21 June 2012

VCE Legals Studies class meets Tony
Staff Appraisal - Why do it?

In this week’s editorial Deputy Principal Paul outlines some key thoughts about the process of Staff Appraisal at MECS.

At MECS we are blessed with a staff that are not only highly proficient and competent, but actively engaged in developing the skills needed to be effective and highly regarded teachers. I am extremely proud of the staff that I work with.

Staff Appraisal - Why do we do it?

The release of ‘My School’ data identifies key issues in improving classroom performance. Lawyers, doctors, health professionals and nurses operate under standards with professional tribunals in operation. Why then should teachers remain unaccountable?

The following excerpt from ‘The Performance Appraisal Paradox’ reflects a teacher’s feelings towards an upcoming appraisal.

As he leafed through his lecture notes, he began to take stock. “No one can fault my preparation,” he reflected, “and I’m seeing some solid progress. In general, the quality of the written work seems to be improving, and a few of the kids are coming up with some really original ideas. But if I’m teaching so well, why do some of them seem bored and unmotivated?” Even some of the best students seemed tired and listless by the end of class. His student teaching days came to mind. “That was probably the last time I really got any input.”

As the appraisal time came closer:

He ducked back into the room. If his two most behaviourally challenged students would just relax and keep quiet, he’d be fine. He wondered what the other teachers did to capture their student’s interest. On a good day, the rest of the students were more or less manageable. But as his rambunctious 3rd period students jostled their way through the door, he knew he would have his work cut out for him.”

So why undertake this process in the first place? It certainly has its challenges:

• It can be time consuming and some teachers may feel overwhelmed by the process
• Teaching is a highly personal profession, so an appraisal process can cause some anxiety
• It is often done poorly and inadequate feedback is provided to teachers.

Yet despite these challenges there are a number of key reasons why effective teacher appraisal at MECS can be, and is, an experience that empowers and seeks to honour the gifts and abilities of our staff.

Teaching is a Professional Practice

Learning is a complex activity and the learners are diverse. The broad ranging needs of students must be recognised and student learning should be the focus of quality, effective teacher feedback. A professional approach to appraisal focuses on the continued pursuit of improved practice. At MECS, ensuring there is a link between the appraisal process and professional development activities has been crucial in encouraging staff to take ownership for practice within the classroom. MECS has a desire to accomplish this through a committed program of post graduate studies in Christian perspectives and philosophy through the National Institute for Christian Education. The desire is to have all staff trained and adequately supported to constantly use Christian perspective as a natural and purposeful approach within the classroom context. We believe that this makes MECS not only unique, but true to the school’s ethos and desires to be distinct and honourable to God.

Through the whole school review, there was a strong theme from staff that they were looking for a committed approach to improvement and development in a range of teaching areas.

Teaching Requires Accountability

Teaching can often be a lonely pursuit. Often teachers and students are together in isolation. We seek to teach in teams and provide our staff the opportunity to be challenged and encouraged by peers who can provide quick and effective feedback. This accountability allows for an open and honest dialogue as encouraged in the scriptures (Romans 3:19).

Accountability allows for positive feedback and allows staff to ask difficult questions to help shape and improve their effectiveness.

Teachers Learn and Accept Changes to Their Practice

Unfortunately, statistics show that one-day professional development courses provide at best, shallow teacher learning that translates, in turn, into shallow student learning outcomes. Successful strategies for improving teacher performance results from a culture established by school leadership. Teachers need to feel the freedom to be creative, inventive, playful, expressive, thoughtful and bold in their choices in the classroom.

The excerpt at the start of this article captures the heart of most teachers: How can I improve and what’s a meaningful way to do so? The key for staff is to know that they are valued and will be given timely and meaningful feedback. I trust that as we journey with staff in this process, their God given gifts and abilities will continue to develop in service.

