



C O N S C I E N T I A

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S t C a t h e r i n e ' s S c h o o l 2 0 1 4

03	Mrs Michelle Carroll	Welcome
04	Mrs Michelle Carroll	Academic Fitness
06	Mrs Karyn Murray	The Importance of Grit
08	Mrs Brigid Weereratne	Creative Thinking
10	Mr Matthew Bolzonello	The History Wars
14	Ms Merran O'Connor	Looking Beyond Ourselves
18	Miss Sally Wilkinson	Highly Effective Habits
22	Mrs Janette Matt	Beauty in Numbers
26	Mrs Brigid Weereratne	Art, Culture and Travel Savvy
28	Ms Kathryn White	Mythbusters: The Digital Native
30	Ms Corinne Buzza	La Vie Française
32	Mrs Ceri Lloyd	The Narrative Imagination
36	Mr Adrian Puckering	Fostering Deep Thinkers
38	Miss Jenny Molloy	Transition to Secondary School
42	Ms Vasiliki Spanos	Finding Oneself in the Service of Others
46	Miss Jeanette Gunn	The Advantages of Girls' Participation in Sport
50	Ms Corinne Buzza	Language is Culture and Culture is Language
52	Mrs Faye Shortal	Fiction's Dark Themes
54	Mrs Pauline van der Poel	Preparing for Life After School
58	Mrs Gina Peele	Parenting: The Hardest Job of All
62	Ms Vanessa Jackson-McRae	Celebrating Science Week
66	Mrs Sue Collister	The Value of Boarding
70	Mrs Alana Moor	Managing Great Expectations
74	Mr James Brown	All the World's a Stage
78	Miss Elizabeth Ryan	Teaching History
82	Mr Alex Bacalja	Digital Dominance
86	Ms Debbie Thompson	Let's Get Physical
90	Miss Skye Stansfield	Role Model on the Slopes
94	Mr Paul Stokes	Travels in the Middle Kingdom
98	Ms Lisa Barker & Ms Simone Schilte	Connectedness in the Curriculum
102	Mr Paul Cross	Extracurricular Activities Create Valuable Learnings
106	Mrs Vicki Marinelli	21 st Century Skills
108	Mrs Elka Gaensler	A Game Changer for Students with Learning Challenges
112	Mr Andrew Gold	French and Fun in the Early-Learning Environment
116	Ms Fiona Beck	The Wonder of Learning



St Catherine's staff share an ethos of commitment, dedication and strive for excellence in their knowledge and practice in a range of articles published in the Principal's blog via the School's website. This is the 2014 collection.





Welcome

In 2014, the School fostered a professional learning community that enabled a stimulating working environment that created innovative and reflective teaching and pedagogy. The St Catherine's Staff articles provided an avenue of sharing professional practice amongst staff. They created an aspirational model of scholarship for students and gave a snapshot of the wider educational framework. The articles captured the breadth of experiences and interests of our staff, with contributions ranging from reflections on professional learning seminars, to scholarly pieces on teaching practice and research completed to achieve post-graduate qualifications.

I invite you to read each article published across the year, and to be inspired by the professional undertakings of our staff.

Mrs Michelle Carroll
Principal



Name: Mrs Michelle Carroll Title: Principal Date: 24 February 2014

ACADEMIC FITNESS

A way to empower girls in their learning is by equating academic learning with 'fitness', writes Principal, Mrs Michelle Carroll.

At the recent Parent Information Evenings, I spoke to the Years 9 and 10 parents about the idea of academic fitness. I first encountered this term in the work of Professor Andrew Martin from Sydney University. Essentially, it refers to a student's 'readiness and preparedness' for good learning and works effectively to empower students with their learning. Professor Martin identifies through his research that, "Girls tend not to have a strong sense of control over their academic life. We find they don't always feel they're in the driver's seat and they are uncertain about their ability to avoid poor performance and failure".

By drawing students' attention to areas where they can have an impact, and a greater sense of control, we are promoting their academic fitness. Martin refers to the importance of reminding girls of three areas where they do have control over their learning:

1. Attitude – what girls are thinking about themselves and the tasks they have to do; their beliefs about their capacity to learn.
2. Effort – how hard they try.
3. Strategy – the way they try and the way they approach their work.

Equating academic learning with 'fitness' conjures up notions of training and practice and is a powerful way to emphasise the control girls can have over their learning; and is something many

girls who train for a sport or learn a musical instrument can relate to. In turn, this can motivate them to refine their approach to learning and build more productive study behaviours.

For excellent learning to occur, and be sustained, students need to engage and to make an effort, even when it is hard to do so. Developing the academic resilience to persevere when things are not easy is also essential. It is important students understand that learning involves getting things wrong and can often require struggle. The experience of failing, or finding something difficult, actually allows students to progress with their learning.

The study of neuroscience has provided an understanding of the plasticity of the human brain. That is, its capacity to change in response to circumstances. Simply put, science tells us that if we do something repeatedly, the part of our brain we are using grows new connections and becomes stronger. Giving this information to our students is important. It reinforces their own role in their learning success, acting as a motivating force, and cements girls' beliefs that they are able to learn and make meaningful academic progress with effort, attitude and strategy.

Mrs Michelle Carroll
Principal

Martin, A. (2010). *Building Classroom Success*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.



Name: Mrs Karyn Murray Title: Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Date: 12 March 2014



THE IMPORTANCE OF GRIT

Mrs Karyn Murray, St Catherine's Coordinator of Gifted and Talented/Independent Learning Class Mentor, writes about the need for children to display passion and perseverance in order to succeed.

For many years, parents and educators have pondered the question, "How do children succeed?" Interestingly, for much of the 20th century, success has been defined as a person's IQ – a number which measures the cognitive ability of an individual. But is a high IQ a guarantee of success? Just what does it take to be successful in life?

Paul Tough, a *New York Times* journalist, author and social commentator, spent four years studying success in its many forms. In his novel, *How Children Succeed*, Tough argues that there are seven non-cognitive skills that make a huge difference to a person's chance of success. These seven character strengths – perseverance, professionalism, self-confidence, grit, resourcefulness, ambition and resilience – all attest to the motivation and volition of the person and whether they are likely to succeed in the long term. What is now understood is that these traits can be learned, where previously they were thought to have been innate.

Researcher Angela Lee Duckworth tested this hypothesis on a number of groups, including school children, marketing salesmen and military cadets. What emerged was that the people who were the most successful were those who displayed grit – 'passion and perseverance' – when things got difficult. Duckworth likens this to viewing life as a "marathon rather than a sprint" and suggests that, in the long term, the people who achieve their goals are those who work towards an end point with determination and conscientiousness.

So, what lessons can we learn from this research? First of all, we can understand that these character strengths can be learned and modelled. We can teach young people the value of persisting when things get difficult. We can explain to them that the ability to learn is not fixed and that the brain grows with challenge and effort. Ultimately, we must be prepared to fail and learn from our mistakes, and to keep making those mistakes until we succeed. Undoubtedly, Tough's ultimate lesson is a positive one, because it shows that success is achievable if you have the grit to succeed.

Mrs Karyn Murray

Coordinator of Gifted and Talented
Independent Learning Class Mentor



Name: Mrs Brigid Weeraratne Title: Head of Arts Date: 20 March 2014

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CREATIVE THINKING

The world needs creative thinkers, no matter what field they work in.

The study of a visual or performing arts subject immerses the student in a world of problem solving that goes far beyond the art studio, music room or drama stage. The application of creative thinking or problem solving is inherent in all that we as teachers, encourage in our students.

They are given the opportunity to think individually and apply skills and techniques learnt in the studio to everyday life and other subject areas. We provide them with a scaffold in the outline of a task, then allow them to explore and develop creative solutions to the task. In short, differentiation is a key aspect of all we do in the arts.

We all need to understand that the world needs creative thinkers, no matter what field they work in. Creative thinkers are the ones who stand out in the crowd of interviewees and the ones who look for everything but the obvious when developing a solution. In our House Arts program, we encourage the girls to explore many avenues of thought to ensure they create a performance that is engaging, entertaining and inclusive. Strong leadership skills are developed and encouraged in this program.

We look to give the girls the chance to build resilience through creating solutions to a task. By creating visual and/or performance based artworks that others can comment on, they learn to accept different points of view about their creative expressions. This is an important aspect of their growth and development. Perseverance in a task is important in the creation of artistic solutions, as is practice in any subject or

skill set. We try to develop an inherent curiosity and willingness to explore and discover ideas, instead of resting on the very first idea that pops into their heads.

Art, Music and Drama are key tools to help students understand the human condition, our history and future. How we engage with the wider community, select subjects to study and work with others is important to the social world in which we live. For the teachers in the Arts Faculty at St Catherine's, the pleasure of watching students discover hidden talents, do a subject, or learn an instrument for the pure joy it brings them is the most rewarding aspect of our work. Knowing that it will enhance their thinking skills in other subjects, sometimes without them even knowing, is just an added bonus.

Studies, research and statistics demonstrate the benefits of studying a visual or performing arts subject, and how this can be reflected in overall grades. Please take the time to watch two videos that discuss the importance of arts education and creative thinking. The first one is from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) about arts subjects. The second is from a talk by Sir Ken Robinson, in which he discusses the importance of teaching creative thinking.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ebEQpRJK14&list=UUXN7Dkh7vEKbcmpIjXjUiebw&feature=share

www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

Mrs Brigid Weeraratne
Head of Arts
Art Teacher



Name: Mr Matthew Bolzonello Title: Head of Humanities Date: 27 March 2014



THE HISTORY WARS

While debate rages over the content of History being taught in schools, teachers will continue to inspire, challenge and encourage students to critically examine the society in which they live.

Over the last few months, there has been debate and discussion in the media regarding the content of History being taught in schools. With the election of the Abbott Government in September 2013, the new Federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne announced a review of the National Curriculum, including an examination of the Years 7 to 10 History syllabus.¹ Pyne's criticisms of what is currently taught in History received wide coverage in the press, leading to newspaper headlines such as "Christopher Pyne tackles leftist 'bias' in classrooms"² and "Teachers warn of 'culture wars'".³

A recent article published in the History teachers' journal *Agora* argued that, in relation to History education, "There is a clear and strong ideological position being promoted through conservative news sources which...has successfully penetrated public awareness."⁴ Some of the criticism of the National Curriculum for History includes there not being a strong enough focus on the development of Western Civilisation, and too great an emphasis on social and economic sustainability.

For History teachers, this current debate over what is being taught to students is reminiscent of similar debates that have occurred in the past and in other parts of the world. In Britain, planned changes to the History curriculum were heavily criticised as being too focussed on English history, with an over-emphasis on mandatory dates and events.⁵ New French History textbooks have been criticised for having only six pages on Napoleon Bonaparte, yet 20 pages on slavery and the 13th Century West African King, Cancun Musa.⁶

How are these debates relevant to teachers and students in schools? While curriculum is important, as teachers, our core purpose is to help students develop strong critical thinking and analysis skills, as well as promoting an understanding of events and movements that have shaped all societies, including our own. History is not simply a checklist of events and dates, but a critical examination into how our society was formed and framed.

While an examination of Western civilisation may not be specifically listed in the National Curriculum, our Year 7 History students study Athenian society and the concept of direct democracy, and in Year 10 the Federation of Australia is explored, with students discussing the democratic foundations of our society, based on the Westminster and Washington



systems of government. Concepts of sovereignty, citizenship and social merit may not be on a checklist but students need to understand these concepts in learning how our society was created.

So, as teachers we will see the politicians and commentators continue to bicker about what events and dates need to be taught, while we will continue to offer a rigorous and strong program that inspires and challenges students, as well as encouraging them to critically examine their present society and the social, political and economic forces that shape their context.

Mr Matthew Bolzonello

Head of Humanities

History Teacher

¹ Christopher Pyne, *Review of National Curriculum*, pyneonline.com.au/media/transcripts/review-of-national-curriculum

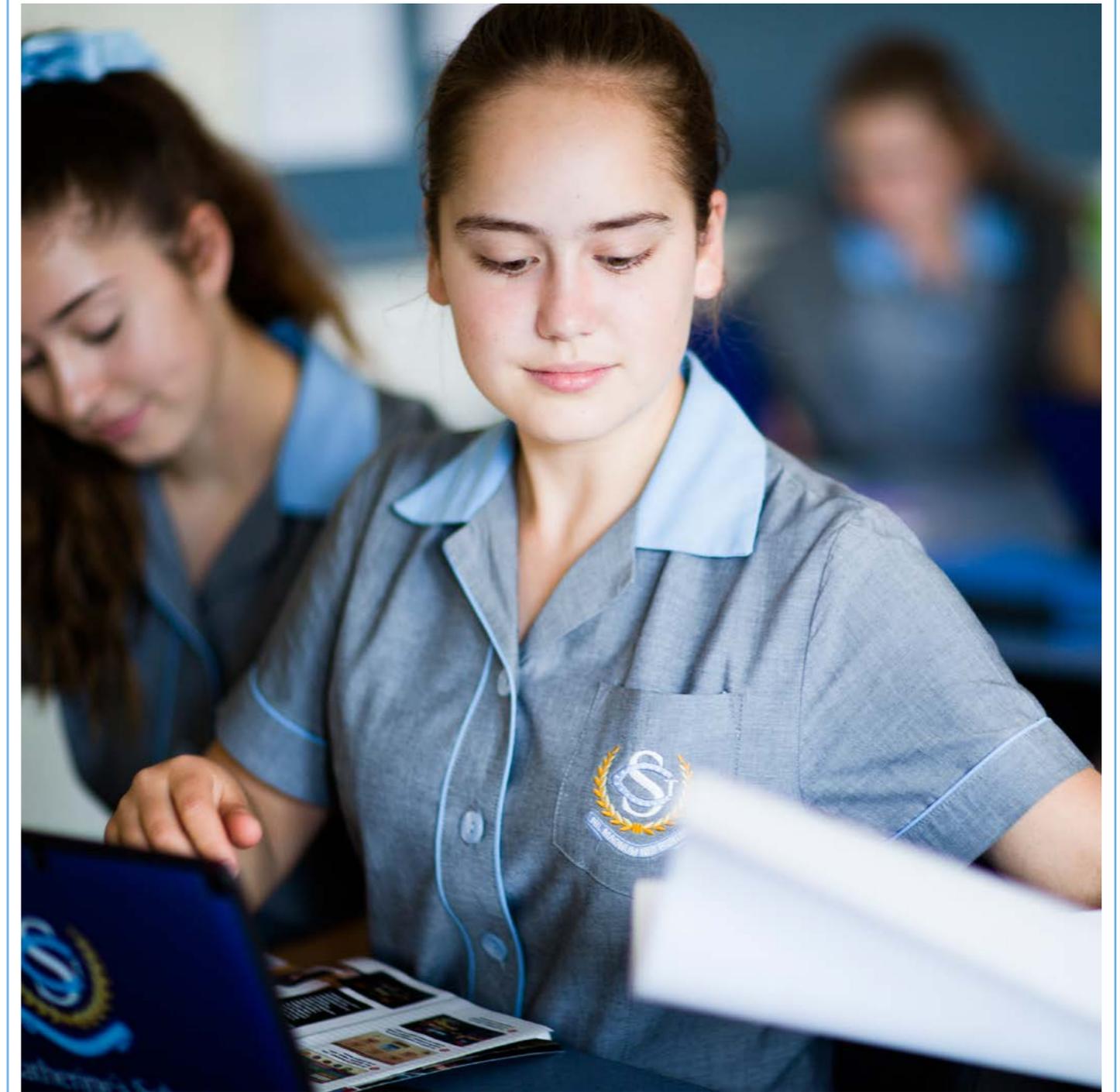
² David Crowe, *Christopher Pyne tackles leftist 'bias' in classrooms*, *The Australian*, January 10, 2014

³ Simon Cullen, *Teachers warn of 'culture wars' as Christopher Pyne announces back-to-basics curriculum review*, www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-10/pyne-calls-for-national-curriculum-to-focus-on-benefits-of-west/5193804

⁴ Sue Collins, *'Ravens, doves and Kookaburras: Australian History Curriculum in the Media'*, *Agora*, Number 4, Volume 28, 2013.

⁵ Warwick Mansell, *Michael Gove redrafts new history curriculum after outcry*, *The Guardian*, 22 June, 2013, theguardian.com/education/2013/jun/21/michael-gove-history-curriculum

⁶ RT news, *No to Napoleon: 'PC gone mad' as French textbooks purge past'*





Name: Ms Merran O'Connor Title: Dean of Year 9 Date: 3 April 2014



LOOKING BEYOND OURSELVES

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." -Mahatma Gandhi

Adolescence can be a time of great introspection, but the Year 9s are discovering that one of the best ways to learn more about ourselves and our place in the world is to look out into the wider community. The Year 9 students have focused on reaching out to the community by volunteering at FareShare, a Melbourne charity that provides free, nutritious meals to the hungry and the homeless.

