



## GET READY FOR THE COUNT

For the third year, hundreds of thousands of children are learning a new song for Music Count Us In, Australia's biggest school music initiative. The 2009 song is *The Music is Everything*, composed by four NSW secondary

school students under the guidance of John Foreman (left). Schools register online, download the song files and support materials and agree to perform the song on October 22 at 11.30am. Register at [www.musiccountusin.org.au](http://www.musiccountusin.org.au)



## MAGDA DIGS IN FOR FUNDS

THE people behind the Our Cool School online resource have created Enviroweek to raise funds for various environmental charities and organisations. Collette Such as Magda Szustanski (left)

is supporting the drive and your school is invited to fundraise online for your own environmental projects. The campaign runs October 11-17. [www.enviroweek.org](http://www.enviroweek.org)

# Why mind-set matters

How do you pass exams with ease? **Blanche Clark** gets some answers from author Patrick Sherratt

### What is the single most important step to passing exams?

Mind-set! Having a background in performance psychology, I believe that if a student can develop an "exam performance mind-set" they will know how to maximise their brain power for enhanced concentration and focus as well as knowing how to align any limiting beliefs that could be causing common problems, such as a lack of motivation or procrastination.

### Can a C or D student become an A or B student?

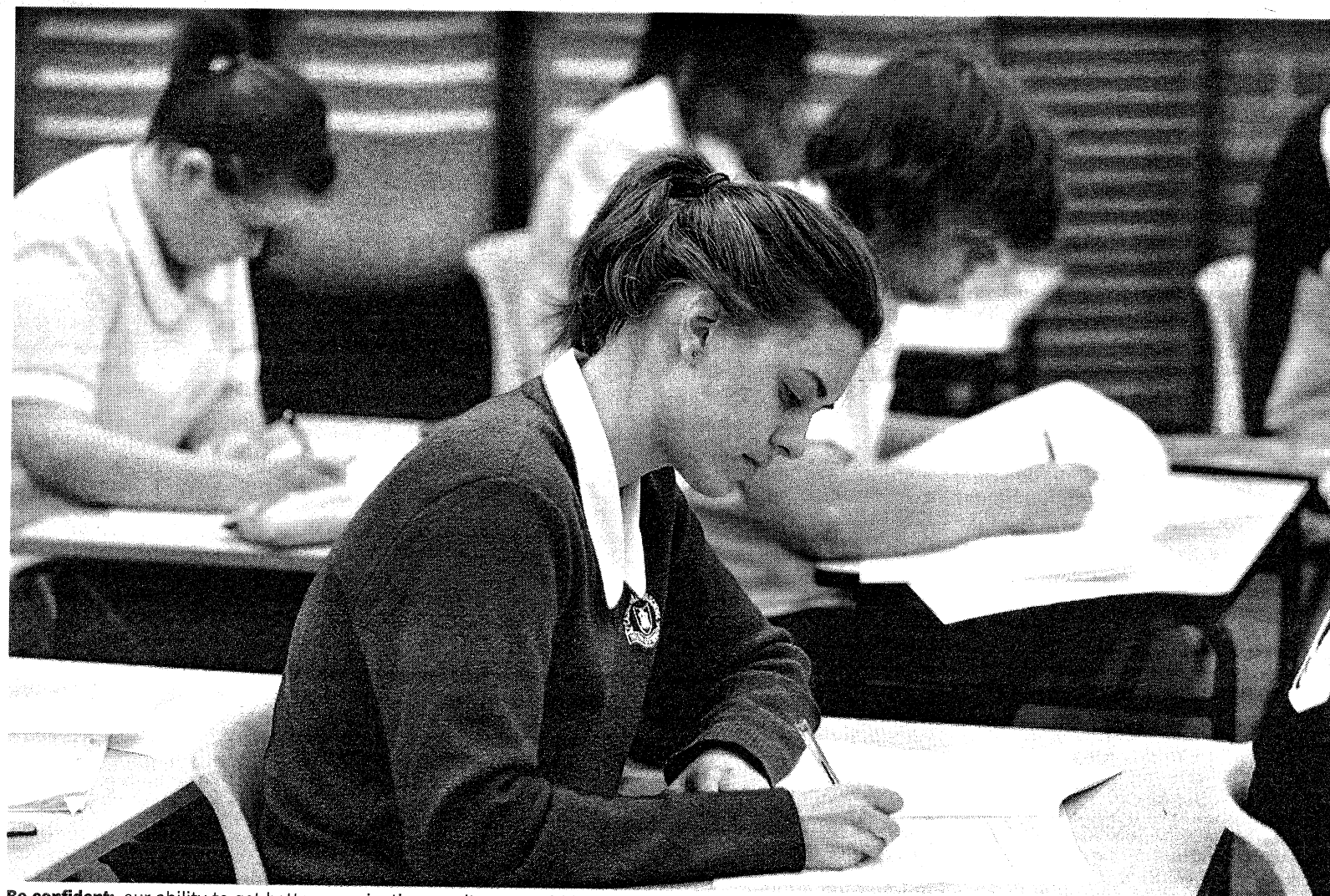
In many cases, yes. Our ability to get better results rests within the subconscious ideas of how good we are. These self-images can be modified through the deliberate use of self-talk: words, pictures and feelings of seeing ourselves being better than we currently are and conditioning these ideas to create a "new normal". We will find ourselves, for example, more able to concentrate and study more effectively.