This is a job that I love. It’s deeply personal and I feel humbled to be given the opportunity to appreciate and support the excellent staff we have here at MECS.
School Notes from Martin, Principal

Cycle A Production This Week
Tonight is the curtain raiser for the ‘Romeo and Winifred’ production. The Cycle A Year 7/8 students and teachers have been working hard bringing this great show together. I hope you’ve been able to grab yourself a ticket and a chance to see the show either tonight, Friday or Saturday night. Next week’s newsletter will give us a photo gallery.

Year 12 Exams
The Year 12s have completed their mid-year SACs (School Assessed Course Work) and have now kicked off Semester 2 studies.Continue to pray for them as they work their way through these last few months.

Music for Young Children
Our new program – Music for Young Children – kicked off on Tuesday with a free ‘Come and Try’ day. This looks like it’s going to be a great success with many families turning up to check it out. The program has been written by Wendy (our Prep teacher and new Early Years Coordinator) and is being run by Rachel who is an instrumental music teacher (violin, piano and voice), parent at MECS and an impressive musician.

Prep Room Progress
If you’re a parent who visits the primary school, you’ll have noticed the great progress being made on the extensions to the Prep classrooms. The Preps are managing well in their temporary home in the PUMP room. Everything looks set to be completed and ready when we return from the holidays.

Term 2 - Long Term
It’s been a long term and these last couple of weeks can be tough. We’ve had a number of staff unwell and a number of students too. We pray for God’s blessings on us as we finish off the term well.

Missing a jacket? Lost Property
There’s a large number of winter jackets at our new home for Lost Property (outside the First Aid Room; near the staffroom). Parents are welcome to come by and check.

Parent Seminar B
Last night we held Seminar ‘B’, now referred to as the ‘Earthquake Seminar’, which is one of 2 Seminars for new parents. The parents agree to attend two ‘Christian Education Seminars’ within the first two years of beginning their partnership with MECS.

Last night we covered ‘The Specifics of Christian Education’. This included:
• Christian Education Overview
• The MECS approach
• Role of the Bible
• Biblical Perspective
• Our distinctive Curriculum

‘Parent Seminar A’ covers ‘An Introduction to Christian Education’. This seminar will be held on Thursday August 23, 2012 and covers:
• Parent partnership
• Religion
• School Governance
• Community
• MECS Core Values

MS Student Art
Paige Year 8 - Dragon - Medieval Times
Music Notes

Congratulations to Nick who recently passed his 5th grade piano exam with credit. Well done, Nick!

Enrol in Instrumental Music

Now is a great time to enrol for instrumental music for Term 3. We have vacancies for piano, violin, drums and guitar (all ages) and for bass, mandolin, flute and singing (age 11+). Pick up an enrolment form from the office.

Try-the-flute-or-violin days

On Mondays in Term 3 you can come and try the flute (age 11+) or violin (all ages) with one of our wonderful teachers. If you’d like to participate, please contact me via email or leave your contact details at the office and I’ll arrange a time for you to try-the-flute-or-violin.

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator

MECS Notes

Lost Property, going, going...

As the end of term fast approaches we seem to be accumulating more and more lost property. As you can see from the photo there is a huge quantity of clothing (mostly jackets and tops) - all without names and homes.

At the end of term all the lost property is taken to the local op-shop, which is great for them but we would prefer to see the clothes returned to their rightful owners.

Could parents please, please, please either get their children to check the racks or come in before or after school and check for anything that is yours before it goes to charity. The lost property is situated opposite the First Aid Room/Middle School girls toilets. If you could also remember to clearly name your children’s clothing that would make our job so much easier! Thanks.

Melinda
First Aid Officer (& used clothing merchant!)

Community Political Forum with Tony

Last Thursday week our two VCE Legal Studies classes went over the road to the ‘York on Lilydale’ for a community consultation with local Casey member Tony and the Opposition Leader, Tony. It was great to see participatory democracy in action.

Year 12 student, Ben, asked the one question we were allowed, which went...

Environment & Vision Question from Ben Magill, Yr 12

In our Legal Studies classes we have studied the Australian Political system and we understand that within the Westminster approach a significant function of the opposition is to keep the government responsible and accountable and therefore it is quite right that you would oppose measures that you think are poor policy.