Using food donated by markets, caterers and retailers around Melbourne, FareShare provides a vital service to the community and the environment, not only by making use of food items that would otherwise be wasted, but also by preparing and distributing over one million meals annually through a number of Melbourne's charities. The Year 9s have produced more than four thousand meals during the four class visits.

We are very proud of the fact that St Catherine's pioneered the FareShare 'Schools in the Kitchen' program as the pilot school. Following St Catherine's lead, there are now 60 schools involved in the student volunteer program, equating to thousands of meals being prepared by secondary student volunteers annually.

The benefits to the community are paramount but the benefits to our girls should not be underestimated. The FareShare visits raise awareness of food insecurity in Melbourne and the fact that people give their time and resources to combat this social problem.

These are just some of the comments made by the students following their time in the FareShare program:

"We made 1,224 egg, bacon and cheese pies and 150 litres of soup. That shows me that we can do a lot to help people who are hungry in just one day. I am very thankful for this experience and it has really opened my eyes and made me feel a better person for doing it." - Annabelle Williams

"The feelings and emotions of knowing that you have helped someone put a meal on the table for their family, or just to be able to feed themselves, are precious. FareShare has taught me the importance of giving back, being aware of how lucky we are and recycling." - Isabella King

The girls commonly remark on how "lucky", "thankful" and "grateful" they feel after doing community service. Martin Seligman, himself dubbed the father of Positive Psychology, calls gratitude "...not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others". He observes in his book, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, "that among other things, grateful people are



happier, have stronger feelings of social support, and feel less stressed and depressed.”¹ In short, through giving back, we nourish our own sense of happiness and wellbeing.

Service to the community is recognised as one of the aims of the General Capabilities, a key dimension of the Australian Curriculum which is based on the goals set out in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008).² It describes individuals who can “become citizens who behave with ethical integrity... work for the common good and act with responsibility at local, regional and global levels”. The Year 9 FareShare program, along with other programs such as the Years 9 and 10 Leadership Diploma Program, support and facilitate this endeavour.

In the words of cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has”.

Ms Merran O’Connor

Dean of Year 9

Debating and Public Speaking Coordinator

English Teacher

¹ Martin Seligman, *The Pursuit of Happiness*
pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/positive-thinking

² *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008)*
acara.edu.au/curriculum/curriculum_design_and_development





Name: Miss Sally Wilkinson Title: Dean of Year 12 and VCE Coordinator Date: 24 April 2014



HIGHLY EFFECTIVE HABITS

Miss Sally Wilkinson, our Dean of Year 12 and VCE Coordinator, explains why a good night's sleep and effective time management are so important for students.

The senior secondary years of schooling, particularly whilst completing the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), can be a busy and stressful time for teenagers. Students often feel overwhelmed by the amount of work required for them to receive the academic results they need in order to achieve their post-school goals, as well as balancing their social lives, co-curricular involvement and family responsibilities.

Maintaining regular sleeping patterns is also crucial for students to be able to achieve their personal best. The National Sleep Foundation in the USA says that teenagers need approximately 9.25 hours sleep each night. In the final week of Term 1, Brad Felstead, from Felstead Education, spoke to the Year 12 students about the importance of sleep for teenagers and provided the girls with some tips to assist them in improving their sleeping patterns. These strategies are useful to students in all year levels and include:

- Maintaining a regular bedtime and awakening time.
- Avoiding bright light at night. This includes having time away from computer screens, the television and mobile phones before going to bed.
- Establishing a regular, relaxing bedtime routine. This may include a warm bath or shower, reading or listening to soothing music.
- Sleeping in a room that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool.
- Using the bedroom only for sleep. It is recommended that work materials, computers and TVs are in another room, although this can be difficult to achieve.
- Finishing eating two to three hours before bed.
- Exercising regularly. Exercise should be finished a few hours before bedtime.
- After 15 to 20 minutes of not being able to get to sleep, go to another room to read or do something else until sleepy.

Discussing these strategies within the home will assist our students to develop positive sleeping patterns during their teenage years.



To help students find a balance between the various aspects of their lives, it is important that they develop strong time-management skills and learn how to use their time effectively. As Stephen Covey, the author of *The Leader in Me* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, says: "The key is not spending time, but in investing in it". Time is a finite resource; as we cannot gain time in our week, we must learn to use the time that we have more effectively.

For students, the first step in this process is to prepare a weekly plan. The Deans of each year level at St Catherine's have copies of weekly planners that can assist students with planning their week. This allows students to see how much time they have allocated to each of their activities during the week. Colour-coding activities allows students to see whether they have a balance in their week. For example, study block may be green, sport may be yellow, part-time work orange and music rehearsals pink. Students can then speak with their teachers about the most efficient ways to complete their work.

Developing a stable and balanced plan for each week is incredibly useful, both for students in Years 9 to 11, who have Semester 1 exams this term, and for the Year 12s, who continue to have SACs each week. During these busy periods,

it is important that students plan time for themselves, whether that involves socialising with friends, walking the dog, spending time with family or reading a book.

We all wish for each student to achieve her personal best. Term 2 is historically a very busy term for our Senior girls and it is therefore important that we continue to discuss the importance of sleep and effective time management with them.

Miss Sally Wilkinson

Dean of Year 12

VCE Coordinator

sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/teens-and-sleep

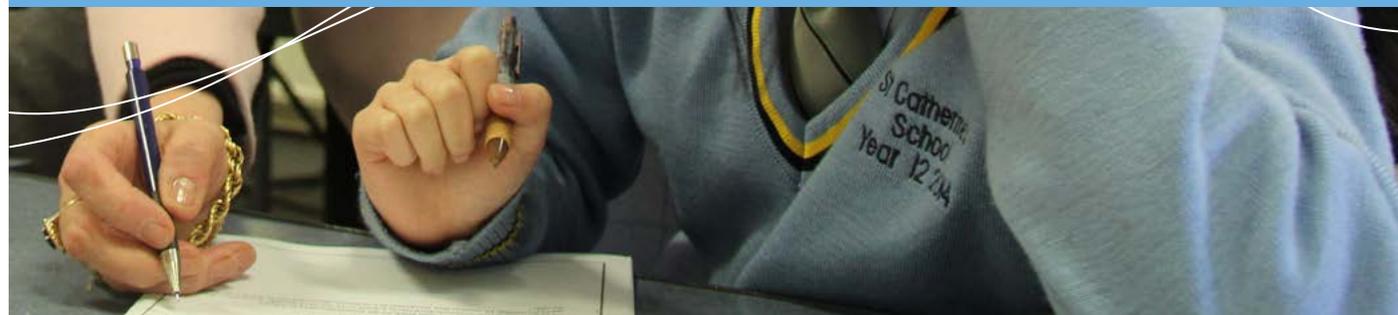
felstead.com.au

pamf.org/teen/life/stress/lifebalance





Name: Mrs Janette Matt Title: Head of Mathematics Date: 1 May 2014



BEAUTY IN NUMBERS

Coming to grips with Mathematics provides us with true mental capacity and the ability to interpret the world around us, argues our Head of Mathematics, Mrs Janette Matt.

When you hear the word 'mathematics', what do you think of? Many people immediately start to have palpitations and remember the horror of sitting an examination where all of the skills and concepts seemed to have gone out of their brain. Others try to avoid it at all costs, whilst some relish the opportunity to delve into the beauty of the subject. What we try to engender in the students of St Catherine's is an understanding that Mathematics is not just a subject of formulas and the need to complete long computations; it is a subject that is not about answers, it is about processes. These processes, once understood, allow us to interpret much of the world.

Obviously, there are skills that need to be mastered before the more creative side of Mathematics can be tackled. Times tables, fractions, algebraic manipulation and many others. These are the tools that are needed to progress to mathematical understanding—the true ability to think, perceive and analyse, mathematically.

The need to develop good skills is no different to what is required by musicians, athletes and in many other areas. I am sure the hours spent practising swimming strokes and the endless laps of the pool are as necessary to the swimmer wanting to achieve their best as it is to the student completing sets of mathematics to develop their core skills.

A good mathematics education produces something of great value: true mental capacity and the ability to think. The analytical tasks the students work through allow them to develop an ability to work through unfamiliar questions and learn to apply their skills efficiently to come up with an appropriate solution. This takes time to master, but what a fantastic skill they are developing for when they move on to other areas. It is not easy, but being challenged is not something to fear.

Some may question the need for mathematics, but in the words of Galileo, "The great book of nature can be read only by those who know the language in which it was written. And that language is mathematics". Mathematics is a way to understand all sorts of things in the world around us. It allows people to apply advanced numerical algorithms to solve



equations (how else would a land-locked nation like Switzerland win the 2003 America's Cup?). It is increasing its role in the biological sciences. Rita Colwell, the 11th director of the United States National Science Foundation, observed that "mathematics is biology's next microscope...only better". Probably the most obvious application of mathematics, but one that is not immediately obvious, is the coding required for our digital world. All text and images are digitised and stored as numbers.

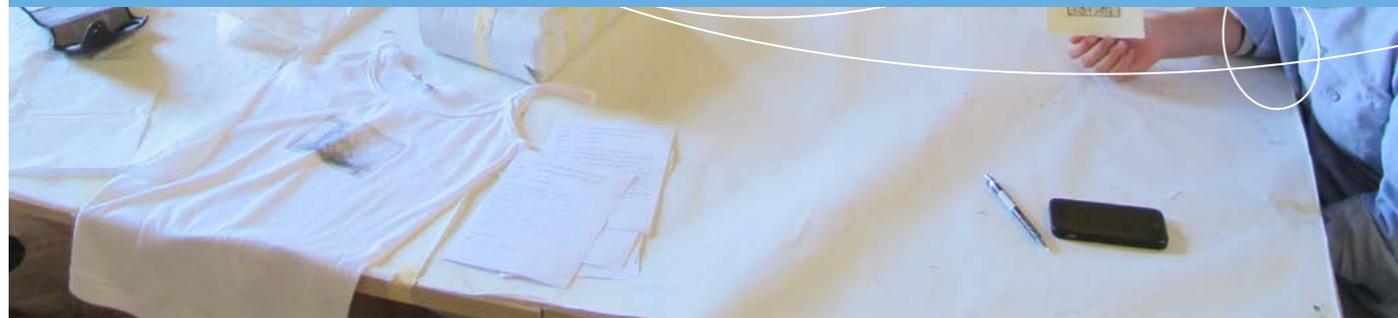
What does this mean to students at St Catherine's School? They need to persevere in their study of mathematics and allow themselves to take risks with the subject. The old adage "if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again" is a perfect catch-cry for their study of the subject. It may not be the easiest subject, but its rewards are bound to help prepare them for life after school.

Mrs Janette Matt
Head of Mathematics
Mathematics Teacher





Name: Mrs Brigid Weeraratne Title: Head of Arts Date: 8 May 2014



ART CULTURE AND TRAVEL SAVVY

Mrs Brigid Weeraratne, Head of Arts, says the recent Study Tour to Italy not only introduced students to Italian art and culture, it also taught them to be organised, patient and resilient.

The recent Italy Study Tour introduced students to the art, culture and life of Italy. They were given the opportunity to explore beautiful towns and cities, such as Venice and surrounding islands, Padua, Florence, Assisi, Orvieto, Rome and Prato.

Staying in Prato for a week allowed us to feel like locals, and not tourists, as we undertook our three-day printmaking workshop at the Monash University campus. The girls learnt a degree of independence during this time, travelling into Florence by train and even coping with a snap train strike that left us waiting more than two hours to get back to Prato. Fortunately, the waiting time was used well, with the girls drawing and working in their journals.

Each day of the tour was full of visits to galleries and cultural sites, with plenty of time to sit and draw and watch life in another country pass by. Immersing the students in the artistic processes of ceramic artisans in Assisi and Orvieto demonstrated to them the commitment these artists have to sustaining their historical links to art forms that are slowly disappearing. The students met Lorenzo, an 83-year-old

ceramic artist who has been throwing pots since the age of seven. Lorenzo entranced them with his effortless skill in turning a lump of clay into a wonderful, functional form. They watched the delicate process of hand-painting the ceramic forms and have a much better understanding of the various qualities of work produced in the region.

This type of overseas tour is not just about visiting major historical places, but learning to be organised, patient and resilient to changes in itinerary. The girls have learnt a great deal from this tour and they continue to draw on the inspirational things they have seen and done over the 18 days away, now that they are back in the Art studios at School.

We will be holding an exhibition of their travel journals and the etchings created at Monash, at the open studio evening in August. We will hang their framed images on the stairwell of Wiltondale as a permanent record of their time on the 2014 Italy Study Tour, adding to the current display from previous tours.

Mrs Brigid Weeraratne

Head of Arts

Art Teacher



Name: Ms Kathryn White Title: Coordinator of Learning Technologies Date: 15 May 2014



MYTHBUSTERS: THE DIGITAL NATIVE

The notion that young people are somehow digitally superior to the rest of us is simply not true, says Coordinator of Learning Technologies, Ms Kathryn White.

When Prensky coined the term 'digital native' in 2001, it seemed a useful metaphor to represent the difference in attitude and ability between those who have grown up immersed in technology and those who haven't. The notion that young people are somehow digitally superior to the rest of us – that their digital nativeness ensures their success in an online environment – is simply not true. We tend to confuse digital comfort with knowledge. This, combined with our own apprehension about the swift development of technology, perpetuates the digital native metaphor. Being tech savvy is one thing, but being digitally literate is another matter entirely.

The myth of the digital native is currently going through a massive debunking; even Prensky himself has revised his position and developed a new phrase – 'digital wisdom' – to replace the neatly packaged digital native concept. The digital landscape is vast, unstructured and uncurated. We need to remember that competence is about more than just access; too often young people are simply not critical of the information and content they consume.

Think about a person's native language: it doesn't develop solely through immersion but, rather, through a combination of immersion, context and practice. Why should a person's digital literacy be any different? Familiarity does not necessarily breed expertise; context and practice are absolutely vital in the development of our students as digital citizens.

Every day, our students are constructing their identity, making choices, and exercising responsibilities online. The success of these actions is not dependent on their grasp of technology but, rather, on the context of values we uphold. Rather than feeling technologically sidelined, we have the opportunity to develop and encourage our girls' values system and moral centre, providing an environment in which they have the best chance of becoming successful digital citizens.

Drawing up a family media agreement is a way of setting digital boundaries and provides an opportunity to discuss appropriate and responsible digital use.

Ms Kathryn White
Coordinator of Learning Technologies



Name: Ms Corinne Buzza Title: Head of Languages Date: 22 May 2014



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LA VIE FRANÇAISE

Our Head of Languages, Ms Corinne Buzza, reports on the recent French Study Tour undertaken by some of our Senior French students.

During the recent three-week French Study Tour, our students were given opportunities to learn more about the culture and language of France through three different experiences.

In the first week, while staying with their host families, students explored the beautiful sights of Paris, such as Versailles, Notre-Dame, the Arc-de-Triomphe and the Musée d'Orsay. They also took part in French lessons tailored to their needs, had a chance to sit in some classes at our sister school and even experienced a French school lunch.

After adjusting to jetlag and becoming accustomed to their new environment, it was time to say goodbye to their teachers and fully immerse themselves in French family life. Since the Tour coincided with school holidays in France, our students were taken to various tourist places, including the landing beaches of Normandy, some islands off Brittany, the Mont-Saint-Michel and even Marseille for a day! For the girls, this was a great opportunity to use the language skills they had been practising at School and during the previous week of the Tour.

Meeting again with the girls in Paris was an emotional time, as they had to say goodbye to their host sisters and families. Then, it was time to board the fast train to the South of France and settle in our gîte, where we were to spend the next six days. The girls turned out to be very organised cooks and we were treated to French staples such as ratatouille and gratin dauphinois cooked to perfection. Some of the activities included shopping at the supermarket, painting with natural pigments, like in medieval times, and interactive visits to an olive grove, Molière exhibition and a local lolly factory. A visit to beautiful Carcassonne provided the girls with time to walk around a fortified city, while a (challenging) bike ride along the Canal du Midi gave the girls a chance to practise their French with other tourists and locals!

Over the time of the Tour, the girls enthusiastically recorded their observations of the French lifestyle and have kept a diary of new words and expressions that they will be able to apply in their future French studies.

Ms Corinne Buzza
Head of Languages
French Teacher



Name: Mrs Ceri Lloyd Title: Head of English Date: 29 May 2014



A NARRATIVE IMAGINATION

Mrs Ceri Lloyd, Head of English, believes literature has a significant role to play in our students' moral development.

Our study of texts at St Catherine's through English and Literature immerses students in other worlds, allowing them to explore and question the experiences of individuals at different points throughout history. There is no doubt that literature has a significant role to play in students' moral development, particularly their empathy and compassion.

Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, calls this the "narrative imagination". A prolific author on the connection between philosophical thinking and literature, she explores how "the arts play a vital role, cultivating powers of imagination that are essential to citizenship". World citizenship and literature, with its ability to represent the specific circumstances and problems of diverse people, makes an especially rich contribution to the narrative imagination. As Aristotle wrote in chapter 9 of *The Poetics*, literature shows us "not something that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen".

