Revolution School
How To Fix Education

A ‘must see’ 4 part series
Tuesday May 31
REVOLUTION SCHOOL is a four-part documentary series which investigates how to improve secondary education in Australia. The series was filmed in 2015 over the entire school year at Kambrya College, a typical public high school in Melbourne’s outer south east.

The series uses fixed rig and roving cameras. It is an Australian TV first which captures the challenges, dramas and triumphs of life in an Australian high school in a way not seen before. Kambrya is a large school, with more than 1100 students from 42 different nationalities. There are high achievers who are aiming for the stars, but also kids at risk of dropping out and others with serious behavioural difficulties and learning challenges.

As a state-funded school Kambrya takes on all comers, but it did have a big problem. In 2008 the school was ranked in the bottom 10% of schools in Victoria on Year 12 results, and principal Michael Muscat knew he had to make significant changes. The question was, what changes?

Faced with the challenge of transforming Kambrya, Michael Muscat went in search of answers and found support for his approach and guidance from Professor John Hattie, an educational statistician. Hattie is Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute, part of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at the University of Melbourne. Under the leadership of Professor Field Rickards, the Melbourne Graduate School is ranked in the top few tertiary education institutes in the world.

Hattie has spent decades number crunching the data from over 70,000 separate studies on the factors that influence how well our kids do in school. From how much TV they watch, to the amount of homework they are given, to the number of students in a classroom, Hattie has been able to come up with a definitive evidence-based ranking of nearly 200 factors influencing what truly makes a difference to student achievement.

It turns out the answers are not what we might expect. And certainly not the problems the politicians and media often focus on, such as class sizes, facilities, funding levels or testing regimes.

At Kambrya Michael Muscat looked at the evidence and decided the best way to lift the school off the bottom rung was to focus on more effective teaching and learning. It might sound simple but when you’re dealing with emotional teenagers, time-poor staff, anxious parents, social media bullying and the pains of growing up, change isn’t always easy.

Across the series we follow the dramatic story of how Kambrya tries to transform itself and change the lives of the kids.

Production credits: Series Producer, Alex West. Executive Producer, Michael Cordell. CJZ Director of Production, Toni Malone. ABC Commissioning Editor, Anita Brown. Produced with the assistance of Film Victoria and Screen Australia.

For further information and interviews contact Kim Bassett, ABC TV Publicity, 03 9524 2580/0409 600 456 or bassett.kim@abc.net.au For images visit abc.net.au/tvpublicity.
EPISODE ONE: TUESDAY, MAY 31 AT 8.30PM

It’s the start of a new school year at Kambrya College, a typical high school in outer suburban Melbourne. In episode one the teachers strive to raise academic results and keep students on track.

Across Australia, education standards have been slipping. We were ranked sixth in the world, but now we’re ranked around 20.

International expert, Professor John Hattie, from the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education, has researched what is most effective to lift students’ results, and he’s helping Kambrya introduce changes.

The school introduces new classroom methods in a bid to improve learning for both gifted and average students.

But with more than 1100 students, there are plenty of day-to-day dramas. Assistant principal Jo Wastle has difficult conversations with several students including 15-year-old Tiarne, who disrupts classes with attention-seeking behaviour, and 13-year-old Jamin who has troubles at home.

Tiarne gives her English teacher Pete Wallis an especially hard time, and she blames it on the fact she was bullied at school.

Principal Michael Muscat brings in internationally renowned classroom discipline expert Dr Bill Rogers, who helps Pete settle his class, regain control and keep everyone engaged.

Teacher Grace Wong, recently graduated, tries to overcome the ability gap in her classroom, and uses technology to make a breakthrough.