However, in the light of the fact that Australians, and particularly us young Australians, are quite disillusioned with predictable mere opposition for its own sake, don’t you think it would be more helpful if you could clearly outline an alternative positive vision for Australia?

As a young person anticipating many more decades of enjoying the Australian environment and, being a steward of this wonderful inheritance and wanting to hand this on to my children and grandchildren in a healthy state, I’d like to ask a more specific question about the coalition’s vision for responding to the challenge of our over reliance on fossil fuels and the extent of our carbon footprint.

Australians understand the Government’s policy on carbon reduction through a tax (whether they agree with it or not) but very few people (myself included) understand the opposition’s policy. Can you give us a clearer understanding of what the coalition would do if they win government?

An Indigenous Issues Question

We had three further questions on indigenous issues also ready to go but didn’t have the opportunity to ask them. Our choice here would have been the third question.

In Year 10 we learned the Warlpiri language and then visited Yuendumu in the Northern Territory.

• The coalition may not be aware that the bilingual education program in the Yuendumu School has essentially broken down resulting in poor school attendance and outcomes. What would the coalition do to restore bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory?

• The coalition may not be aware that there are Warlpiri people wishing to start their own secondary school, but are hindered by red tape in accessing their Education Trust funds (from mining royalties). What is the Coalition’s policy regarding support for grass roots indigenous education ventures?

• The news regarding community tensions within Yuendumu and the Warlpiri people living in Alice Springs is very well known. What is the Coalition’s view regarding the interface between tribal indigenous law and “Australian Law”?

Martin
Legal Studies Teacher
Parents & Friends

Woolworths Earn & Learn & Coles Vouchers

We are doing this again! Please remember to ask for your stickers or vouchers when you do your shopping. Then drop your completed cards and collected vouchers in the boxes in the Main Office. Thanks for your participation.

P&F Meeting

Our next meeting is on June 25 in the Conference room in the Main Office at 9.15am. All are welcome.

Evelyn
P&F President

“Why doesn’t MECS give academic prizes for the highest achieving student in each Year 12 subject like most other schools do?”

I put this question to a Year 12 class, interested in their responses. Over their heated responses and debating, I managed to jot down some of their ideas:

“It makes it into a competition!”

“Everyone should be proud of what they’ve accomplished.”

“Doesn’t the Bible say something about doing everything for the glory of God, not awards?”

“It suggests that academic knowledge is better than other forms of knowledge.”

“MECS is about celebrating the growth of all people.”

“It would put more emphasis on that person, when everyone’s done well.”

“All talents don’t necessarily come out at school.”

“Why does it need to be shown off and paraded?”

“How does it benefit anyone?”

“It would take away from the sense of community.”

“I’d rather be humble.”

“Someone could’ve worked really hard and done well with the abilities they’ve got; that’s not acknowledged.”

I thought these responses were wonderful, reflecting these students’ understanding that MECS is inclusive and encompassing, that the school and ultimately life is not about academics. Indeed, why does ‘who’s the best’ even matter? Why does it matter who scored the highest grades for a subject? Where is the recognition of our students have. It can also be dispiriting for students who are gifted in ways apart from academics to constantly have only this achievement stressed. To focus merely on academic subject awards neglects acknowledgment of effort, individuals’ development of skills, and the broad range of God-given gifts outside of academics.

(Pseudonyms have been used).

MECS Notes

Farewell Afternoon Tea for Mel and Family

There will be a farewell afternoon tea to be held for Mel and family, to wish them well and God’s guidance on their new adventure moving to Darwin.

This is to be held in the Staff Room on Thursday 28 June at 2pm. Please take the opportunity to come and see them and have a cuppa before collecting your children for the day.

Adine

Congratulations Zac

Zac in Australia’s Top 10

Zac and family travelled to Wollongong over the Queen’s birthday long weekend. On Fri 8 June, both Caleb & Zac participated in an extra special training session that included 17 former and present Judo Olympians as well as 75 kids. Zac represented Victoria and gained much experience over the weekend. One of his highlights was competing against the number one ranked player in Australia.