Nussbaum discusses the vital role literature plays in educating citizens of the world. When a parent and child begin to tell stories together, the child is acquiring essential moral capacities. A child deprived of stories is deprived, as well, of

certain ways of viewing and understanding other people. During their education at St Catherine's, students engage in narrative imagination through the study of literature, as it inspires intense concern with the fate of characters and defines those characters as containing a rich inner life. Students begin to learn habits of empathy and morality that, in turn, cultivate a sympathetic responsiveness to another's needs. In their study of characters and their predicaments, students learn about complex traits such as courage, self-restraint, dignity, perseverance and fairness. They understand hope, fear, happiness and distress and, in engaging with these characters, they empathise with moral and ethical considerations and learn the all-important traits of empathy and compassion.

Past School Captain Nakita Wilson ('13) reflects on her literature journey:

Over the past six years, the words of the great writers have captivated the Year 12 cohort. The written word, ranging from Shakespeare to Harper Lee, unifies us at St Catherine's, as we are each taken on our own individual journey led by the literary greats we have studied. It is in the English and Literature classroom where the students of St Catherine's have faced their greatest challenges; we have lamented the fall of Gatsby in

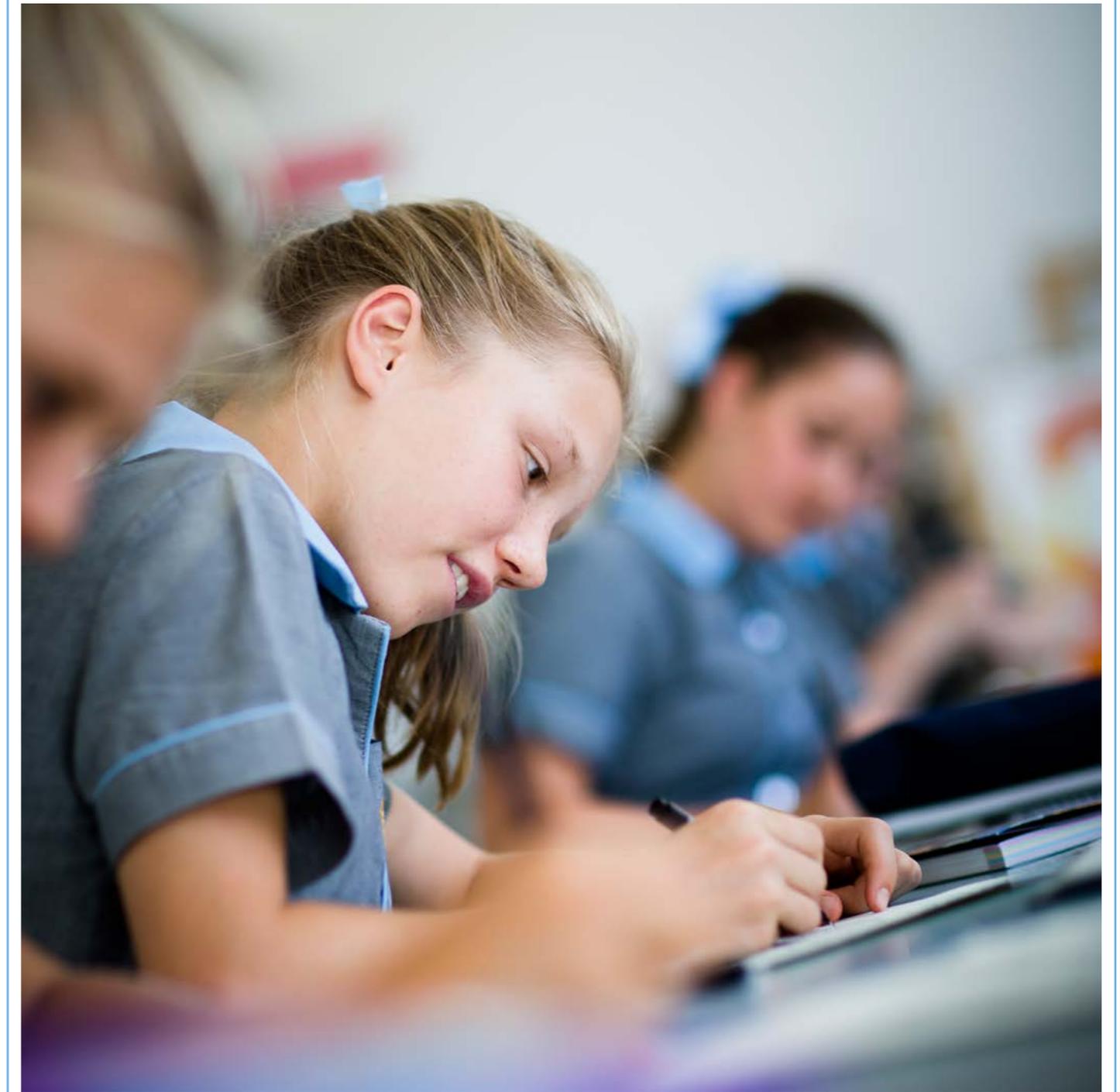


Year 11 Literature, and celebrated the strengths of Macduff in Macbeth during Year 11 English.

I will always remember beginning 'The War Poems' in Year 12, and the amazing connection my class made with Wilfred Owen, reading his poetry 100 years later. The great strength of literature lies in the feeling of satisfaction we gain from understanding what the writer is exploring and empathising with the characters. This moment occurs in countless lessons across the School, as English classes finish Animal Farm, or read the final lines of Atonement. The awestruck feeling provoked by these timeless texts resonates deeply with all students who study them.

As teachers, our ability to share in these experiences with students is a joy, as they embark on the literature journey engaging with their narrative imagination.

Mrs Ceri Lloyd
Head of English
English Teacher





Name: Mr Adrian Puckering **Title:** Director of Curriculum Innovation and Development **Date:** 5 June 2014

*

FOSTERING DEEP THINKERS

Curriculum is largely a product of the era in which it is taught, while a good education transcends time, says our Director of Curriculum Innovation and Development, Mr Adrian Puckering.

The school curriculum is a keenly contested field of debate; governments, media, interest groups, church, parents and teachers all have a vested interest. But essentially, any school curriculum is a product, or indeed a servant (or, some might say, master), of its own time.

In Western education we could begin by exploring the curriculum of the Ancient Greeks. Their lessons were taught in the open air, beneath the olive groves, in sight of the mountains or the crashing Mediterranean waves. Their curriculum was a product of their space; it was filled by inquiry into the very elements of nature, by an exploration of philosophy and by a growing realisation of humans within and without creation.

The Romans, the great empire builders, moved lessons inside classrooms for the first time. They created a 'curriculum' (from the Latin 'currere' – the course upon which a chariot ran) of essential learning for running an empire: engineering and maths mixed with politics and law. Almost two thousand years later, another empire-building nation, Britain, created an industrial model of schooling and curriculum, where students 'clocked on' and sat in neat rows mimicking the factory production lines; authority was the order of the day, as were the three Rs.

Curriculum, then, seems to be a product of the era in which it is taught. In contrast, however, a good education – and

indeed, nothing is great unless it is good – seems to transcend time. St Catherine of Alexandria's story is a case in point.

Although she lived nearly two millennia ago, we know a great deal about her. Catherine, the patron saint of schoolgirls and patroness of teachers, was broadly educated in both the arts and sciences. She also knew philosophy and mathematics, and she was widely read in Aristotelian Greek and Roman law. At the tender age of 18, she debated 50 of the greatest pagan philosophers in the great learned city of Alexandria – and won! Their conversion to Christianity was accompanied by the conversion of 200 soldiers, all later martyred. While Catherine's education had brought out her passions, more significantly it had nourished her thinking; the curriculum may have been the vehicle but it was the learning that set the compass.

At St Catherine's School, we are rightfully proud of our long heritage in helping girls to become great linguists, scientists, mathematicians, artists, sportswomen, writers, politicians, historians. The blue and gold thread that binds each together is the capacity to think deeply, creatively and critically. Not only does St Catherine's produce leaders, but our learning ensures that students become thinkers. The curriculum may be a product of era but a great education is a product of vision and commitment. The future certainly needs greatness in all disciplines but, more than ever, it will require the capacity to think broadly, to think independently, to think creatively and to think critically – in short, to just think.

Mr Adrian Puckering

Director of Curriculum Innovation and Development



Name: Miss Jenny Molloy Title: Dean of Year 7 Date: 12 June 2014



TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

The move from Primary School to Secondary School is a time of great challenge and change. A successful transition program is therefore vital for a student's social and academic wellbeing, writes our Dean of Year 7, Miss Jenny Molloy.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria defines transition as "... a period of change that can be both challenging and exciting, in which children and families adjust to new roles, identities and expectations, new interactions and new relationships" (DEECD, 2011).¹

In the Senior School at St Catherine's we have devised an all-encompassing program that prepares students for their move from the Primary School setting into Secondary School. The move involves change on a major scale and we are aware that this can be both an exciting and worrying time for students and parents. Successful transition is vital to the development of a students' self-esteem, academic performance, enhancement of resilience and sense of connectedness to family, peers, school and the wider community.

We are aware that students go from being the oldest in the group and the leaders of the Primary School to the youngest group in a much bigger school and that they move from a familiar environment into unfamiliar territory; also from being very well known by many to being relatively unknown. However, all of this does change as the first term of Secondary Schooling unfolds.

It is normal for your daughter to be excited and ready to move from Primary School into Secondary, as well as nervous, anxious and a little stressed – this is all due to the uncertainty of what lies ahead. The transition process for all students is different; the stages vary, as does the speed at which an individual makes the necessary adjustments. Let us consider the changes that the students experience in a very short time frame.

The changes to the school day and routine for Year 7 are significant. The Year 6 students who come from the St Catherine's Junior School, for example, have contact with five Specialist teachers and their Class teacher. In Year 7, however, they will have 12 subjects, possibly taught by 12 different teachers, as well as a Form Teacher. This means that they have to adapt to 12 new teaching styles. There is an obvious increase in the level of homework and time allocated to completing homework each evening, which is often more challenging and more complex.

Students are required to undertake an increased level of self-management, organisation and responsibility. They have to move classrooms, take appropriate books, laptop and Record Book to class, whilst mastering the code on their padlock, putting away their personal belongings and locking up their locker. In addition to this, they are making friends, consolidating and maintaining existing friendships, possibly using public



transport for the first time alone, without mum or dad. Then there is the co-curricular program, which comprises GSV Sport, early-morning sports practice, House competitions, Music and Choral programs, as well as extension activities.

The end of the school day can be exhausting, as many students head off to other afterschool activities, such as ballet and dance, tennis and private music lessons. Before the day eventually ends, there is dinner and homework, then it is time to pack the school bag and the sports bag, organise the school uniform, snacks and lunch, and get ready for the next day. There are so many new challenges! You can see that your daughter is going to require as much support as possible from you and the rest of the family.

In order to prepare the students for the move into Year 7 at St Catherine's School, we bring all of the girls together on three occasions. The aim is for the students to meet and embark on the journey of getting to know each other. We facilitate this through small group activities and games, music, sporting activities, school familiarisation and an introduction to academic subjects, combined with meeting some of the Year 7 teaching staff.

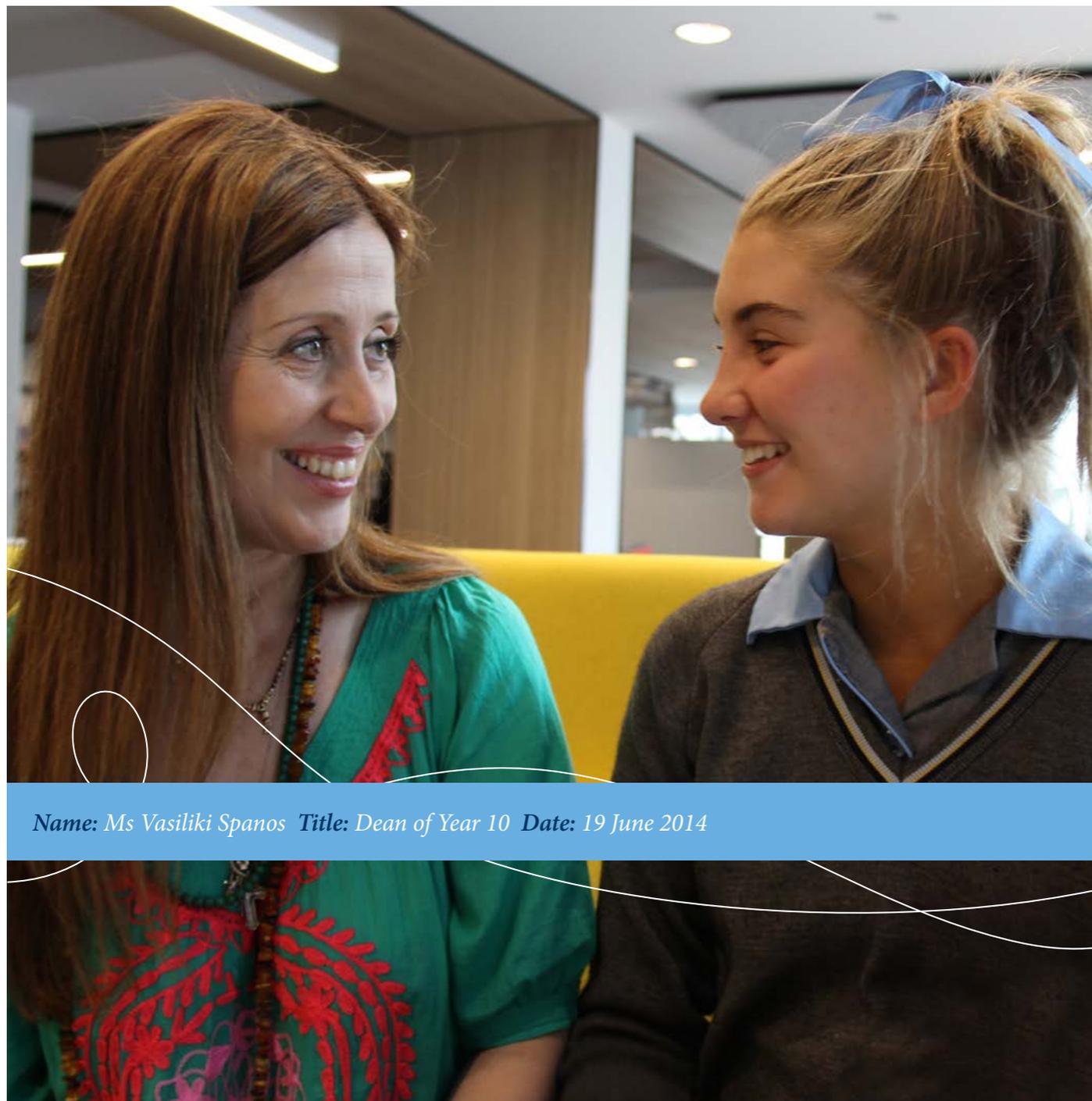
This process commences in Term 2, as we aim to begin to establish a sense of belonging and resilience amongst the group as early as possible. There is an Orientation activity organised for Terms 3 and 4. We follow our Orientation Days with a Transition Interview, where I meet each student and her parents. This focuses on her personal interests and is another opportunity for me to get to know the girls and families in my care. Our final Orientation is a half-morning at the beginning of Year 7, where all of the girls start the school year a day earlier than the other year levels. This is a relaxing time, with just Year 7 girls and their teachers, integrating and starting the familiarity process and journey into Secondary Schooling.

Miss Jenny Molloy

Dean of Year 7
Humanities Teacher

¹ Hanewald, R. (2013). *Transition Between Primary and Secondary School: Why it is Important and How it can be Supported*. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 38(1)





Name: Ms Vasiliki Spanos Title: Dean of Year 10 Date: 19 June 2014



FINDING ONESELF IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

The Year 10 Community Service program helps awaken personal and social consciousness in our students, writes Ms Vasiliki Spanos, Dean of Year 10.

When students embark upon their Year 10 journey at St Catherine's School, it marks a seminal point in their development. Suddenly a whole new landscape stands before the Year 10 student – a young woman, ready, excited, yet at times hesitant to take that step over the threshold towards young adulthood. Regardless of those initial feelings of trepidation, the Year 10 student has arrived!

It can be a daunting time. The change does not necessarily take place overnight; in most cases, individual shifts occur gently and gradually. So what might the reality of the Year 10 girl be? New friends, old friends, new VCE subjects, future career paths to consider, subjects to manage, family and even work responsibilities, on top of sport and co-curricular commitments. With change and ever-present flux comes a growing awareness of one's sense of self and personal identity, as well as a sense of one's place in the world.

The supportive culture of St Catherine's seeks to nurture and instil our School's values of Integrity, Curiosity, Perseverance and Empathy in a manner that holds and supports the student, whilst, seemingly paradoxically, encouraging the individual to explore and extend their experience beyond the boundaries of 17 Heyington Place.