### Do you need to understand your learning style to succeed?

It's very helpful to know your various learning styles because this tells you your unique way your brain best receives, processes and communicates information. It also tells you your weaknesses so you can develop ways to overcome these. The common styles are visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and analytical and there are many others. The more styles you can use simultaneously, however, the more "whole brain" learning will occur. You can do an internet search on "learning styles" to discover how to practically use them when revising for exams.

### How do you beat procrastination?

The way around it is to turn your "have to" into a "want to". It's a simple psychological process of telling yourself: "OK, I don't have to revise!" Get a sense of your ability to make this decision that you don't have to do this. Now, think about the consequences. If you make this decision, what would be the likely consequences? Think these



**Be confident:** our ability to get better examination results rests within the subconscious ideas of how good we are.

through and if they don't look too good, what then would be the positive consequences you would get if you made the decision to revise? Enhance the sense of value you would get and you will start to feel this task as a "want to" and start to feel more motivated.

### Are mind maps the best way to fine-tune your memory?

In *Passing Exams For Dummies*, I discuss six principles of memory, one of which is that memory works through visual association. So we need to convert our linear class notes into more visual formats. Mind maps are a great way to do this, but there are many other thinking maps and concept maps. You can even use Microsoft Word's diagram tools. Some people love mind mapping and can recall an entire mind map from

memory. This is because their brain has developed strong neural pathways that enable this type of thinking. Other people find this difficult. For me, I placed information into a spreadsheet and found (because I am a logical sequential learner) that I could recall all the rows and columns with ease. I did this in a university exam and got an A+. So, it really depends on knowing how your brain best processes information.

### What is mental rehearsal and how useful is it?

Mental rehearsal is using your imagination to see yourself performing well in a future situation that may normally be challenging. I believe one of the best ways to overcome exam anxiety is to mentally rehearse being in

the exam and seeing yourself calm and relaxed with all the information coming to you with ease. When you rehearse this ideal scenario over and over, your brain says "I've been here 20 times before" and delivers to you the conditioned ideal response. This is a very powerful technique that is used often in sports performance.

### What are your tips for dealing with exam anxiety?

Other than mental rehearsal, there are some good breathing techniques to relax the nervous system. Breathing on a ratio of 1:4:2 for example — breathe in for four seconds, hold for 16 and breathe out for eight. This is a good one to use in the exam, especially if you are having memory block.

### What or who inspired you to succeed?

I didn't do well in my high-school exams. It wasn't until I got to university as an adult student that I started to learn about metacognition (learning how to learn) and performance psychology and started getting great results. When my results improved, I got so excited by this knowledge that after my psychology undergraduate degree, I focused much of my Masters in Education on learning how to enhance exam performance. Then I started offering guidance to other people and this inspired me to learn more. Now I offer coaching, consulting and run seminars.

**Passing Exams for Dummies**, by Patrick Sherratt, Wiley, rrp \$34.95. [www.passingexams.co.nz](http://www.passingexams.co.nz)

# Reach to the sun for a ray of hope

Learn has invited 10 secondary-school students to talk about issues that concern them. This week year-12 student **Daniel Romano**, of St Joseph's College North Melbourne, talks about climate change

**C**LIMATE change has evoked fear, concerning all generations from international nations.

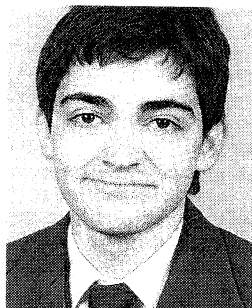
For several young Australians, the issue is at the forefront of many conversations. Politicians, scientists and the public are concerned about our planet's future.

I believe without a radical transformation of attitude towards this issue, we will be placed into the dustbin of history for not starting a revolution on environmental conservation.

We have seen extreme global weather patterns causing havoc through natural disasters such as tsunamis and bushfires, and the drought has made us cautious of our water usage.

These events affect us and spark a sense of curiosity as to what could happen if we do not act.

What would happen if we were to continue using coal power for another 200 years?



and move towards environmentally friendly solutions.

British company Maplecroft calculates global risk and recently ranked Australia in the top five of the world's biggest per-capita producers of carbon emissions, surpassing the US.

Considering we use electricity to power our technology, machines and public transport, why haven't we made the complete switch to alternative energy sources?

Australia needs to eradicate its reliance on coal

Its research found Australia emits 20.58 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a person annually, compared with the US that uses 19.78 tonnes — that's almost a 4 per cent difference.

Generation Y and those who follow will have to face rising temperatures, extinction of animal species and natural disasters because of a lack of active change in establishing an effective plan that can radically make a difference.

A few wind farms in rural areas of Australia will not make a huge difference. We have the sun that could solve the problem.

We should embrace the solution of powering the trams and trains that transport us to school and work. Solar panels on every home with a full government rebate would be most appropriate in a country with so many ultraviolet rays.

If we care about our future, we need to be active and embrace that big star in the sky.