At the end of the competition Zac placed in the Top 10 in Australia, ranking 9th!!

He’s already looking to better that result at next year’s National competition.

Well done Zac. What a remarkable achievement!

Sonia
Our ‘Music for Young Children’, ‘Come & Try Day’ was a lovely experience for those families who attended this week. Over 30 children had a lovely time experiencing singing, creative movement and musical activities. The children and their parents learnt some new songs and had a take home activity and words to one of the songs they sang.

If you and your Pre-school child or baby would like to be a part of the ‘Music For Young Children’ program in Term 3 and Term 4, we are now taking enrolments. Sessions will be held in a lovely bright room in the Primary School called the PUMP Room 2.

**Tuesdays, 2 Session Times: 9-9.30am or 9.40-10.10am**

2012 Term 3 $90 (9 weeks, July 24-Sept 18)

2012 Term 4 $80 (8 weeks, Oct 16-Dec 11, excl Nov 6)

Fees $10/1st child/session. $5/sibling (2 years+) Paid per term.

The ‘Music For Young Children’ program, written by Prep teacher Wendy, will be led by Rachel, an experienced musician, performer and teacher - also a MECS mum. The program aims to present flexible hands on sessions which develop music concepts and general life skills using a combination of the following activities:

- Speech rhymes and songs, including action songs, games, finger plays, drama and stories
- Playing a variety of tuned and non-tuned percussion instruments
- Moving, including creative movement and dance
- Listening games
- Improvisation using creative imagination and free expression

**Music Aims:**

- To develop a sense of beat
- To discriminate between high and low sounds (Pitch), loud and soft sounds (Dynamics) and fast and slow music (Tempo)
- Learn to sing in tune and acquire a repertoire of songs
- To experience a variety of music, introducing mood and style
- To become familiar with differences in music
- Enjoyment and fun with music
- Stimulate the children’s imagination and encourages participation through the use of props and puppets

**Music Experiences Promote:**

- Positive social interaction between children, their peers and adults
- Concentration, memory and recognition skills
- Improved coordination skills
- Self-confidence to sing alone and with others
- Body awareness
- Large and small muscle development
- Communication skills and verbal development
- Understanding a variety of concepts
- Development of both sides of the brain

For a brochure or Enrolment form, please see the MECS website or contact the office. You are welcome to chat to the MECS Community Relations Officers – Nicole or Amanda for any further information.
Sporting News

Eliza shoots her way to the State Championships

On the weekend Year 5 student Eliza won her way through to the State Archers Championship. Eliza competed in the ‘Bare Bow Recurve’, which means she doesn’t have sites on her bow… and yes, that means it’s even harder for her to hit a target!

She competed against 96 men and 4 women. To give some perspective to Eliza’s achievement, she shoots a 30 pound bow, which means that every time she pulls the bow back she is pulling back a 12kg bag of potatoes. Eliza is 11 years old! So yes, basically, Eliza is **amazing**! We wish her every success when she competes at the State Championships at the end of July.

Fun with Montrose Primary School

On Friday our Senior Primary boys Football Team and girls Basketball team went to Montrose Primary School to compete against their Senior Primary students. We had a lovely afternoon and the students, from both schools, had the most wonderful time. Both our teams narrowly lost their games. Basketball was 36 - 28 and Football 52 – 40, but it was just great to play some Inter-school Sport against a friendly, yet competitive school. We hope to play against them again this year.

Middle School Helpers Impress

A special thanks to Year 9 students Ari, Jay, Dillon, Bayley, Joel and Justin who helped out with the Football on Friday. They were mature, helpful, actively involved, great with the Primary students and an absolute pleasure to have as part of our group. It’s such a blessing to be able to rely on our Secondary students to provide such practical assistance.

Carissa
Primary School Sports Coordinator

‘Trans Ed’ Week

Last week in the senior school the Year 10 students completed Transitional Education Week or as we call it ‘Trans Ed’ week.