Where and how does Community Service fit in? Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others". In many ways, what we seek to achieve through the various Community Service initiatives at St Catherine's School embodies this ideal. So often, students who volunteer their time, skills and energy find that, in offering their services to help others, they do indeed 'find' or discover an aspect of their own being that they have not had the opportunity to express, or perhaps did not even know they possessed. This is a very powerful moment. Quite often, students feel empowerment and a deep sense of satisfaction that is not quantifiable nor measurable in any tangible form, but everyone senses and feels that it is 'good'. Therein lies the key: *Nil magnum nisi bonum – Nothing is great unless it is good.*

Since 2010, Year 10 students have been involved with the Friday Night School. Every Friday during term, from 4.45pm until 6.00pm, a group of students and a supervising St Catherine's School teacher make their way to St Ignatius Church in Richmond. There, in the big Church Hall, they tutor students whose families have recently arrived in Australia, students who come from a non-English speaking background, or students of refugee background. Our girls may work with young children, or even Year 12 students, and our teachers often assist parents with their English skills. Everyone gets involved and this outburst of intense activity takes place, almost miraculously, within 75 minutes.



Similarly, St Catherine's School students at Year 10 look forward to the winter months every year, as this is when we get involved with the Prahran Mission Winter Breakfast Program. Here, two students, accompanied by one St Catherine's School staff member, are involved in the preparation and serving of breakfast to those who are in need of a warm meal and are living in our community. This community service experience is also very powerful. Everyone volunteering during these cold winter months is confronted with the very real face of poverty in our society. However, it is also the face of humanity. Working with the staff and patrons of Prahran Mission serves to remind each and every one of us of the links that bind us, essentially, the link of our common humanity. The students who volunteer at The Prahran Mission, without exception, come away feeling such a deep sense of gratitude, empathy and care for their fellow man. Again, how does one measure the success of such a program?

In Erica Frydenberg's book, *Think Positively: A Course For Developing Coping Skills in Adolescents*, Tom Oakland writes, "much has been written about optimism and empowerment and how these contribute to an understanding of how we

confront the challenges of life, develop goals and visions and attain success".¹ In an age where young people are faced with many challenges, as teachers and parents we are indeed challenged and compelled to foster a sense of personal agency in each young person in our care.

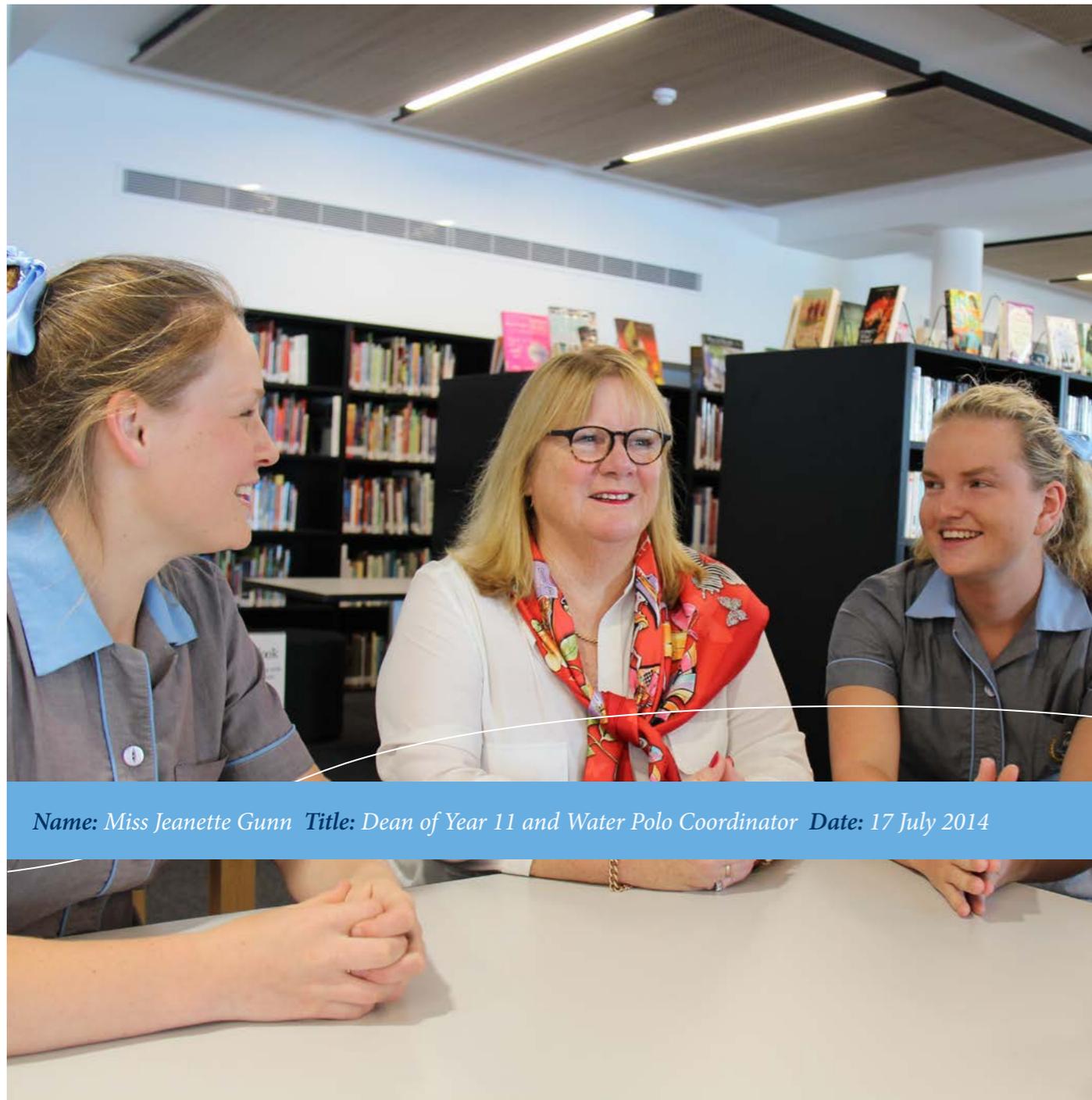
Community service is a means through which the individual student is able to manifest and cultivate their own personal sense of self and engagement with society. It promotes positive communication and relationships, whilst increasing resilience, empathy and courage within a spirit of altruistic and civic responsibility. The impact of such an experience cannot be underestimated as it quite often represents the potent seed of individual empowerment and cultural change.

Ms Vasiliki Spanos

Dean of Year 10
English Teacher

Frydenberg, E. (2010) *Think Positively! A Course For Developing Coping Skills in Adolescents*, Continuum Publishing, London. New York.





Name: Miss Jeanette Gunn Title: Dean of Year 11 and Water Polo Coordinator Date: 17 July 2014



THE ADVANTAGES OF GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

Taking part in team sport provides girls with many valuable lessons about themselves and life in general, argues Miss Jeanette Gunn, Dean of Year 11.

It is no state secret that I am passionate about sport, both as a participant and a spectator. Many of my fondest school memories are indeed based on my extensive sporting involvement. As the daughter of a father who very much wanted a son, I spent a great deal of my youth watching cricket and football (AFL). And so it is that both of these more than continue to hold my interest and enthusiasm today.

Beyond these though, there is a strong connection with water polo. As Manager of the highly successful Australian Women's Water Polo team from 1995 to 2008, I have been most fortunate to have been involved in sport at an elite level, including world titles and Olympic Games campaigns.

I am thrilled, therefore, to observe that Sport is definitely recognised as a much valued aspect of the co-curricular program at St Catherine's School. A wide variety of sports are offered, including athletics, badminton, basketball, cross country, gymnastics, netball, rowing, snowsports, softball, swimming, tennis and water polo. It is a credit to our School that such a large percentage of the girls participate in Sport in some way.

Playing sport has many benefits that I believe can be classified into the following categories:

- recreational
- personal development
- health and wellbeing
- learning about values.

"If you want your child to grow up to be a confident and well-adjusted adult, then team sports may well be the answer as you learn that it doesn't come down to the best player. It comes down to working as a team, accepting decisions and understanding that people have different abilities," advocates Ross Morrison, a sports expert with the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Playing a team sport provides girls with important lessons in personal values. As Morrison explains, "Kids learn that things aren't going to go their way all the time, and that they need to respect their peers as well as referees and sports officials." These experiences can influence them throughout their lives.

Team sports can also be good for a child's mental health. Children who play team sports learn how to be more resilient when presented with a setback, and are less likely to feel isolated. Failure to gain selection in a team or an event may certainly be difficult for a child to cope with, but the opportunity



to deal with this provides the child, and the adults around them, with the chance to grow from the experience.

There is little doubt that society exerts pressure on students to gain academic success. Interestingly, though, there is a body of evidence to suggest that physical activity might play a positive role in actually increasing numeracy and literacy. As the old adage proclaims: "Healthy body, healthy mind!"

When students take part in team sports, they develop:

- friendship and camaraderie
- cooperation and teamwork skills
- leadership skills
- physical skills and fitness
- tactical skills
- respect for team members, opponents, coaches, umpires
- social interaction skills
- goal setting skills
- a sense of belonging
- self-discipline, patience and persistence
- resilience through sharing positive and negative experiences.

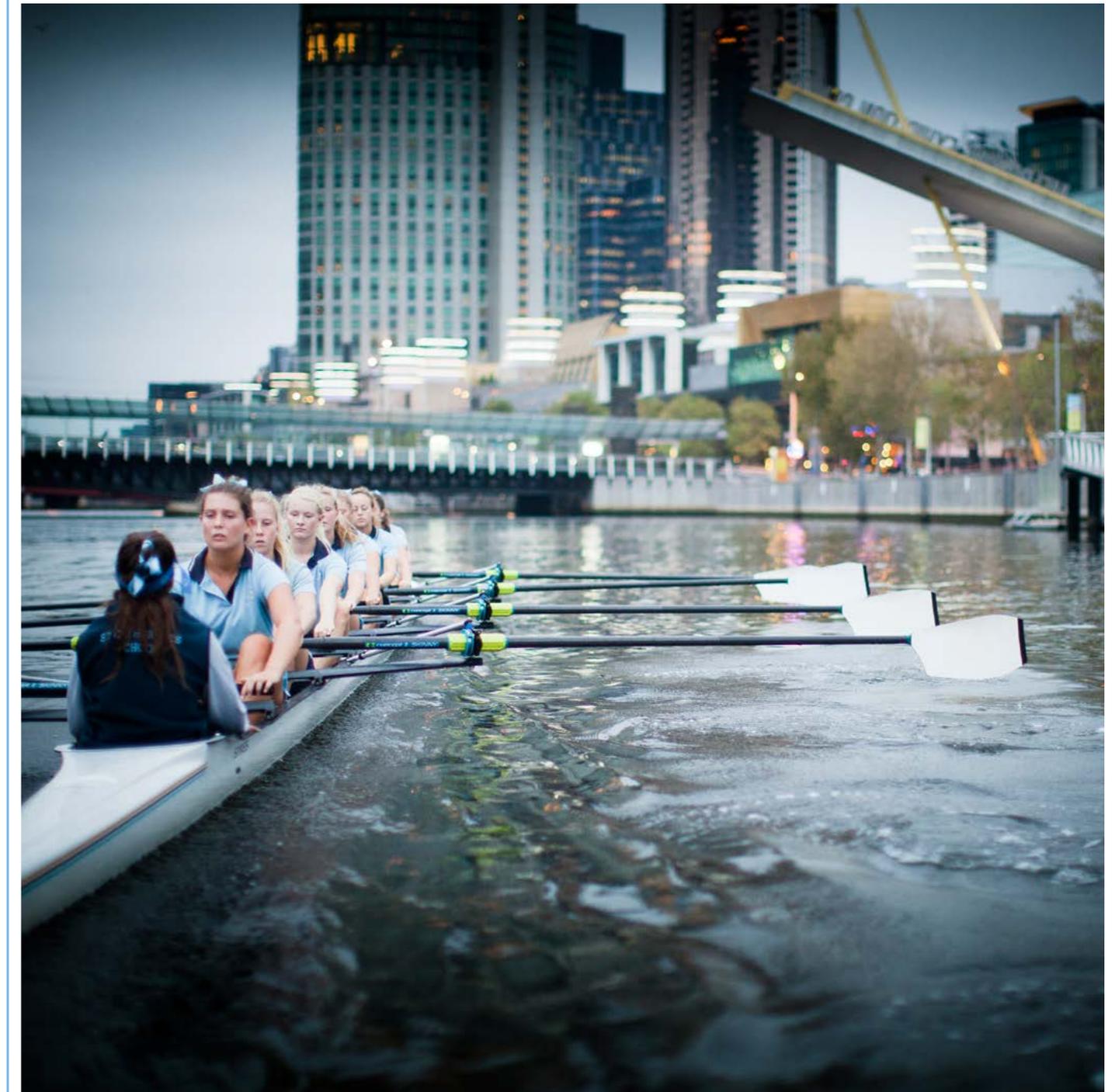
Team sports give students the opportunity to:

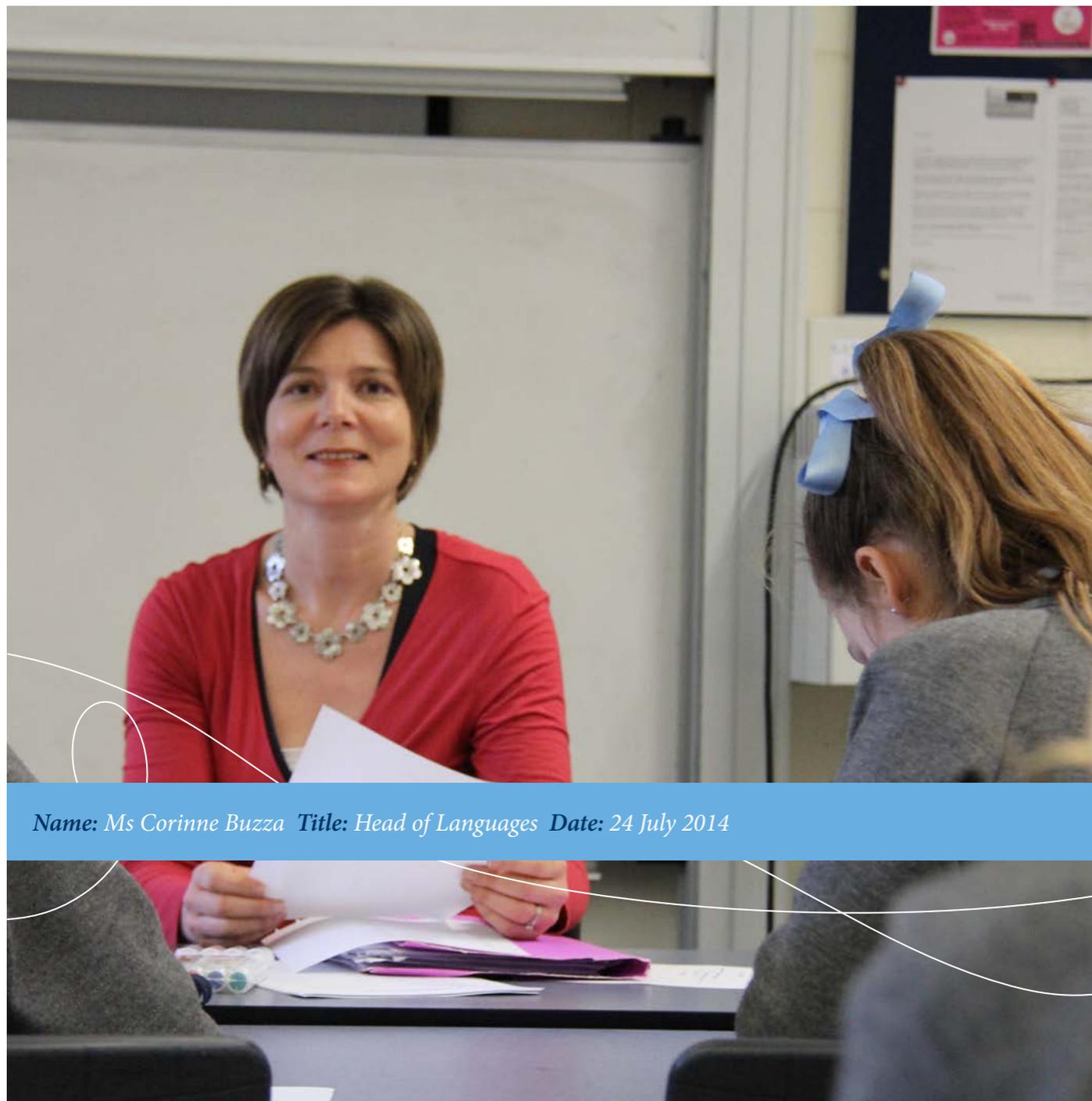
- deal with winning as well as losing
- overcome shyness by being in the situation of needing to communicate with others
- participate with different students, who may not be a part of their friendship group.