EPISODE TWO: TUESDAY, JUNE 7 AT 8.30PM

In this episode the focus is on how to get the best out of students, be they high-achievers or strugglers in danger of dropping out. Year 11 student Rachel wants to get into medicine at uni so needs to be in the top 1% of students Australia-wide. Rachel’s parents pressure her to perform, which causes her stress at home and school. They meet to try to resolve their differences, but Rachel’s mum loses her temper. One of the students has been caught with drugs and it’s a major dilemma for principal Michael Muscat.

Currently 25% of Australian kids don’t complete Year 12 but Kambrya makes valiant attempts to keep students at school.

A special program, Darrabi, is set up for a group of teenage boys who don’t fit in to mainstream classes. The boys are unruly and performing badly in all subjects so teacher Martin Macdonald and assistant principal Keith Perry plan a wilderness bush trek to build their self esteem.

NAPLAN, National literacy and numeracy testing, is held and Kambrya decides it needs to further improve its reading results. The school calls in literacy expert Di Snowball, who shows teachers a simple but effective method for improving literacy. At the start of each class, students must spend time reading a book. The kids love it, and the results are impressive.
EPISODE THREE: TUESDAY, JUNE 14 AT 8.30PM

This episode focuses on student wellbeing, amidst the stark reality that suicide is now the number one cause of death in Australia in those aged under 24.

Rachel benefits from the support she has received at school. She mends her relationship with her mother and knuckles down to study for exams. The senior students at Kambrya including Rachel focus on a highlight of their year, the glamorous Deb Ball. Year 12 student Tausif is bright but procrastinates, putting in doubt his ambition to excel in his final exams. Principal Michael Muscat has always focused on student welfare but now also seeks input from Professor Lea Waters from the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education. She measures students’ emotional wellbeing at Kambrya and suggests ways to improve it, and the benefit is evident for a group of Year 8’s.

The Darrabi boys are out of their comfort zone as they start their bush walk. Along the way they discover personal strengths they didn’t know they had. Back at school their new-found determination leads to better maths results and they graduate from Darrabi with proud parents looking on.

Bailey finds himself in trouble when he punches another boy. Kambrya’s school counsellor Andrew Reeves talks to him about his tough guy exterior, and helps him open up about the death of two close friends.

EPISODE FOUR: TUESDAY, JUNE 21 AT 8.30PM

It’s nearing the end of the school year and principal Michael Muscat is working hard to continue the improvement that began when he took over in 2008, at a time when Kambrya’s results hit rock bottom. Reputation is all-important, so the school showcases itself and stages its own musical production.

Professor John Hattie visits and helps teachers including Debbie Blee re-focus on what works best in the classroom to increase learning rates. Debbie embraces Professor Hattie’s suggestions and the results are uplifting. Tiarne is nearing the end of Year 10 but she’s hardly been at school. Assistant principals Jo Wastle and Keith Perry do all they can to help her pass, and she just pulls through, writing an essay on courage and submitting it by text.

Former Darrabi student Michael has transformed from troubled teenager to role model and puts himself in the race for a school leadership position, up against the articulate Chelsea.

Tausif continues to under-perform as his dedicated teacher Sarah Hewat frets about her students’ final results.

Michael Muscat is thrilled when the school’s reputation grows and Year 7 enrolments are set to double, as Kambrya shows the way for schools across the nation.
Personal Statement

Alex West – Series Producer

REVOLUTION SCHOOL was an enormously complex, challenging and ultimately rewarding experience as a documentary maker.

The brief was ambitious: To make a nationally significant series on the state of Australian secondary education, by focusing on the lives of the students, teachers, and staff at a typical suburban high school.

To link the unique story of a school to the national big picture meant understanding the daily events at the school in the wider context. That meant understanding a vast amount of research on education. Our aim was to tell the story of Kambrya while introducing the audience to the specialist research in education that lies behind what the school is trying to do.

The risk was that the two aspects would not work well together, since students and indeed teachers can’t be expected to understand and act according to knowledge a university researcher has spent decades accumulating.

