

Quest Community Newspapers - Student Reporter Program

The Quest Student Reporter Program encourages school students to become newspaper correspondents and the eyes and ears of the local paper in their communities.

Under the program Quest asks schools to identify students who have an interest in journalism to be appointed as student reporters.

The students each work with a teacher to ensure articles are checked and accurate and Quest provides them with a kit telling them what sort of stories are required and how to write them.

The program is a joint project of all the Editors at Quest. There are currently more than 70 active student reporters in the Brisbane area and they produce a considerable amount of copy for the newspaper education pages.

In one case a cluster of 15 schools in the Wynnum area has worked together on the Student Reporter Program. As well as creating material for the newspaper, they have used the content to create their own website.

Earlier this year this partnership won an Education Queensland Showcase Excellence Award.

Quest has conducted a variety of visits and workshops for this group to give them a deeper understanding of journalism and the needs of newspapers. The volume of schools coverage in this area has increased 87 per cent since the program was launched.

None of the student-written stories published in the Wynnum Herald were published as a favour. All of them had to meet the standards Quest would apply to stories written by its own journalists. This means that students are learning genuine, real-world skills that are applied in the workplace.

Another school has set up a newsroom within the school environment to ensure ideas and stories are worked up and quality controlled before being submitted to the newspapers.

The Student Reporter Program, launched across the Brisbane region in 2005-06, has a variety of benefits:

- It produces stories for the newspapers (both from school and outside)
- It helps identify young journalistic talent
- It breaks down the communication barriers between newspapers and the community and demystifies the news gathering and selection process
- It helps re-invigorate a culture of tipping newspapers off to breaking news
- It gives young readers a direct interest and stake in their local newspapers

The idea is simple but the rewards are many.