A sense of connectedness, physicality and enjoyment associated with a sporting life may well have origins at school through individual and team sport but, in many ways, the approach to sport can be an ever expanding universe that spills over into life beyond school – a habit of mind and attitude that gives a person the confidence to discover much about themselves and capabilities in the process – and undoubtedly bring much joy, too.

Miss Jeanette Gunn

Dean of Year 11
Mathematics Teacher
Water Polo Coordinator





Name: Ms Corinne Buzza Title: Head of Languages Date: 24 July 2014



LANGUAGE IS CULTURE AND CULTURE IS LANGUAGE

Learning a language is about so much more than process and memory, says Faculty Leader – Languages, Ms Corinne Buzza.

"I think my French has improved a little bit but I think that the whole experience is more important than that. I learnt a lot of things during my exchange and I think that I came back a different person from when I left Australia. For me, the most important things are that I am more open to new experiences..."

These few lines, written by a former St Catherine's student after her exchange to France, prompted me to write this article.

Have you ever wondered what it really means to learn a language? Is it more than learning new words, sounds and grammar rules?

The belief that is becoming more and more prevalent is that learning a language is much more than learning the mechanics of language, and that the process is, in fact, about making links between language and culture. We could not understand a culture without having direct access to its language because of their intimate connection.

Communication with people from other countries is fraught with dangerous misunderstandings if we ignore culture. Have you ever found yourself in an awkward position while overseas because you were unaware of the local practices? I have!

A distinction, however, needs to be made between learning about the culture of the other country (or countries), which emphasises the culture of the other, and learning culture through an intercultural perspective, which emphasises our own culture as a vital part of engaging with a new culture. In other

words, to fully understand the culture of the 'other', we need to be able to relate our own values and traditions to others'.

For example, by learning the language and practices related to gift-giving/receiving in Japan or China, learners are given the opportunity to reflect on their own traditions, thus understanding the underpinning cultural conceptions related to the practice. By taking part in role-plays aimed at mimicking greeting people in a French-speaking country, learners are able to experience and reflect on the language used. By comparing it to their own, they will then be in a position to analyse the register and level of language used in both cultural environments.

Language and culture are inherently linked and it is impossible not to consider intercultural understanding as an intrinsic component of the language curriculum. The aim is for learners to be able to challenge their own beliefs and for teachers to ask questions that may trigger students' critical reflection.

Learning a language is not only about understanding others, but also about developing a better understanding of oneself. As contact among cultures is increasing, intercultural understanding is critical for anyone wanting to understand those whose beliefs and backgrounds might be vastly different from ours.

Learning a language is learning about the behaviour of a society, its customs and language use.

Ms Corinne Buzza
Head of Languages
French Teacher



Name: Mrs Faye Shortal Title: Head Librarian Date: 31 July 2014



* FICTION'S DARK THEMES

Head of Library Mrs Faye Shortal provides an insight into the reading habits of teenagers and explains how so-called 'dark' fiction can be a tool for empowerment.

Periodically, you will come across an article in a newspaper or magazine decrying the fact that current Young Adult Fiction (YAF) is too 'dark'. Commentators point to the fashion for stories about an apocalyptic end-of-the-world, where young people need to commit violent acts in order to survive, or books about the sadder side of human experience, where characters self-harm or suffer terminal illness. Recent best-sellers such as *The Hunger Games* and *The Fault in Our Stars* have both been criticised for such focus.

Children's reading habits continually change and they will self-select books that have meaning for them at any given time, reading a particular style of book for a while and then moving on. A good book for any child will have subject matter showing main characters who satisfactorily resolve a crisis applicable to the relevant developmental stage and age of the reader.¹ For a five-year-old, this might be a picture story book about coping with the loss of a favourite toy; for a 13-year-old it could be a novel about a girl surviving exclusion by classmates.

YAF is often written from the first-person point of view, giving readers a look into the mind of a teenage character. The characters may be quick to love or hate and are put into situations where a young reader can easily sympathise with them, or commiserate over their fate. Often the main character is given unexpected power

over her situation, making her own decisions for survival in a dystopian world where adults are absent, or able to choose the person she wants to love against the rules of her society.

Understanding the mind of a character who meets obstacles, makes mistakes, develops strength through hardship, or experiences human kindness in the face of traumatic events is not a depressing read. On the contrary, such books can be empowering. Our girls often request "a sad book" to read, and one of the most popular books in the School Library is written as a series of notes interchanged between a girl and her mother, as her mother is dying of cancer. Teenage readers are curious and such books can offer them an emotional insight into troubling issues that might be affecting them, or someone that they know.

Reading novels dealing with social and personal problems can be a safe way to bring these issues into focus for teen readers. As well as being a compelling read, these 'dark' books may indeed give our girls some effective tools with which to survive similar challenges.

Mrs Faye Shortal
Head Librarian

Saxby, Maurice. *Give Them Wings* p 11



Name: Mrs Pauline van der Poel Title: Careers Practitioner Date: 7 August 2014



PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

Our Careers Practitioner, Mrs Pauline van der Poel, explains how St Catherine's helps students discover what they want to do when they leave School.

Often, when I am asked where I work, I proudly say "St Catherine's School". When I explain that I am the Careers Practitioner, I am met with a longing gaze.

So, what does a Careers Practitioner offer a school? Why, and how, do schools encourage students to think about the future in terms of Career Development?

According to the Career Education Association of Victoria website, career development is defined as "the lifelong process of managing life, learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving future. It applies to people of all ages".

Within schools, a Career Development Practitioner will work with young people to help them develop an understanding of themselves, their personal attributes, skills, abilities and interests. Following the guidelines in the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework, students are encouraged to discover, explore, focus, plan, decide and apply. These are considered to be the six steps to success.

Career development practitioners provide services that assist people to make educational, training and occupational choices. In schools, we work with young people in transition between year groups and into the tertiary or employment

sectors. We spend a great deal of time providing a positive and supportive environment to enhance a student's understanding of the range of future prospects they may have.

Career development should be ongoing and the opportunities provided at school give students the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed choices for the future. There is evidence that Career Development can have a positive impact on the skills of students, in relation to making successful transitions, having positive attitudes towards careers, and developing self-awareness, pathway knowledge and improved job search skills.

Career development at St Catherine's follows a model to enhance a student's understanding of themselves and to provide the skills to make informed and considered choices for the future. Careers is a joint program involving teaching staff from curriculum and pastoral areas in the School. Teachers work with students to help provide information that is reflective of the student's skills and abilities, while also looking at ways to feed forward information about how to enhance performance and satisfaction.

Within our program we are able to offer the opportunity to understand and work on career development pathway plans from Year 7 onwards. With the introduction of the eportfolio, we are now able to assist students to work through a variety of activities where they are able to develop a sense of self-awareness, measure their interests, values, talents and



begin to set SMART goals for the future. They are able to be proud of personal achievements and showcase these in written, photographic and video forms. The eportfolio is a 'moving' electronic document, allowing students to update and change their information as they change and develop. By the time the students reach Years 10, 11 and 12, they may reflect on information they have obtained from participating in work experience, career focused seminars/lectures, visiting open days and participating in careers mornings/breakfasts. The eportfolio allows all of this be showcased in one place.

As students progress through our School, they are empowered with the skills to search, plan and make decisions with relevant information pertaining to their personal interests and ambitions. They become more aware of opportunities to study, or gain future employment, and develop the required skills to effectively manage their careers and pathways throughout their lives.

Career Development at St Catherine's also works towards enhancing students' personal capacity to develop their employability skills, so that once they graduate, they will be able to excel in their fields of interest for the future. These are skills needed in all types of occupations and include the following:

- Communication
- Team work

- Problem solving
- Initiative and enterprise
- Planning and Organisation
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology.

(For a detailed definition of each of the above skills and how they can apply in the workplace, I would encourage you to read the Victorian Department of Education's *Employability Skills Framework* document by clicking here.)

My belief is that schools cannot be the sole provider of careers information and support to our future generation. It is imperative that there is a team approach – student, school and family. When all these stars are aligned, we can support a student to make informed decisions and provide support and assistance enabling them to fulfill their future aspirations. St Catherine's School enjoys the participation of our parent and School community. A level of involvement and understanding of parents in their child's choices can be very beneficial. We are proud of the involvement and participation our parents, Old Girls and School community members show for our careers programs.

Mrs Pauline van der Poel

Careers Practitioner
VET Coordinator





Name: Mrs Gina Peele Title: Dean of Year 8 and Yalari Student Coordinator Date: 14 August 2014

* PARENTING: THE HARDEST JOB OF ALL

Being a good parent to young teenagers is not always easy but our Dean of Year 8, Mrs Gina Peele, has a few tips that might help.

I was reminded by a family friend recently that parenting is the hardest job we will ever have. When we first become parents, it can be very stressful having to cope with a crying, hungry baby on very little sleep, while also trying to manage a household and the chores that go with it.

When children become more independent, the perception is that they will be easier to manage. However, parenting young teenagers can be a challenging experience, and one that we need to involve ourselves in wholeheartedly. Consistency in our approach, while sometimes difficult to achieve, is vital. As a parent, it can be difficult to watch our children go through hormonal changes and struggle for independence.

Recently, I read an article about positive parenting teenagers, which was written by Dr Laura Markham, a clinical psychologist from Columbia University. She offered the following 10 tips to assist families through the teenage years:

1. Establish dependable together time. Be sure to check in every single day and bank time with your child. Communication is important. A few minutes of conversation while you're cleaning up after dinner or right before bedtime can keep you tuned in and establish open communication. Even teenagers who seem to have forgotten who their

parents are the other 23 hours a day often respond well to a goodnight hug and check-in chat once they're lounging in bed. In addition to these short daily check-ins, establish a regular weekly routine for doing something special with your children, even if it's just going out for ice cream or a walk together.

2. Parent actively and appropriately. Don't invite rebellion by refusing to acknowledge that your son or daughter is growing up and needs more freedom. But don't be afraid to ask where your kids are going, who they'll be with and what they'll be doing. Get to know your kids' friends and their parents so you're familiar with their activities.
3. Try to be there after school. Rearrange things at work if you can. And try to be there between 3.30pm and 6.00pm. If your child will be with friends, make sure there's adult supervision, not just an older sibling.
4. Make it a high priority to eat meals together as often as you can. Meals are a great opportunity to talk about the day's events, to unwind, reinforce and bond. They're also your best opportunity to keep in touch with your teen's life and challenges, and to spot brewing problems. Finally, an important factor in kids' happiness and overall success is whether they feel they get time to 'just hang out and talk' with parents every day.



5. Keep the lines of communication humming. Ensuring that you are there for your children when they need to talk will encourage them to discuss issues when they need to, rather than bottling it up inside.
 6. Encourage good self-care, such as the nine-and-half-hours of sleep every teenager needs, and healthy eating. Coffee is a bad idea for early teenagers because it interferes with normal sleep patterns. Too much screen time, especially in the hour before bedtime, reduces melatonin production and can contribute to children finding it difficult to fall asleep at night.
 7. Keep your standards high. Your teenager wants to be his or her best self. Our job as parents is to support our teenagers in doing that. But don't expect your child to achieve goals you decide for her; she needs to begin charting her own goals now, with the support of a parent who adores her just as she is and believes that she can do anything she aims to. Support your teenager's passions and explorations as she finds her unique voice.
 8. Remember you're a parent, which is better than a friend. Kids want to be able to talk to you about anything, and they want you to understand. But they don't want you to be their friend; sometimes they'll be looking to you to set limits they can't set for themselves. Sometimes you'll need to stick by your values and say no, whether that's to an unsupervised party or a very late bedtime. Sometimes your teen will be able to use your guidance to come up with a win-win solution that answers your concerns. Want respect, consideration, authenticity? If that's what you offer your teenager, that's what you'll receive in return.
 9. Keep kids safe and connected to the family by keeping computers in your common space. It can be hard for parents to track what teenagers do online because they know more about the computer than we do. But research shows that she'll be less tempted to spend time doing things you'd disapprove of if the computer is in a common space, where you can walk by and glance at what she's doing. Kids live online these days, but she can still stay connected to her family if online is in the heart of your home.
 10. Continue family meetings. Held regularly at a mutually agreed-upon time, family meetings provide a forum for discussing triumphs, grievances, sibling disagreements, schedules, and any topic of concern to a family member. Ground rules help. Everyone gets a chance to talk; one person talks at a time without interruption; everyone listens, and only positive, constructive feedback is allowed. To get resistant teenagers to join in, combine the get-together with incentives such as post-meeting pizza or ice cream, or assign them important roles such as recording secretary.
- Melbourne-based clinical psychologist Andrew Fuller has researched the teenager's brain and suggests that: "Parents



need to be their teenager's frontal lobes. Asking an adolescent to do a lot of forward planning is like asking a dog to study physics. This is why too much freedom does not seem to help too many young people". This reinforces the suggestion that teenagers need boundaries and renegotiation of these boundaries should take place regularly, to allow room for growth, independence and new experiences.

Parenting is a challenging experience for which there is no rule book, despite all the available advice. No two families will embark on this journey in the same way. Communicating and being there for your children is a vital component to the relationship you create, allowing trust on both sides.

Mrs Gina Peele

Dean of Year 8

Yalari Student Coordinator

Physical Education Teacher





Name: Ms Vanessa Jackson-McRae Title: Head of Science Date: 21 August 2014

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CELEBRATING SCIENCE WEEK

Celebrated each year at St Catherine's, Science Week is an opportunity to showcase an aspect of the world of Science for students and staff. Our Head of Science, Ms Vanessa Jackson-McRae, explains further.

National Science Week, held this year from 16 to 24 August, is celebrated at St Catherine's through the annual Science Assembly, where we mark the achievements of the young scientists at our School.

At this year's Science Assembly, students presented their involvement in three specific areas:

- Science Experience – a three-to-four day, hands-on science experience in universities and other tertiary institutions for Year 9 students.
- Science Students @ Work program – an investigation into the cause of, and care for, those affected by Muscular Dystrophy in order to produce a booklet to entice patients and carers to participate in respite activities offered by Muscular Dystrophy Australia.
- Astrophysics elective – a pilot program run by Monash University and John Monash Science School: The National Virtual School of Emerging Sciences (NVSES).

The 2014 National Science Week theme for schools is Food for our Future, investigating the question, "How will science feed the world?" In order to answer this question, the Science faculty invited Professor Marilyn Anderson from La Trobe University's Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering, School of Molecular Sciences, Department of Biochemistry, to speak at Science Week Assembly.

Professor Anderson completed a BSc (Hons) at the University of Melbourne and a PhD in Biochemistry at La Trobe University. She spent seven years in the United States working on diabetes and oncogenes, and returned to Australia in 1982 to establish a molecular biology group at the University of Melbourne. In 1995, she moved to the Department of Biochemistry at La Trobe University, where she is currently working on defence molecules produced by plants for protection against insect pests and pathogens.

Professor Anderson identified the food for the future being obtainable through genetically modified plants. Global population predictions estimate that the planet will need to feed nine billion people by 2050. Currently, half the world's population lives on less than two dollars a day, one billion are undernourished and 100 million are starving.

According to Uma Lele, a former senior advisor to the World Bank, "Lifting a billion people out of poverty and feeding an extra 2.3 billion by 2050 will require an increase in cereal production by 70%"¹. Currently only one month's supply of grain is in storage, one third of forests have gone, 20% of arable land is lost and cities are expanding in areas of best agricultural productivity. According to British zoologist Charles Godfray, "We have 40 years to radically transform agriculture to work out how to grow more food without exacerbating environmental problems and simultaneously cope with climate change"².

Professor Anderson outlined the production of transgenic plants and how this technology has been used to engineer



soybean, corn, cotton and canola for resistance to herbicides and insecticides. The benefits of transgenic plants are higher yields, minimum tillage (saves fuel, reduces greenhouse emissions) and no toxic residues in the soil. Genetically modified (GM) crops have been planted commercially for 18 years. In 2013, GM crops covered a global area of 175 million hectares, grown in 27 nations by 18 million farmers. The environmental benefits have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 19 billion kilograms (equivalent to nine million cars in 2010) and chemical insecticide use by 9.1% (equivalent to 443 million kilograms from 2006 to 2010).

Products in the biotech pipeline include rice, wheat and sugar cane, with drought tolerance, high yields, nitrogen utilisation, insect resistance, nematode resistance and herbicide tolerance. GM crops have the potential to contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of cutting poverty in half by optimising crop productivity through drought tolerant corn in North America by 2013 and in Africa by 2017, golden rice in the Philippines by 2014 and insect resistant corn and rice in China.

Professor Anderson's presentation promoted rich scientific discussions amongst staff and students, prompting many to investigate the food they consume.

Other activities around the School during Science Week included students and staff participating in Science Week Quizzes, where their knowledge of genetically modified food and future resources was tested. Years 9 and 10 students attended a presentation of *'The Bad Science Show'* and explored suspect science, strange discoveries and weird claims alongside critical and scientific thinking outside the classroom. Meanwhile, Years 7 and 8 students discussed the energy content of food and the energy conversions within the body with Professor Bunsen.