It was also a challenge to work so closely with kids and a very close-knit community of teachers and staff. As filmmakers our job was to begin as outsiders, and maintain that sense of distance and objectivity, whilst becoming a very familiar and intimate part of the school community.

That meant a huge focus on building and maintaining trusting relationships with students and teachers alike.

Our team was small, comprising myself as series producer, two director/camera people (Naomi Elkin-Jones and Nick McInerney) and a production assistant (Georgi Savage). We worked in the school out of an office we were given for the whole 2015 school year.

Being on site everyday meant we quickly became a part of the school community. We were all humbled by the open, welcoming and receptive attitude of all the community at Kambrya College. This is particularly so given how courageous the school was to open itself up to the scrutiny of documentary cameras.

Always mindful of this and the background of the more undesirable excesses of modern reality TV, our aim was make an honest yet serious series about life in school for our kids. There was constant dialogue between the teachers, leaders and staff in the school, and we tried to work very much on a model of ‘co-creation’ to tell the story of how Kambrya has gone about raising standards and improving outcomes for students.

This meant openly showing the issues and how the teachers work to overcome them, and at times this was uncomfortable for staff and students. Yet to everyone’s credit, they stuck with the process and therefore we were able to show how powerfully Kambrya overcomes the challenges it faces.

They are by no means unique problems and issues. In fact the experience for teachers and students at Kambrya is pretty typical of life in high schools right across Australia. That is what makes the series so important and I believe worth watching.
It was certainly a privilege to have the opportunity to work with such a wonderfully warm and dedicated group of teachers. Working in this collegiate framework meant great personal and professional relationships were formed, and it was enormous fun to work alongside the teachers and staff, and above all the students at Kambrya. I would dedicate this series to them with thanks.

The experience has made a lasting impression on all of us, and it is this that is ultimately the most wonderful part of the job that we do as filmmakers.

Alex West
Why Kambrya College is a “Revolution School”

In 2008 Kambrya College hit rock bottom. Just six years old the school had exploded in size to over 1,600 students. Grappling with disorder and lack of direction Kambrya ranked in the bottom 10% of schools in Victoria based on VCE scores. And on virtually every other indicator the school was failing abysmally.

In eight short years Kambrya College has revolutionised itself. Through strong leadership, a focus on innovative teaching techniques and bold strategies deployed in partnership with The Graduate School of Education at Melbourne University the school is a model for how an under-performing school can turn itself around. Indeed, their strategies could help inspire every student and every school in Australia to better achieve their potential.

Here is a summary of Kambrya’s key achievements:

- In 2008 Kambrya College was in the bottom 10% of Victorian schools as measured by their VCE median study score. Over the last four years, the school has been placed between the top 25% to 30% of state schools in Victoria.

- In 2008 the VCE English median study score for the College was 23, placing it in the bottom 5% of the state. By 2015 the VCE English median study score had steadily risen to 31, placing it among to top 20% to 25% of state schools in Victoria.

- According to NAPLAN data Kambrya’s students have been growing above the state average academically. After testing Year 7 students in 2012 and then in Year 9 they were shown to be growing above the state average by 24% in Reading, 17% in Grammar and Punctuation and 13% in numeracy. Kambrya is a “growing” school, not a “cruising” school.

- In the Attitudes to School Surveys conducted by the Victorian Department of Education, students rated Kambrya’s “Teacher Effectiveness” at 15% in 2008. This has grown to 80% in 2015. An improvement of 70%.

- In the same surveys “Teacher Empathy” was judged at 20% in 2008. It improved to 80% in 2015. A growth of 60%.

- Kambrya’s “Stimulating Learning” environment was rated by students at just 18% in 2008. This has grown to 74% in 2015. A growth of 56%.

- Kambrya’s “School Connectedness” was rated at 10% in 2008. This was in the lowest 4% in the State. In 2015 students rated their connectedness at 75% - among the highest 25% in the state. This is a growth of 70%.

