MP Camp - A Botanical Experience

Emmerson drawing plants at the MP camp
Size Matters

In a context of high expectations from Independent Schools, many comments are made about having sufficient numbers/critical mass in order to provide adequate specialization and opportunities. This week Principal Martin addresses questions of the impacts of school size and the mindsets that go along with that.

Learning from others

Back awhile I was asked to undertake a review of a school in another capital city. These exercises are not just contributing to the wider Christian School movement, but they provide some wonderful insights and opportunities to reflect on your own school.

Small school syndrome

One of the key concerns I noted at this school was an entrenched sense of ‘small school syndrome’. There was an unfortunate focus on the potential weaknesses of small schools like: limited choice; insufficient resources; teachers spread too thinly across subjects and therefore limited depth; lack of specialization and so on. Whilst each of these perceived weaknesses needs to be addressed by a small school, some of them were simply not justified. However, the school was spending too much of its limited energy responding, because this ‘smallness syndrome’ had become ‘self-fulfilling’.

When small is beautiful

Whilst a small school can get caught up in its limitations and the sacrifice needed by those who attend, the point I was making at this school was that it needed to turn its ‘smallness’ to its advantage. These included the close and strong relationships between parents, children and teachers; the wonderfully strong sense of connection and involvement and the ability of the school, and particularly the class teacher, to modify things to accommodate either end of the learning spectrum.

This flexibility, ‘personalness’ and individual responsiveness are the advantages of the smaller school. This is a lot less apparent and understandably quite difficult to achieve within a larger context. By contrast the large school frequently sees the individual swallowed up in the crowd; the culture is largely ‘systems driven’; teaching is primarily orientated to the ‘middle’, and the ‘learning outers’ are relegated to specialist programs. Individuals only tend to receive attention around bigger disciplinary incidents and more problematic educational issues.

Time for each individual child

Implicit to the smaller school’s teaching/learning culture is the recognition of the importance of meeting the educational needs of the individual within a communal context.

Each Monday morning I move around the Primary, Middle and Senior Sections of the school, touching base with the Weekly Section Briefing and in the afternoon I catch their Section Meetings. Such meetings can easily get tied up with house-keeping and programs. However, not so a school that notices the small things and discusses individual students with a positive focus. The team is strongly expressing both sides of the ‘Christ-centred, Student-oriented’ catch-cry. Small schools do this naturally as if it’s simply woven into the fabric of who they are.

Frequently it is only the parents who have experienced both sizes who can appreciate the less trumpeted advantages of the ‘smaller’. I’d encourage these parents to broadcast this comparative perspective.

MECS and size

Even though MECS is frequently categorized in the ‘mid-sized’ grouping, we still have our fair share of ‘small’ issues, like… Will we get to a double Prep each year? Will we run two or three Year 10s when a number of Year 9s go to Ranges TEC? How many VCE subjects are on offer? (a VCE class requires a minimum of 6 students). Is there sufficient depth in specialist programs like music, sport, the arts, etc? Are there sufficient friendship options?

For us ‘small’ means keeping each child squarely in our focus. It’s not ‘small-minded’ or ‘small-hearted’.

For the past decade or so, MECS has settled into a steady school-size and pattern. We aim for two Preps followed by multi-age (two year levels) triple classes and then multiple single year level classes from Year 9 upwards. We’ve added Ranges TEC and from next year, our 3 and 4 year old Kindergarten classes join the cohort. This is a student population of around 600, divided into three sections, where the class teachers know each and every child in their Section. (I think this is a wonderful guideline for size – that broadly all staff know all the students in their own Section.)

‘Small is beautiful’ was Schumacher’s famous 1970s book. For us ‘small’ means keeping each child squarely in our focus. It’s not ‘small-minded’ or ‘small-hearted’. Rather, it’s big-minded and big-hearted, and small in noticing. Let’s structure our size so that each child is at the heart of what we’re doing and not the system.
Energy Audit
Recently we received news that we were unsuccessful in the very popular National Solar Schools program that the federal government has been running for the last 4 years. This was disappointing as we were looking forward to installing solar panels and incorporating the energy use and production information within various educational programs. However, we have paid for an Energy Audit to be completed to assist us in improved energy efficient design and building. We need to model good design and planning and explain our stewardship responsibilities to our students.