Science Week encourages students to become fascinated by the world they live in and, most importantly, to question the world around them. Being a scientifically literate citizen enables students to change their world not only as a voter but also a consumer.

Ms Vanessa Jackson-McRae

Head of Science
Science Teacher

¹ Lele, U. 2010. Food security for a billion poor. *Science* 326: 1554

² Godfray, H C J. 2010. *Food Security: The Challenge of Feeding 9 Billion People*. *Science* 327: 812.





Name: Mrs Sue Collister Title: Director of Boarding Services Date: 28 August 2014



THE VALUE OF BOARDING

When students attend boarding school, the skills and values they learn stay with them for life, says our Director of Boarding Services, Mrs Sue Collister.

In Australia, there are currently 21,444 boarders residing in the 190 schools which are members of the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA). St Catherine's School is one of the 27 member schools in Victoria and one of only eight all-girls boarding schools. As a member of the Executive of ABSA (Vic) and a past Board member of the National Executive of ABSA, I have had the opportunity to visit many of our member schools and understand the true value of a boarding education. Coupled with this has been my involvement in the Exchanges Programs in the United Kingdom and the United States (over 12 years), which has also allowed me to reside, and learn about boarding, overseas.

As well as providing an excellent education, boarding schools also teach their boarders important values, such as consideration, responsibility, respect, reliability and resilience. As a result, students learn to set goals for themselves based on these values and learn to cope with real life situations.

Recently, I asked some of our boarders what they saw as the real values of boarding and I have summarised some of their thoughts:

- The chance to develop a strong sense of independence – “not dependent on my family to do everything for me”. (Year 9 Boarder)

- “Developed tolerance of others, including girls from other cultures”. (Year 11 Boarder)
- “Learned [life] skills, such as doing your own washing and catching trains – things that I would never have learnt at home”. (Year 9 Boarder)
- “An opportunity to develop an organised approach to my studies and the importance of time management techniques...the value of a tidy bedroom...and the possibility of making friends with girls in different year levels”. (Year 11 Boarder)

The importance of resilience, which can be defined as the ability to bounce back when faced with life's challenges, is often used in connection with boarding schools. In Illawarra, our Boarding House, we have created an environment as close to that of a home as possible; however, there are still many challenges that our girls face. The first challenge is usually that of homesickness. For many of the girls, it is the first time they have been away from home for an extended period. Our staff, through their kindness and empathy, help them to develop strategies to cope with these feelings. The set-up of our staff desk and the central lobby area at Illawarra encourages the girls to come and sit with other girls and staff when they may need support, a warm drink and a biscuit, help with their knitting or just the chance to feel part of a group. The time straight after school, before dinner and after prep, are often the busiest and noisiest times in the lobby.



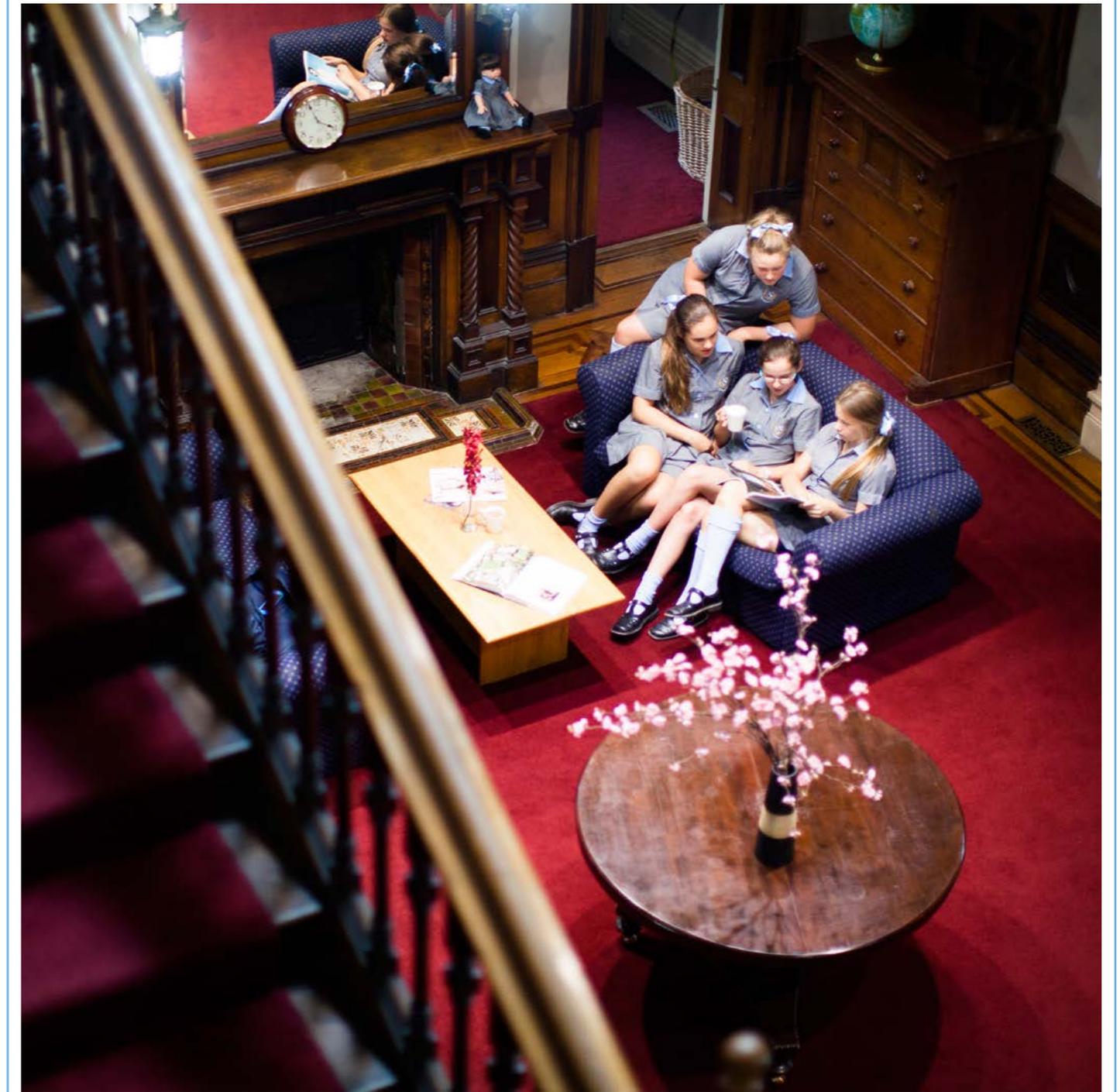
Often the group dynamics of a boarding environment, together with shared experiences, can have a lasting impact on a boarder's self-confidence and on her ability to try new things. We always encourage our girls to continue with pursuits they may have done at home, and to try new activities. This has been showcased this year by one of our Year 9 rural boarders who had always wanted to try cheerleading and now, after six months, is trialling for a team to compete in the United States. She has learned the values of responsibility to her team members, being reliable by always turning up to training, respect for others' strengths and weaknesses, and resilience when a particular skill is difficult and needs more practice.

Whenever I take prospective boarding families on a tour of Illawarra, I always stress the importance we place on respect for each other and for each other's belongings, the value of developing life skills such as independence, and the benefit of a structured study program for later academic success.

At dinner, we do not use our mobile phones, as we do not want to lose the value of talking and sharing experiences over the dining table. We are all conscious of the impact that technology has on our lives, and at Illawarra we endeavour to teach responsible use of devices such as smart phones and notebook computers, including when it is and is not an appropriate time to use them.

It is our plan that when our boarders leave at the end of Year 12, they take with them many of the values learned at Illawarra which we hope will aid them in their tertiary studies and future pursuits. Together with long-lasting friendships and the ability to adapt to a range of situations, we hope they have developed the skills to make their own decisions and have the resilience to cope with life's challenges.

Mrs Sue Collister
Director of Boarding Services
History Teacher





Name: Mrs Alana Moor Title: Head of Junior School and ELC Date: 4 September 2014



MANAGING GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Encouraging the ambitions and goals of young children while setting realistic expectations for them is a delicate balancing act, as our Head of Junior School and ELC, Mrs Alana Moor, explains.

"You can do and be anything you want."

Despite its inaccuracy, this statement (and others like it) is often made to children.

While encouraging ambition and aspiration is a major component of parenting and teaching, balance is essential at all times. Allowing children to believe that ambition alone will bring about success and achievement of goals sets a precedent for disappointment and a sense of failure if that ambition is not realised. Neither of these outcomes is desirable.

Similarly, emphasising absolute success creates anxiety and the desire to work towards other goals may diminish.

In primary school, children often set their sights on being selected as School Captain. The reality of leadership positions in most primary schools is that there will be one School Captain, one Vice Captain and a number of House Captains. This, of course, means that most children in the year level will not be chosen for a leadership role.

Children who have been told persistently that they can do and be anything they want, but who nevertheless miss out on

a leadership position, are usually left feeling disappointed and cheated.

Young learners need warm support and encouragement when they pursue particular goals, and sincere endorsement of effort and persistence sets firm foundations and attitudes in future pursuits. It is important that they feel pride in their planning and effort, regardless of the outcome. First place is a fantastic achievement but not a place occupied by all contenders.

With regard to leadership positions, it is wise to affirm the individual's positive characteristics and attributes, as well as to ensure they know that, with or without a badge, they are valued and loved.

Interestingly, while those who do achieve a leadership position in primary school are always initially elated, they quickly come to realise that having that coveted badge can sometimes create difficulties for them. For instance, early in Term 2, the 2014 Barbreck House Captains explained that they had learnt that a badge "does not make people listen to us when we are organising things", nor does it mean that "people do what we want them to" or "turn up for practice!" One of the students with a badge reported, "I always wanted to be a Captain, but it is quite hard to lead and sometimes I wish I was helping and not the leader!"



They all agreed emphatically that House success is only possible "with the support and help of all the others in the House".

Listening to children's hopes, ambitions and plans is essential. Endorsing their drive for success and efforts to achieve is strengthening. We must afford children a respectful but realistic response regarding success, where we applaud ambition, endorse effort and persistence, but ensure that children do not see second place as disappointing nor as effort wasted.

Mrs Alana Moor

Head of Junior School and ELC





Name: Mr James Brown Title: English and Drama Teacher Date: 11 September 2014



ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

The works of William Shakespeare continue to resonate with students more than 400 years after they were written, especially when they are viewed in performance, says English teacher Mr James Brown.

*Shakespeare. A name that undoubtedly stirs
The deepest of emotions within all.
If fear or joyous ecstasy occurs,
The Bard has shaped the learning in your school.
His teachings are still relevant today
Four hundred-fifty years since his birth;
Exploration of human condition,
Tragic lessons and witty comic mirth.*

*We need not mock the time with fairest show,
Honest integrity will light the stars,
Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard and Othello,
Made ill choices to set them all apart.
Finding meaning not too far from his page
As we all know that all the world's a stage.*

One of the teachers in the English Faculty is teaching *Macbeth* for the twentieth time this year. It is probably best I do not name her, so as to avoid my own tragic downfall. However, when I asked her about whether the text had become disengaging or stagnant, her answer was, quite simply, "No, it's *Macbeth*. It's just such a beautiful text". The plotline is fairly straightforward (spoiler alert): brave Scottish nobleman is honoured for defeating the invading Norwegian army; is

told by three witches he will become King; against his better judgement is coaxed into killing the well-loved king by his wife; becomes a paranoid regal insomniac and continues killing to retain his throne; is given more ambiguous prophecies by the witches; culminating with his beheading, restoring the natural order. So what is it about Shakespeare that makes his writing so beautiful and worthy of study?

Rich language, carefully crafted characters, abundant symbols and motifs, thought-provoking plotlines and moral conundrums are all worthy of mention, but the most enjoyable pedagogical aspect for me is its ability to inspire engaging discussions, critical thinking and creative meaning making. Having Shakespeare on the syllabus should not scare students. The language may be challenging at first, but some simple substitution can highlight the ever-evolving nature of language. Students are mastering new terminology every day, and should therefore feel confident to tackle the Elizabethan tongue – 'YOLO'*. I find that Shakespearean texts can be explored via a vast range of different learning activities. Students get to experience, read, listen to, devise, decipher, deconstruct, consider and create within the English classroom when studying Shakespeare, which is not always the case when studying other texts.

However, it has always been my opinion that to be properly appreciated, Shakespeare's plays must be experienced as they were intended – in performance. Scaffolding the concepts and Shakespearean language is beneficial, but to see the characters



come to life definitely helps students go beyond the surface of the text to engage with ideas that are relevant and meaningful. Luckily, this year the Bell Shakespeare Company had its school season of *Macbeth* playing at the Arts Centre, coinciding with the Unit 2 study on the very same text, and thankfully we were able to take the entire Year 11 cohort to see it.

I very much enjoyed accompanying the girls to the production last month. The performance was modernised, fast-paced, and full of action and excitement. More exciting still was what occurred after the curtain calls: a breadth of discussion about the varying meanings extracted from the performance. Some girls were discussing the symbolism of the music and lighting design, while others evaluated the use of modern dress, technology and minimalist set. Some were critiquing the

interpretation of the characters by the actors (even identifying some misquoted lines), while others compared notes on things they had not expected to see from their initial reading of the text. Some felt no sympathy for characters when looking at the play in class, but changed their minds once they had seen their portrayal on stage.

This is the true value of Shakespeare – not poring over the difference between ‘thy’ and ‘thine’, but the sharing of ideas that his work can stimulate. It is through this sharing of knowledge that learning is most engaging and effective.

*Ask a teenager for translation.

Mr James Brown
English and Drama Teacher





Name: Miss Elizabeth Ryan Title: Head of Davis and History Teacher Date: 18 September 2014

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TEACHING HISTORY

With high-quality instruction and a clear sense of direction from teachers, allowing students to 'own' their learning can produce amazing outcomes, argues Miss Elizabeth Ryan, History Teacher.

In a previous teaching role, I spent most of my time teaching Senior History and English. I started teaching Units 3 & 4 Revolutions with a burst, dedicating a considerable amount of my time and energy to learning about, developing and implementing a range of activities. I had very high hopes. In my long nights of planning, I was striving to hit upon the perfect task that would – in one fell swoop – engage, motivate and create a disciplined crew of History buffs who were inquisitive and metacognitive all at once.

Interestingly, I discovered that many students were very attached to rote learning in History. Some of my most determined young historians, who could intellectually match most university students, often compromised their marks by reciting the textbook. I was continually met with impressive students who lacked confidence in their own voice and their ability to express it. Needless to say, I met the rude awakening at the end of my first year that the equation was not:

Time spent on planning into the wee hours of the morning + coffee = outstanding student outcomes

As I reflected on my own teaching, and the ways that students behaved in my classes, I learnt that my goal as an educator is to establish a classroom culture of relentless engagement

and reflection. I envisaged my classroom as a space where no student could be left behind; one in which each individual would be regularly assessed in a variety of conventional and unexpected ways. Most of all, I wanted my students to work really hard, not because they were externally motivated by marks or the hours that I put into a task, but because they chose to – they wanted to. I developed a sense that perhaps my equation could be:

Development of a classroom culture of student ownership of learning = outstanding student outcomes

Encouraging students to develop 'ownership' of their learning underpins some important academic literature. John Hattie has, for several years, emphasised the very central role that a teacher plays in this process. His research has led him to conclude that teacher questioning, the regularity of feedback and overall instructional quality are fundamental to student engagement. Carol Dweck further contends that students who have a 'growth mindset', as opposed to a 'fixed' perception of their abilities, have a far greater capacity to learn and achieve.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that instead of galloping through jam-packed curricula without pausing for breath, it is up to the teacher to create intellectual space for the development of metacognitive and academic confidence. In my own experiences, simplicity can be the key to this. Dylan William recommends the use of simple, formative strategies, such as an 'Exit Pass' at the end of a lesson, to assess student



learning. I've found that engaging in a conversation with each individual learner as you return work, for example, can assist students to be more positive and objective in their attitude towards their own learning.

A wise mentor once said to me: "Learning History is like running a marathon". History, as with many disciplines, cannot easily be broken into small, right-or-wrong, digestible chunks. It is not a straightforward exercise in rote-learning and the retention of knowledge. Student ownership of a historical period will inevitably build over time, with high-quality instruction and a clear sense of direction.

I think effective teaching could be envisaged in a similar way. Effective teaching is a slow-build; a marathon, if you will. When I started, it felt like a series of short (and often very tiring) sprints to 'the finish line': the next assessment task; reports;

the end of the term. As much as I do often get swept up in these deadlines, I now try very hard to maintain equilibrium. In my determination to build student ownership of learning, I have become preoccupied with the engagement of my students during classes. I try to use efficient activities to allow students the space and time for active reflection.