- In Parent Opinion Surveys the “General Satisfaction of Parents” stood at 35% in 2008. In 2015 it was 79%.

- In 2008 Kambrya College offered just one “in house” vocational course for senior students. In 2015 vocational courses in Automotive, Plumbing, Hair, Beauty services, Hospitality, Sport/Recreation and Personal Fitness at the College. This has had massive impact in student retention rates.

- In 2008 the school expelled 12 students. Since 2013 there have been no expulsions.
• In 2008 the average rate of absenteeism was 25 days per student, per year. By 2015 it had dropped to 12 days per student, per year. The state average in Victoria is approximately 18 days per student, per year.

• In 2015 the new Independent Reading Program increased loans of books from the school library by approximately 25%.

• The pilot “Visible Wellbeing” initiative in 2015 showed enormous growth in student self-awareness. This program is being fully rolled out during 2016.

These are some of Kambrya’s achievements in 2016 that have flowed on from its successes in 2015.

• Kambrya has almost doubled its Year 7 intake from 155 students in 2015 to 280 students in 2016. This has been achieved through relentless promotion of the school in the local community.

• In 2015 Kambrya introduced its innovative Year 7 SEAL program (Select Entry Accelerated Learning) for high achieving students. In 2015 50 students enrolled in the program. Applications for the program in 2016 have now doubled to over 100.

• The Independent Reading Program is being implemented into all Years 7 to 9 classes.

Kambrya’s quiet revolution is not over yet. Its leadership team and teachers are on a relentless drive to improve further. The College motto of “Maximising the potential of each student” is never fully achieved and creates a mindset that drives further improvement.

• Over the next four years, Kambrya College is aiming to further increase the VCE median study score to 32 (to place it among the top 15 – 20% of state schools)

• Fully implement the “Visible Wellbeing” approach across the College through our partnership with the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

• Significantly extend support available to students with mental health issues.

• Develop new programs to meet the needs of students with special learning needs.
EXPERTS:

Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne and chairman of the Federal Government's Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

John Hattie is a straight-talking academic with a passion for trying to understand, measure and share what makes a difference in the classroom.

His study on what really matters to help students learn and progress has been described as the 'holy grail' of effective teaching and he is arguably the world’s most influential education researcher.

His 2009 book, Visible Learning, is the largest ever collection of evidence-based research into what makes a difference for students, ranking the factors which most improve learning. It was the culmination of 15 years of research, incorporating more than 70,000 studies on schools involving millions of students globally.

Professor Hattie found improving the quality of feedback students receive and ensuring positive teacher-student interaction led to the best outcomes. It is a pupil’s ability to assess their own performance and to discuss how they can improve with the teacher that makes the most difference.

Somewhat controversially, he also says the evidence shows that factors such as class size, homework and public or private schooling are not nearly as important to students’ learning progression as the quality of individual teachers.

Born in New Zealand, John Hattie grew up in the regional port city of Timaru, and after school worked as a house painter before going to university and gaining a teaching diploma. He gained his PhD in 1981 and has worked at universities around the world before taking up his position in Melbourne in 2011.

Professor Lea Waters, Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

Professor Lea Waters is a psychologist who has held an academic position at the University of Melbourne for the past 20 years.

She often speaks in public about positive education and parenting, and has worked with more than 100 schools across Australia, Asia and Europe.

The Centre for Positive Psychology aims to advance the science and practice of wellbeing for students, teachers and education systems at primary, secondary and tertiary level. The Centre assists schools to create positive cultures.

Professor Waters says Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show one quarter of young Australians are suffering from symptoms of mental illness. She says it’s critical to equip young people with the skills and mindsets that counteract mental illness and prepare them for a ‘life well lived’.
Professor Field Rickards, Dean of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

Professor Rickards trained as an audiologist and set up Australia’s first training in audiology in 1974. He has been Dean of the MGSE since 2004 and has set a firm focus on improving the quality of teaching through an evidence-based approach.