The four days included many people and activities that were all aimed at the area of vocation. Many students in Year 10 won’t have too much of an idea of their future pathways. The aim of the week is to enable students to look at themselves and the opportunities that exist for them.

One of the places we visited was Box Hill TAFE. This was an eye opener as to what courses were available and helped some students to see that this place was an option for them as it is on the train line and on our side of town.

At Box Hill the presentation included a game that enabled students to see what areas they might look into in relation to further studies.

During this week students also worked with Jacqui from Unlimited Learning Adventures.

The first session (before the Trans Ed Week) was about purpose, passion and potential and not making career choices based just on money. During the week she spoke of interview skills.

Students have completed many questionnaires to ascertain a fuller picture of their abilities, interests and giftings. From the results of these questionnaires, individual coaching is being undertaken to give students personal career guidance. These interviews started last Monday.

Other parts of the Trans Ed week included looking at Year 11 and 12 options and making use of the netbooks and websites to help plan their future. Throughout the week the students were also able to hear from a number of people a little older than themselves (some of whom were ex-students) about their pathways.

Overall, a great week of students engaging in looking at options, dreaming about possibilities and generally recognising that their gifts and abilities can be used in many different ways.

Anne
Careers Teacher
MECS Kindergarten:-

has a facebook page, with weekly photo updates.
Check it out.

Thur 21 - Sat 23 June
Cycle A Production 7pm

Mon 25 June
P&F Meeting 9.15am in Conference Room

Wed 27 June
MP Swimming

Thur 28 June
Reports Issued

Fri 29 June
End Term 2

MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES

MECS does not endorse the products or services of any private advertiser. No responsibility is accepted by Mount Evelyn Christian School for the accuracy of information contained in advertisements or claims made by them.

School Accountant Position
Mount Evelyn Christian School is seeking a School Accountant.

The Accountant:
• Assists the Administration Manager with the financial operations of the school.
• Keeps accurate and orderly accounts as required by the school, government and law.
• Oversees the work of the Accounts Clerk (Payroll, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable).
• Manages the bus operations of the school.

This is a four day per week role.
We would like the successful applicant to wholeheartedly join a team implementing a distinctively biblical approach to education.

Please contact the MECS office for an Application Form and further information.

Applications close Monday 2 July, 2012

Badges for the Deaf Sales
We are selling Butterfly Badges for the Victorian Deafness Foundation, which is dedicated to support hearing impaired people through research, prevention, education, early detection and technology.

These butterflies are only $2. They come in 6 different colours and patterns. The reason that butterflies are chosen from any other animal, insect or symbol, is because butterflies are deaf, but beautiful! The badges are available from the Main Office. On Thursday, June 28, we will be going around to the classrooms selling badges.

Hope & Dakota
MECS Students

Thanks to MECS
Mount Evelyn Veterinary Clinic and Animal Hospital would like to thank Mount Evelyn Christian School for participating in the Pet education program - PEP. It has been a delight for us to be a part of your community.

NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK
(can also be downloaded from website)

• Year 6 Billy Cart Mentor Letter

Cycle A presents Romeo and Winifred

“Break a leg!” is said right before a big performance, and our big performance of Romeo and Winifred is THIS week! Rehearsals have never been so serious but this week all the actors are giving it their best. We have two dress rehearsals before we will be preforming to a real audience. Everyone’s costumes look fantastic, and the light and sound looks amazing.

The directors/teachers jobs are done, so now it is up to the actors to carry out the performance. For some people it’s the Performance they have been waiting for, and for others they can’t wait for it to be over. But no matter how the cast is feeling, whether they’re anxious or excited, the performance will go on without a hitch, that’s if no one breaks a leg of course.

We can’t wait to show you what we have been working on all term. Can’t wait to see you there!

Written by Sarah, Edited by Sophie

1st performance: Thursday 21 June
2nd performance: Friday 22 June
Last but not least: Saturday 23 June