I no longer stay up with a giant cup of coffee into the wee hours, planning maniacally, as I know now that I, too, need the space to engage with my own world. Funnily enough, it's in having this space that I've learnt to better reflect on my practice and feel confident in my own voice as a teacher.

Miss Elizabeth Ryan

Head of Davis
History Teacher





Name: Mr Alex Bacalja Title: Head of Beaulieu Blair and Humanities Teacher Date: 9 October 2014



DIGITAL DOMINANCE

The value of digital texts as tools for facilitating students' learning is becoming increasingly apparent, according to Humanities teacher Mr Alex Bacalja, who has been investigating learning in digital environments for his PhD at the University of Melbourne.

Having taught English in secondary schools for five years prior to beginning my PhD in 2010, I became very interested in the types of digital texts that dominated the everyday lives of my students. The schools I taught at had compulsory silent reading time every day, yet it was the texts that students willingly chose to engage with outside this time that fascinated me. Groups of sports-crazy boys would huddle in the library in the morning and flick through the latest soccer magazines, whilst the popularity of mobile phones was also widespread. It was not uncommon for a bus ride to a sporting venue or camp to be dominated by the sight of a busload of teens with their eyes fixed to mobile phone screens: sending messages, scrolling through music playlists, watching videos, and even surfing the internet. What became obvious was that the traditional novel was not the dominant text in their lives. Despite English classes spending the overwhelming majority of time working with print-based texts, and some students still borrowing regularly from school libraries, I began doctoral research wanting to understand the influence that more multimodal forms of textual experience were having on today's youth.

The proliferation of digital devices throughout the everyday practices of young people has had little impact on the way

that literacy has come to be conceptualised within educational contexts. Contributions to the field of literacy education, from the new literacy studies¹ and multiliteracies², have raised many questions about what constitutes appropriate literacy education and argued in favour of more flexible definitions of literacy. At a time when communication technologies, characterised by mobile phones, personal computers, the internet and video games, are changing the ways that many young people communicate, socialise and connect with the world around them, the focus has begun to shift to what tools and resources learners require in order to understand the multimodal texts that dominate their lives.

There are two questions that need to be addressed if we are to better understand the implications of young people's technology use. The first involves the potential cognitive and social potentials associated with digital technologies. The second is more holistic and seeks to understand teacher awareness about many of these technologies, so that they may support both practical and critical learning.

That digitally orientated literacies are different is hard to deny. Academics have chosen to focus on the participatory and collaborative affordances of these new forms of literacy. They are participatory in the way they privilege participation over publishing, distributed experience over centralised experts, and experimentation over normalisation. They are collaborative in the way they encourage collaboration over individualised authorship, a highly critical skill essential for successful integration into 21st century workplaces.



Whilst it is easy to focus on the potential harm of digital devices, we must resist the moral panic often associated with change that challenges our own ways of seeing the world and the experiences we had during our youth. Even though globalisation has created a situation of widespread insecurity for young people, typified by social exclusion (Wyn, 2009³), changing study and work choices (Anlezark, 2011⁴), and non-linear life trajectories (Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2011⁵), our attention needs to turn towards what can be learnt from the ways that young people create, challenge, and explore their own identities, and the potential learning affordance of digital and online practices.

Mr Alex Bacalja

Head of Beaulieu Blair
Humanities Teacher

¹ James Paul Gee, *The Social Mind: Language, Ideology and Social Practice*, Series in Language and Ideology (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1992)

² New London Group, 'A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures', Harvard Educational Review 66 (1996)

³ Wyn, J. (2009). *The changing context of Australian youth and its implications for social inclusion*. Youth Studies Australia, 28(1), 46-50

⁴ Anlezark, A. (2011). At risk youth: a transitory state? LSAY briefing paper 24. Adelaide: NCVER

⁵ Wyn, J., Lantz, S., & Harris, A. (2011). *Beyond the 'transitions' metaphor: Family relations and young people in late modernity*. Journal of Sociology, 48(1), 3-22





Name: Ms Debbie Thompson Title: Head of Health and Physical Education Date: 16 October 2014



LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Health and Physical Education Week is a much anticipated event on the St Catherine's School calendar. Ms Debbie Thompson, Health and PE Faculty Leader, explains why.

Health and Physical Education Week (HPE Week) provides an opportunity for St Catherine's Health and Physical Education teachers to promote and incorporate health and wellbeing activities and events into the Senior School calendar. It is a celebration of being active, learning about how to look after ourselves and encouraging everyone in the St Catherine's community to incorporate health and wellbeing into the School in a sustainable way. St Catherine's works continually to support health and wellbeing in many ways, and HPE Week allows us to showcase our practices.

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation states that Health and Physical Education is an essential area of the curriculum that provides real opportunities for children to learn how to lead active and healthy lives, now and in the future. In a world where technology is insidiously eroding physical activity in our leisure time, it is vital that we equip our students with the health literacy skills they require for lifelong participation in physical activity and healthy practices.

Some of the benefits of physical activity are obvious: a healthier heart and lungs, stronger bones and muscles, and improved body composition. Other benefits, despite their significance, are often forgotten: the reduction of stress and anxiety, improvement of self-esteem and body image, a greater sense of belonging and social connectedness, and

increased motivation for more physical activity. Intellectual benefits include enhanced learning, improved concentration, memory and academic performance, and improved mental health and awareness.

Yet, physical activity only provides overall health benefits when matched with healthy eating. Nutrition Australia is holding its annual National Nutrition Week to coincide with HPE Week, with the aim of raising awareness of the crucial role of food in our health. Nutrition Australia is encouraging all Australians to take the National Nutrition Week challenge by preparing healthy meals every day for seven days, and eat according to the Australian Dietary Guidelines as follows:

1. Drink plenty of water and enjoy a wide variety of nutritious food from these five food groups every day:
 - Vegetables of different types and colours, and legumes/beans.
 - Fruit.
 - Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley.
 - Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans.
 - Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat (low-fat varieties not recommended for children under the age of two).



2. Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.
3. Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.
4. Achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs.

For more information on the National Nutrition Week Challenge go to www.nutritionaustralia.org.au

This year's HPE Week has been action packed, thanks to the Health and Physical Education Faculty, ably led by Mr Brad Hicks' Years 9 and 10 Recreation and Sports Leadership elective class. These girls have helped to provide an extensive program for Years 7 to 12 students and staff throughout the week, and their preparation has been outstanding.

Notable activities have included a Year 8 Soccer Round Robin, Years 7 and 9 Zumba sessions, Years 7 to 12 Hip Hop Yoga (followed by a healthy breakfast for all participants), Wheelchair Basketball and massage therapists. The very popular Bike 'n' Blend, where students blend their own smoothies from a variety of healthy fruits and vegetables by cycling purpose built bicycles, was a huge success. A number

of fund-raising activities have been held, including a raffle to raise money for the Victoria Disabled Sports Association.

The HPE Week Assembly was held on Tuesday and we were honoured to have Dr Lee Naylor as our guest speaker. Dr Naylor is a retired Olympic athlete and the Managing Director of Fit and Healthy, an organisation committed to improving the physical and mental health and well-being of all Australians. Dr Naylor has completed a PhD in medical research from Melbourne University and is a passionate advocate for the benefits of physical activity combined with healthy nutrition. She was one of the instigators of the very successful 10,000 Steps Challenge that many Victorians, including St Catherine's staff and students, have participated in.

I am sure that all Senior students and staff have enjoyed HPE Week and, as Olivia Newton-John so beautifully sang (for those of you who are old enough to remember her video clip), 'Let's get Physical!'

Ms Debbie Thompson
Head of Health and Physical Education





Name: Miss Skye Stansfield Title: Snowsports Coordinator Date: 23 October 2014



ROLE MODEL ON THE SLOPES

Snowsports Coordinator Miss Skye Stansfield reflects on a successful season inspired by the highs and lows of a special St Catherine's Old Girl.

There has been a lot of hype this year surrounding Snowsports at St Catherine's, and with good reason: in our 55th year of competition, we have had one of our most successful seasons to date.

At the Victorian Interschools Championships, St Catherine's won both the Overall Senior Girls Section and the Overall Primary Girls Section. At the Australian Interschools Championships, we came first in the Overall Senior Girls Division by an impressive 85 points, and second in the Overall Primary Girls Division, missing out on first place by just six points.

We also had a total of 175 girls from across the School competing at our annual House Snowsports event – a record level of participation.

Our success has largely been inspired by St Catherine's Old Girl Anna Segal ('04), who has been making a name for herself in the world of Snowsports ever since leaving School. In February this year, we all watched in awe as Anna, the 2011 Slopestyle World Champion, competed in the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Anna proudly represented her country in the Freestyle event, which was only introduced to the Olympics for the first time this year.

After suffering many serious injuries, including to her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), Anna was uncertain leading up to the Sochi Games as to whether she would be able to land the difficult tricks required in the Slopestyle event. She demonstrated great determination and perseverance to keep trying in the face of adversity. Without an ACL, your knee becomes unstable and balance can often be lost, particularly when trying to land in snow off 60-foot jumps. Most people in this situation would give up and be in for surgery instantly to repair the damage, but not Anna. After years of training and with only a few weeks until the Olympics, she rested for three weeks, strapped her knee and hoped for the best. She ended up competing on knees which were so damaged that she had to get medical clearance only days before taking to the snow.

At the end of her competition, we waited with bated breath while the judges tallied the scores for the final skier. The results for the event were finally announced and Anna placed a close fourth. Afterwards, many people commented on how close she had come and what bad luck it was to miss out on a medal. When interviewed soon after, Anna commented that she could not have asked for any more and that she was ecstatic with her result. She had achieved an amazing feat and was so happy with the outcome. After thinking her dreams were dashed, Anna had accomplished the impossible and achieved at the highest level in her sport.



St Catherine's was lucky enough to have Anna as a guest speaker at our end-of-season Snowsports Dinner this year. She spoke to the girls about the highs and lows of the sport and her tumultuous journey over the last decade. What resonated the most with me was that her focus was on her own personal best and competing for the love of the sport, rather than for the results and glory.

Anna reflected on her time at St Catherine's and the many opportunities that presented themselves as a result. She confirmed what we already know: that our girls are so fortunate to be able to participate in a huge range of sports and other co-curricular activities while at School. When recalling her time as Snowsports Captain in 2004, she revealed that she couldn't even remember where she placed during the event. What had stayed with her was the memory of how much fun she had had competing for St Catherine's.

Anna Segal is living proof that winning isn't everything. Just as important are giving things a go, trying something new and having fun in the process.

Miss Skye Stansfield
Snowsports Coordinator
Physical Education Teacher





Name: Mr Paul Stokes Title: Service and Leadership Coordinator Date: 30 November 2014



TRAVELS IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Mr Paul Stokes, St Catherine's Service and Leadership Coordinator, accompanied nine Year 9 students on a study tour to China during the school holidays. He reports on their discoveries.

During the September holidays, I was fortunate to accompany nine Year 9 students on a Study Tour of China. We spent time in the cities of Beijing, Xian and Shanghai, and students and teachers alike were awestruck with the immense size and contrast that they provided. While statistics cannot purely explain the enormity of the country, the following are just a few staggering numbers for you:

- There are over 5.5 million cars in Beijing alone (the traffic is extraordinary!).
- The equivalent to the population of Australia, almost 24 million people, live in the greater Shanghai city area.
- There are over 20 cities in China with a population greater than five million people.
- China's economy grew seven times as fast as the United States of America's in the 2000s.

There was significant trepidation on my behalf on the day of our flight out of Melbourne. As it was my first trip with students anywhere, let alone overseas, my mind was in overdrive with questions for our illustrious, well-travelled and steadfast leader, Mrs Mary Hugh. A source of constant energy and enthusiasm, Mary's contribution to the tour cannot be overestimated.

The nine students who travelled with us were highly supportive and engaged on the trip. The relatively small travelling group enabled students to spend quality time with each other, which has enabled many to build new friendships that have lasted well beyond the 10 days spent in China.

Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall of China, the Terracotta Warriors of Xian (a must for any intrepid traveller) and the Traditional Villages of the Yangtze River were all incredible experiences in their own right. Without doubt, these important historical sights provided students with opportunities to visually interpret the immense and complex nature of history and culture within this vast country. As important as these sites were, the nightly discussions regarding the cultural aspects of the places we visited were as beneficial. Over dumplings or Peking duck, these sessions proved most cathartic to all members of the group, enabling us to discuss the wealth, poverty, transport, behaviours of the nation and its inhabitants.

On our last day in Beijing, we were given the opportunity to visit Beijing Hepingjie No. 1 Middle School, which is attended by hundreds of students each day. After St Catherine's Principal, Mrs Michelle Carroll, signed the customary 'friendship' document, we were given the opportunity to visit an English language classroom where repetition and verbal language training was used on a grand scale. Students were called upon to answer within seconds with high accuracy and



formality. It was a fascinating experience. I would encourage all teachers who are given the opportunity to travel overseas in an educational setting to visit individual classrooms and schools. While language barriers can prove difficult, the experiences and insights you obtain far exceed these initial challenges.

The St Catherine's girls were also given the opportunity to spend the afternoon with a 'buddy' from the school. The Chinese students took their Australian counterparts to a local shopping area and all enjoyed the opportunity to converse in their respective languages about social and cultural similarities and differences with people of their own age from a foreign land. From an educational perspective, trips should always include time for students to meet and mix with local students as a means of developing an understanding of their way of life.

As a commerce teacher, the scale of the Chinese economy is both perplexing and vast. The quantity of apartment buildings being constructed in all three of the major cities that

we visited was staggering. With millions migrating into cities and large speculation in property investment, the sheer size of development is placing enormous pressure on many to modernise their lifestyle and take financial advantage of this boom. This was reinforced by Dr Leonie Lethbridge, ANZ's Regional Chief Operating Officer, with whom we were fortunate to spend a very interesting hour discussing the nation at ANZ's headquarters in Shanghai.

The extraordinary sights, coupled with the cultural and social dimensions of a country still controlled by a central Communist government, made the tour a fantastic and challenging experience for teachers and students alike.

Mr Paul Stokes

Service and Leadership Coordinator
Head of Langley Templeton
Humanities Teacher





Names: Ms Lisa Barker and Ms Simone Schilte Titles: Year 4 Teachers Date: 6 November 2014



CONNECTEDNESS IN THE CURRICULUM

Learning about the deep connection between Indigenous Australians and the land has been a highlight for the Year 4 students and their teachers, Ms Simone Schilte and Ms Lisa Barker.

Ensuring our young students are immersed in enriching and meaningful learning experiences is essential in a well-balanced curriculum. In Year 4, we explore several important periods in Australian History and it is an integral part of our students' learning.

Primary teachers bring a variety of personal opinions and understandings to the teaching of History, so it has been imperative for us to gain a great deal of knowledge and professional development in this area. This ensures that our understandings are factually correct, relevant and meaningful to the students in our care, and provides us, as teachers, with an exciting and educational adventure also.

Year 4 History involves a study of Indigenous connection to land, the age of exploration, the First Fleet and first contact between Indigenous people and early settlers in Australia. The content of these units is largely new to most of our students; they arrive at the beginning of Year 4 with varying experiences, opinions, understandings and levels of excitement. Of particular interest to us has been the observation of our students' responses to the study of Indigenous connection to land. They have been highly engaged, very enthusiastic and a great deal of learning has taken place.

When the Australian Curriculum commenced in 2012, it led to a great deal of curriculum rewriting, research and planning. This is our second year of teaching Year 4 and it has allowed us to refine and enrich our classroom activities. We all saw the need for our students to be provided with adequate resources to understand the Indigenous connection to land. But, as we have found through student feedback, even more important was the need to foster experiences that provide our students with their own real-life connections with Indigenous people and culture.

The students enjoyed a wealth of in-school sessions that presented information and gave them the task of researching their questions and wonderings. However, it was the hands-on experience of engaging with an Indigenous Elder that had the greatest impact of all on the girls. Watching their faces as they sat transfixed by the Wathaurong Elder, David Tournier, as he addressed the girls in his traditional lands at Point Addis on the Great Ocean Road coastline was a wonderful moment for all of us. The students engaged fully, asked questions and were inspired to think deeply about their own connections to their land.

Back at School, we were able to integrate this connection to land into other curriculum areas. Our Science studies in Term 3 took a very interesting direction when we decided to plan our own garden here in Barbreck using indigenous species suited to this area. Our ensuing unit on plants was developed so that



our students were able to research, design, plant and care for an Indigenous garden of their own in the Junior School. Part of the students' research task was to discover what the plants were used for by the Indigenous people who lived here before white settlement. The students then documented this information and presented it to the group before putting it on display in the garden. The planting of the garden involved much careful planning and mathematical skills were put to great use as the students had to make important decisions about where to put plants in light of their growing patterns and eventual size.

This collaborative project has been a highlight of the year for both the Year 4 students and the teachers. Such enriching learning experiences make our school days extremely enjoyable, intellectually rewarding and give us all much to reflect upon.