He believes teaching, like audiology, should be viewed as clinical practice and he has introduced that approach into the Master of Teaching at the MGSE.

Professor Rickards has facilitated ongoing partnerships with dozens of schools in Melbourne where Masters students spend two days each week on pre-service training so they are better prepared for the classroom when they graduate. He equates this to teaching hospitals for medical students.

Professor Rickards has been a member of the Federal Government’s advisory panel to review teacher education and training in Australia.

At the MGSE, he leads a team of internationally acclaimed researchers, including Professor Hattie and Professor Waters.

Dr Bill Rogers, education consultant and Honorary Fellow, Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

It’s not hard to find classroom teachers who credit Bill Rogers, or at least one of his books or YouTube presentations, for helping them manage students with challenging behaviour issues.

Dr Rogers is a teacher by profession but now spends his time lecturing on discipline and behaviour management in schools, and how to help teachers manage stress. He has taught at both primary and secondary schools, and began his consultancy work in 1985 when he worked with the Victorian Education Department to promote whole school approaches to behavior management and student welfare, within a framework of rights and responsibilities.

Dr Rogers focuses on positive behavior management, emphasizing the need for teachers to have a plan to deal with disruptive behavior. He suggests a series of descriptive cues for calmness, tactical pauses, and clear directions and reminders for expected behaviors. He is big on “do” rather than “don’t”.

He has written numerous books including “Cracking the Hard Class: Strategies for Managing the Harder than Average Class”, and “Behavior Management: A Whole School Approach”.

Di Snowball, Literacy consultant

Di Snowball began teaching in 1972 and quickly realized she didn’t have enough training in how the children in her Grade 1 class in Melbourne would learn to read and comprehend.

Ms Snowball took it upon herself to find out all she could, and over time developed a six-step strategy for teaching reading which has achieved dramatic results in low-performing schools both in Australia and overseas.
In 1992 she was invited to provide professional learning for teachers and administrators across schools in New York and other parts of the United States, and she carried out that role for 16 years. More recently she has been involved in a program which has led to significant improvement in literacy levels in schools in Melbourne’s western region.

The principal at Footscray North Primary School, Sharon Walker, sings the praises of Di Snowball’s approach to teaching reading. “We look at Finland, Singapore, people go overseas and yet we have a fantastic model on our doorstep,” Walker says.

Di Snowball has written several books and articles about literacy teaching and has produced videos demonstrating the most effective teaching practices.
Clinical teaching:

Clinical teaching is at the core of the work being done in successful schools around the country, and internationally.

It is also the foundation for the Masters Teaching program at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education.

For an explanation of clinical teaching:

http://education.unimelb.edu.au/about_us/clinical_teaching

Paper on clinical teaching by Professor Stephen Dinham, Chair of Teacher Education and Director of Learning and Teaching Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne:

‘Walking the Walk: The need for school leaders to embrace teaching as a clinical practice profession’, Conference Proceedings, ACER Research Conference, Sydney, pp. 34-39

Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne:

Read the MGSE’s Green Paper outlining its vision for education in Australia if we are to arrest declining standards.

Focusing on the learner: Charting a way forward for Australian education

Professor John Hattie, Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute at the University of Melbourne:

Professor John Hattie’s ground-breaking book, Visible Learning, brings together 20 years of evidence-based research into what is proven to work in schools to improve learning. It has been described by the Times Educational Supplement as “the holy grail of education”.

http://visiblelearningplus.com


Dr Bill Rogers, education consultant and Honorary Fellow, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Considered one of the world’s foremost experts on behaviour management in the classroom

http://www.billrogers.com.au


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqIXB1RG-Vg

Professor Lea Waters, Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne

A registered psychologist, Professor Waters holds the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology and is the Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology, MGSE, University of Melbourne

http://www.leawaters.com


YouTube talk of Positive Education https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UABRP73t7A

Di Snowball, Literacy consultant

Expert in the teaching of reading; consultant in Australia and internationally:


**My School website and NAPLAN**

The My School website was established eight years ago to provide parents, schools and the community with information about academic results and the socio-economic make-up of Australian schools.

