiative, from 2000 -2003 and from 2003 to 2006 served as its Clinical Advisor.
In 2003, Professor Hickie was appointed as the Executive Director of the Brain & Mind Research Institute (BMRI). From 2008 to 2013, he was one of the first round of new NHMRC 2008 Australian Fellows and was appointed to the Federal Health Minister’s National Advisory Council on Mental Health and then, in 2010 to 2011, the Federal Ministers Mental Health Expert Advisory Group.
From 2012, Professor Hickie has been appointed as a Commissioner in the new National Mental Health Commission to oversee enhanced accountability for mental health reform in Australia. Ian Hickie is also an IGS parent.

Memorandum of Understanding

International Grammar School (IGS) has a long association with the Brain and Mind Research Institute (BMRI) at the University of Sydney. More recently, this relationship has been formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two organisations.

The purpose of the MoU is to enhance collaboration between the BMRI and IGS and to develop a whole-school wellbeing framework that will enhance best practice in the maintenance of wellbeing and care of students at IGS.

Through the MoU, the BMRI also identifies other services available to IGS students, parents and staff – including clinical services, professional development of IGS staff, and contribution to parent and student education forums. The BMRI also gains from this relationship, through increased community awareness of the clinical services they offer, as well as the referral of students where this level of care is indicated.

- Mary Duma, Deputy Principal, IGS

L-R: Dr Kimberley Pressick-Kilborn, Professor Ian Hickie, IGS Principal Shauna Colnan and IGS Deputy Principal Mary Duma at Wednesday night’s Forum