Ms Lisa Barker and Ms Simone Schilte

Year 4 Teachers





Name: Mr Paul Cross Title: Deputy Principal Date: 13 November 2014



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES CREATE VALUABLE LEARNINGS

Children experience abundant benefits from learning outside the formal classroom structure.

There is no question that there is a direct correlation between what students learn and how they learn. Personalised student learning must be student centred, it must be engaging and must be designed with careful consideration to the learning, not just the concepts being taught. A recent study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has investigated the link between performance in science and participation in extracurricular activities, such as field trips and science projects.

Most countries (22 of 31 OECD countries) demonstrated that pupils did perform better in schools that offer more extracurricular activities compared with pupils in schools that offer fewer of these activities. The links between improved pupil performance and extracurricular activity is consistent, with Germany and Australia having the strongest correlation.

Other findings were the links between positive attitudes toward the subject and stronger belief in ability in the subject (22 OECD countries) and with enjoyment of learning (20 OECD countries). Our teachers all know that student enjoyment of a subject influences significantly their engagement, which in turn enhances learning. Developing a wealth of classroom activities, all designed to engage and to cater for individual differences in learning and ability, is what creates a rich curriculum which is accessible and forges a culture of learning through curiosity.

Many years ago, cognitive scientists J. Bransford and D. Schwartz found that what distinguished young adults from children was not just the ability to retain facts or apply prior knowledge to a new situation, but a quality they called "preparation for future learning". As teachers, we want our students to develop the skills to be lifelong learners; showing curiosity, forming questions and developing solutions to problems.

As teachers we have a clear responsibility to provide opportunities for students to fail, to experiment, experience concepts and ideas outside their understanding, to become stuck, reframe their questioning and ideas and to figure things out. It is therefore often the case that critical thinking is best taught outside the classroom. "Experience," as Oscar Wilde said, "is simply the name we give our mistakes". Without mistakes, a child does not gain the valuable experience needed for their emotional and intellectual growth. A baby learning to walk or talk, does so by repetitive attempts, almost constant failure and a clear desire to succeed. Intensely and innately curious, children should be given the opportunity to explore the world around them. Through hands on experiences, links can be formed between theory and reality.

Children experience abundant benefits from learning outside the formal classroom structure; the chance to take risks, learn new skills, understand the reasoning behind concepts or questions, improve self-confidence and develop better relationships with peers and teachers.



At St Catherine's, we provide a range of opportunities to learn outside the formal structures of the classroom. Through Outdoor Education, the House Arts Program and myriad extension and co-curricular activities, students are exposed to challenges and develop their sense of curiosity and perseverance. When on exchange in the United Kingdom, dealing with the day-to-day organisational challenges on a World Challenge trip to a developing country, supporting a village in Fiji, or working with community groups such as FareShare or the Prahran Mission, students are engaged in powerful learning.

Senior students visit art galleries to observe and question; during Science@work students problem solve real-life community issues; on excursions they may visit the Melbourne Zoo, creating an impression of the links between animals and their habitats, or observe native orchids in the wild to develop a greater appreciation for their cultivation in the classroom.

Year 11 students gain a great deal from speaking to professional mentors in their workplace – subtle, but invaluable learning occurs as they navigate the corporate world or work to introduce themselves and engage in conversations; learning about the 5th to 15th Century comes alive on Medieval Day and in Geography, students gain an insight into communities through fieldwork.

As teachers we should never underestimate the power of learning outside the formal classroom environment. The images, memories and reflections of their schooling will be shaped by the different experiences and challenges we create for them outside the classroom as these inform their development as young adults.

Mr Paul Cross
Deputy Principal





Name: Mrs Vicki Marinelli Title: Art Teacher Date: 20 November 2014



21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Senior School Art Teacher Mrs Vicki Marinelli explains how the Arts are well placed to develop and enhance the skills students need in the 21st century.

If you haven't heard the term '21st century skills' yet, you may still be familiar with the concept. Educators are well aware that the careers your daughters choose later in their life might not have been invented yet, and that your daughter could have several different careers in her lifetime. The rate of change is rapid and raises questions about the kinds of skills we will need in the future, as well as the knowledge and skills students need now to prepare for their future. Key 21st century skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, collaborating and communicating. To achieve these, our students need numeracy, literacy and proficiency in technology, media and information.

The Arts are well placed to enhance these skills. In particular, the design process used in Visual Arts is suited to the development of these 21st century skills and allows students to develop and refine their own ideas using a variety of techniques and media.

During their History class, Year 8 students learnt about Medieval History, which was supported by an Art project on heraldry where each student investigated and developed their own coat of arms. This project not only modelled collaboration across curriculum areas but encouraged a deeper understanding of the context of the Medieval era across different subject areas. The girls demonstrated key 21st century skills, such as: critical thinking in their idea

development and refinement; creative thinking with problem solving; instigating ideas and refinement of techniques; open collaboration as they discussed their ideas; shared materials and equipment; communication through visual and written language. On Medieval Day, the Art studios were filled with energy and enthusiasm as the girls concluded the project by finishing a Medieval-style flag complete with their own coat of arms.

The Year 11 Visual Communication Design students are currently working on an exciting collaborative group project based on 'Warehouse', a fictitious new restaurant concept. In this project, they are working collaboratively to solve design problems which closely model real workplace situations. As romantic as it seems, the mythology of the genius artist or designer working alone in a studio is rare; in reality, true creativity often comes from collaboration and the meeting of minds. In exploring and expressing their design ideas, the students use and develop their digital literacy skills. They also research and evaluate information to help inform their choices.

In Visual Arts, we are fortunate to be able to develop and deliver an innovative curriculum that also encourages the development of 21st century skills. As we come to the end of the 2014 School year, we are already planning (collaboratively) for another exciting, creative and rewarding year in 2015 and look forward to supporting your daughter's studies in the Visual Arts.

Mrs Vicki Marinelli
Senior School Art Teacher



Name: Mrs Elka Gaensler Title: Education Support Teacher Date: 27 November 2014



A GAME-CHANGER FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING CHALLENGES

Research in the area of neuroplasticity is offering hope to students with learning difficulties and their teachers, writes Mrs Elka Gaensler, one of our Education Support Teachers.

Just over a year ago, I attended an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) conference titled 'How the Brain Learns'. The conference focused on the latest research involving the brain. Both the content and my participation altered my teaching pedagogy and professional pathway.

For many years, educators were of the belief that learning difficulties were, in the main, unchangeable. Yes, we had strategies to try to compensate for these difficulties, but it was a strongly held belief among educators that students with significant learning challenges would have lifelong difficulties and that there would be minimal changes to their learning potential. This was my belief as well, until the illuminating conference that led to my 'light bulb moment'.

Understanding neuroplasticity is a game-changer for students with learning challenges. Research in this area is shattering previously held beliefs, transforming the potential for students with learning challenges in a significant way. I was excited by what I heard regarding the brain's potential to change. Dr Bruno della Chiesa discussed neuroplasticity and how it works. He maintained that, "New neural pathways can be created in the brain, circumventing the broken or dormant pathways inhibiting a particular brain function". His mantra was: "The neurons that fire together, wire together". Dr della

Chiesa cited research using MRI studies, or brain imaging. These studies found that the brain learns all the time, even when damaged. This provided me with optimism for the future of my students, whose daily lives pose so many challenges.

During the conference, participants were introduced to a range of evidence-based learning tools and practices that have transformed the lives of students. One such tool was Cogmed, a highly structured, intensive, computer-based training program, from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, that focuses on developing 'working memory'.

Working memory is the ability to keep information active in mind for a short period of time, and then use it to complete a task. The more information or complexity there is to deal with, the harder it is to remember what to do next without being distracted. Problems with attention and learning are often caused by poor working memory. Studies on the relationship between working memory and students' school performance indicate that about 15 percent of students in any class will have deficits in working memory, which limits their capacity for learning.

It is important to note, however, that a memory difficulty does not equate with an intellectual difficulty. In addition to increasing concentration, there is evidence to show that stronger working memory skills can also improve students' reading comprehension and mathematical ability.

The Cogmed program has been implemented in both the Junior School and the Senior School at St Catherine's. It is



planned intensively and undertaken with the aid of a member of the Education Support staff trained in Cogmed. The program includes scientifically tested exercises that require approximately 30 to 45 minutes per day over 25 training sessions: usually five days of training per week for five weeks.

At this stage, the program is still undergoing continuous studies worldwide. However, for those already undertaken, results have shown that up to 80 percent of students show an improvement in their working memory, which has benefits for their academic performance. Given the need for further research, we will be conducting our own action research, to be completed midway through 2015, in the hope of replicating research results gathered to date.

Are there downsides to the program? The answer is yes. A computer program is subject to the vagaries of Wi-Fi connection, so there are times when the program shuts down and frustrations go up! Student motivation and parent support are essential.

Using the Cogmed program provides an opportunity to accelerate learning, in combination with other classroom and curriculum programs. Over the next six months, we hope to review our action research to compare the benefits and effectiveness of the program with the research results to date. We hope to collaborate with some of the 100 schools in Australia currently using the program, with the possibility of comparing results.

Cogmed is only one of a number of programs available to our Education Support students and we will continue our innovative practices of implementing evidence-based programs to enhance the learning opportunities for our students.

If you are interested in exploring Cogmed in more detail, I recommend you visit www.cogmed.com.au.

Mrs Elka Gaensler
Education Support Teacher





Name: Mr Andrew Gold Title: Barbreck French Teacher Date: 4 December 2014



FRENCH AND FUN IN THE EARLY-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Barbreck French teacher, Mr Andrew Gold, explains why learning French in the pre-school context is most definitely 'child's play'.

When the opportunity to teach French in the Early Learning Centre became part of my Barbreck job description in 2011, I was excited but quietly concerned. At the time, I was a fairly inexperienced, primary-trained educator, still learning the Barbreck ropes and attempting to navigate the many learning styles within the Prep to Year 6 classrooms. The thought of walking into a pre-school environment speaking French seemed, ironically, quite foreign.

On the contrary, my experiences speaking French with the ELC students continue to inform my teaching in all year levels. Furthermore, they constantly remind me of the inextricable link between language acquisition and having fun.

I do admit that I had pre-conceived notions regarding foreign language acquisition at the pre-school level prior to starting my classes with the ELC learners. I felt, albeit wrongly, that children below the age of five would not be 'ready' to acquire a language, particularly in a formal environment of a 30-minute weekly session. I feared that the inclusion of French in the daily ELC learning routine would confuse students rather than inform them, and that I would be left needing to re-explain activities in English. However, I was excited to find that many ELC learners were able to establish a French accent quickly

and effectively, and recall simple vocabulary at a speed that often rivalled their counterparts in Barbreck.

Subsequent professional reading highlighted the importance of exposing young learners to foreign languages. Dr Benjamin Bloom tells us that children form up to 80 percent of learning pathways in the brain before the age of five¹. Bloom's observations on brain formation in pre-schoolers continue to be echoed in studies of modern neuroscience, with prominent paediatric neuroscientist Dr Harry Chugani suggesting that stimuli, such as second languages, present within a young child's immediate environment will fundamentally shape the way in which they learn and think for the rest of their lives².

However, my real watershed moment occurred at a Critical Agendas professional development seminar held in 2012 by Viviana Golding, language acquisition researcher and experienced teacher of LOTE (Languages Other Than English) in the Victorian education system. Viviana changed my entire approach towards young learners of French in two fundamental ways. She asserted that short pre-school lessons were of benefit only if French was used 95 to 100 percent of the time by the educator; in her opinion, my efforts to make ELC students more comfortable by occasionally using English were in fact counter-productive.

She also informed me that young learners acquired other languages more quickly when engaging in topics that



related directly to their own everyday experiences. As Viviana put it, how would a LOTE student who likes horses learn best? By discussing an abstract topic such as the post office, or by using French verbs, nouns and adjectives to describe her favourite horse? It was suddenly much clearer where my interactions in the ELC could be improved. In order to achieve my goal of having ELC students speaking French, I had to first have a greater understanding of the experience of being an ELC student.

Now, in 2014, the ELC French program feels a much more dynamic and immersed learning environment than my tentative and cautious efforts during my first attempts in 2011. At least 95 percent of lesson time is dedicated to the French language and the short, varied activities are based around concrete materials, rhymes and songs. Telling short stories with puppets (particularly when the puppets are naughty) continues to be a source of good humour and I notice that the ELC students do their greatest learning when we are all laughing together. And I am positively looking forward to performing the French song "Alouette" with the Wattle Room as part of their end-of-year celebration. Who would have thought I'd be having so much fun?

Mr Andrew Gold

Barbreck French Teacher

¹ Bloom, B. (1964) *Book II Affective Domain 1964*, pp. 82 – 84

² Chugani, H. (2014) *Metabolic costs and evolutionary implications of human brain development* Department of Anthropology, Institute for Policy Research, p. 7





Name: Ms Fiona Beck Title: Early Learning Centre Coordinator Date: 11 December 2014



THE WONDER OF LEARNING

Rich learning experiences in early childhood create a sense of wonder and a lifelong love of exploring the world around us, writes ELC Coordinator Ms Fiona Beck.

As educators, our image of young children is that they are capable and competent. We believe that children are born with this capacity and when they begin their educational journey in the Early Learning Centre (ELC), they bring their own knowledge, understandings and a desire to learn about life. This view of young children now resonates across the world and neuroscience is confirming that the experience and learning in the first five years can last a lifetime.

We also believe that children have a right to play. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states this as a universally accepted right for all children. This right is advocated and embraced by the Reggio Emilia Educational Project in northern Italy. The principles of this project are held in high esteem in our Early Learning Centre and have been interwoven into the Early Years Learning Framework, developed by the Australian Government. It is our ongoing aim to ensure each child experiences the joy of learning through exploratory play.

Research has shown that, by the age of four years, a child's brain can be 90 percent of adult size. The brain is most sensitive to environmental input while it is developing. Therefore, rich and varied experiences at an early age have more impact than later in life. Activities that develop children's

curiosity promote this type of brain development. A child's innate sense of wonder drives their ability to learn through thought-provoking play, which in turn stimulates neural activity in the brain. It is our intention as early childhood educators to foster a love of play and for the children to learn through discovery, inquiry, experimenting, exploring one's senses and making connections to real-life experiences.

Play is such an enjoyable activity for young children. Engagement and repetition in play leads them to learn new skills, concepts, learning dispositions and enhanced relationships, not only with the people around them but also with the materials they use. The wooden-block building area in each classroom is always a sought-after play space in the St Catherine's ELC. Provision is made to leave these interesting 'creations' that have been built with the blocks to allow the children to return to and build on their play from the previous day.

A sense of accomplishment and confidence can also be achieved through these types of open-ended play experiences because they involve emotion, cognition, language and sensorimotor activity. Play experiences that are closely aligned with real life, the children's interests, passions and nature help them to begin to make sense of the world around them. Nature items, including wood off-cuts, textured bark, dried leaves and pebbles, enhance the children's play. Figurines that represent their families, animals or imaginary creatures that they may be interested in encourage the children to create homes or other structures. These types of materials support their creativity and



thinking. The children are more motivated to become involved, as they feel connected to the experiences and interests they have in their own lives.

The beauty of the materials and the thought and presentation of the environment sets the educational scene for the children to learn. Programs that intrigue, provoke and challenge the children's thinking are planned. As early childhood educators, we aim to cultivate a love of aesthetic learning through the use of a wide range of materials and experiences, especially those that are nature based. Young children's early experiences with nature foster their sense of wonder through opportunities for them to be amazed and in awe of the world of nature around them.

We often focus the children's attention on the beauty of the natural world versus 'teaching' facts about nature. The children often arrive to discover provocations that, in turn, may unfold into a new inquiry. A beautiful display of spring daffodils, alongside a range of paints in matching colours, entices the children to paint what they see. They learn that differences are valued, as they all have their own interpretations. An assortment of shells displayed with a mirrored background can also create exploration and experimentation as the children study the patterns and colours. There are everyday opportunities for the children to sing, dance, dramatise, draw and create their feelings about the things they discover along the way.

Much is learnt about sustainability along the way, too, as the children discover the connection between themselves and the natural world around them. The children are encouraged to develop a respect for and love of nature so that they can begin caring for it.

Places and materials that invite their curiosity in nature are created in the ELC garden and in the classroom. The children are often growing seeds to study and there is an obvious love of plants and animals across the ELC. In one class, sunflowers were cut and dried in the classroom. There was much delight when the children discovered they could harvest the tiny seeds from the dried flower heads. These seeds were carefully collected over several weeks and it was decided that a special gift of these seeds would be made to the new children who would join these classes when the other children went on to school. At the children's first orientation session in their new class, these seeds were planted in the ELC garden as a way of connecting them to the exciting growth of the plants when they return next year.

Rich learning experiences in early childhood that create this sense of wonder develop lifelong attitudes and a love of exploring the world around them. We are fortunate in the Early Learning Centre to be part of this unique journey of discovery with the children each and every day.

Ms Fiona Beck
ELC Coordinator





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