My School displays data collected in NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) tests, which are conducted every year in schools for students in grades 3, 5, 7 and 9.

My School now has eight years of data which means student achievement can be tracked to see how much learning growth students have achieved in literacy and numeracy at individual schools from year 3 to 5, or year 7 to 9. This can be a useful pointer to the effectiveness of teaching in the school, and how much schools are “adding” to students’ learning.

The data enables comparisons to be made among schools serving students from similar socio-educational backgrounds, for example schools with a high percentage of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

NAPLAN data gives a snap shot of student performance but can’t measure the spirit, condition, and overall wellbeing of a school.

An important area for parents to focus on when using the myschool site is to look at the NAPLAN data relating to ‘student growth’, because this is a measure of the effectiveness of the schools teaching, which is standardised to take into account socio-economic and other factors.

[http://www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

Extra Material

Survey – Conducted for Revolution School documentary series

Australians get fail mark on what works to improve schools

A significant number of Australians wrongly believe that smaller class sizes, compulsory homework and private schooling all lead to better academic results for students.

A national survey has found serious misconceptions about the most effective ways to raise Australian academic standards, which have fallen significantly in international rankings over the past decade.

The survey was conducted in conjunction with this series, which follows a year in the life of Kambrya College, a state secondary school in Melbourne’s outer south-eastern suburb of Berwick.

In 2008, Kambrya’s Year 12 results put it in the bottom 10% of secondary schools in Victoria. Revolution School follows the transformation of the school under the leadership of principal Michael Muscat, to the point where it is in the top 25% of schools.

Muscat and his colleagues manage more than 1100 students, including those struggling to cope with school and home life. Revolution School gives a raw and honest insight into the challenges facing these teenagers, while also showcasing what really works in classrooms to improve academic results.

The series highlights the internationally renowned research of Professor John Hattie, and one of the world’s top ranked education institutions, the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education.

During 20 years of research analysing more than 70,000 studies involving 80 million students from around the world, Professor Hattie has established what is most effective to improve student learning.

He has found that teaching which involves goal-oriented, specific feedback to students, and positive teacher-student interaction, have the most impact on learning growth.

Contrary to what the survey has revealed many Australians believe, Hattie’s research has established that smaller class sizes, state-of-the-art facilities and hours of homework have little or no impact on results.

“Reducing class size does enhance achievement, however, the magnitude of that effect is tiny,” says Professor Hattie. “And the reason that it’s so small is because teachers don’t change how they teach when they go from a class of thirty to fifteen.”

The national survey found more than three quarters of Australians incorrectly think smaller class sizes have a positive impact on academic achievement. Less than 10% of people got this right.
Australians had other misconceptions:

- Fifty two percent believe wearing a school uniform has a positive impact on students’ results, but Hattie’s research has found it has no impact at all.
- When asked if the academic achievement of secondary school students was better at single sex schools compared to co-ed schools, only a third correctly answered that it was not.
- More than two thirds of Australians incorrectly think that regular homework is essential for students to succeed at secondary school.
- When asked if the standard of teaching in private schools promoted greater academic growth among students compared to teaching in government schools, 43% wrongly answered yes.
- Only 34% correctly answered that there was no difference between private and public schools in terms of student’s academic growth.
- Nearly a third of Australians under-estimate the number of hours teachers work each week.

The survey also found two thirds of people think teaching is a worthy profession but ranked teachers behind doctors, lawyers, university lecturers, elite athletes and nurses in terms of perceived status in our society.

More than two thirds of people think schools should place more emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but only 13% strongly agree that Australia should push secondary students harder to outperform Asian countries.