Conveyance Allowance
The good news relating to this allowance is that MECS is not being re-classified as a metropolitan school even though we were concerned this might occur as we are located within the areas that have been re-classified. Also, for most of our current recipients, their funding will continue for up to 6 years providing they don’t move residence or change school level, eg Primary to Secondary. If you would be eligible anyway (through means testing) then the allowance would continue regardless. All new applications will be means tested (probably through EMA or Health Care Card).

What this means for MECS buses, we are unsure. For all those affected, we’ll send more detailed information when the picture is clearer to us.

Year 12s in the Middle of Exams
The big Unit 3 & 4 VCE exams started last Thursday with English. Maths followed soon thereafter. This week many other exams in humanities and sciences are scheduled. We pray that our students will be able to give a really good account of themselves.

Primary Camps
Last Thursday and Friday our Junior Primaries endured the rain to go camping up at Belgrave. They found out lots about local transport and even olden day transport, like steam trains - Puffing Billy. Camps are great. Thanks to all our great parent helpers.

Two 4 year old Kindergarten groups
Wow! What a blessing. We’ve been blown away by the massive interest in Kindergarten enrolment. We easily filled the first class and even though we had the physical capacity for a second group, we didn’t expect to achieve that goal so quickly. We finally reached the minimum numbers to go from a ‘waiting list’ to a second class last week. Well done to those applying (thanks for your patience) and to the marketing team (Amanda, Nicole and Christine) and anyone else who dares to wear orange Kindergarten t-shirts.

Year 11 Biology at the Aquarium
On Monday (29 October) we set off from Lilydale station with nine students, a student teacher (Gerry) and myself to the Melbourne Aquarium. After a quick pit stop at Southbank food court we were on our way. Students were encouraged to engage with key questions such as ‘What’s the purpose of having an aquarium?’ as well as looking at key concepts that were relevant to the course. All the students had an enjoyable and informative experience and many found the penguin exhibit particularly fascinating.

The role of humans in understanding God’s creation, through understanding threats, is critical to the preservation of each species that we looked at and all of the students walked away with a greater understanding of ‘our role’ in being good stewards of God’s world. Gerry provided excellent commentary and the experience achieved the educational goals that we had set. I would highly recommend a visit in the near future.

Paul
Deputy Principal

Year 9 Open Village
With a packed term ahead of us, the Year 9s have settled into their last term of the Open Village program after a three week break. Pressure is really on now for Year 10 readiness, and for exams in week 8. But we’re all focusing as well on our Open Village topic for the term, which is Australia, Australians, and our Australian history. This explores everything from immigration, to the First and Second World Wars and to the ‘current day Australia’.

Some things that have already passed this term for the Year 9s are the Interschool cricket and basketball days, which were both full of fun and excitement, especially for the cricketers who had no practice time at all, but still managed to have such an enjoyable day. There was also the Year 12 graduation that the Year 9s attended, and Primary Athletics day where a few students were helpers which was a fun day out in the sun.

Still to come for the term are exams, but before them, the long awaited Canberra Camp in week 6, (19 - 24 November). So close now, with our camp groups just being finalized, it will be upon us in no time, and we’ll finally get to unravel the mysteries of Canberra Camp that await us. Not forgetting to add lots of assignment work to the to-do list for the term, we have our work cut out for us.

It tells us in the Bible to do our hard work first, then our easy work, and then we can have fun. It also reminds us that through Christ we can do all things. Hopefully all the Year 9s keep these things in mind throughout the term and have no troubles getting through all their work on time to the best of their ability with the guidance of their family, friends and God.

Grayson & Shannan
Parents & Friends

Shopping Tour – with a difference - more shopping, less touring!

Tickets are still available from the office. **Saturday 10 Nov**, $20.
BYO lunch. Morning and Afternoon Tea provided. Depart 7.30am sharp. Return approx 7.30pm.
Visiting Smith St Collingwood, West Meadows and DFO Essendon.
Enjoy Friends and Shopping with no parking problems!

Stationery Helpers

A big thank you to all those who have offered to help. The roster will be sent out closer to the date. There is still an urgent need for helpers for the following date:
Jan 31: am & pm (sales day and pack-up)
If you can help please phone me or email me.
It is a great way to meet other parents at the school and the days are filled with fun and laughter.
Evelyn
Stationery Coordinator

Year 11 Flying Physics

The topic of flight is a generally respected topic within our Physics class. Which is why when our teacher Paul told us we were going to the Australian Centre for Mission Aviation (ACMA) with a lesson from one of the flight instructors, Volkher. He showed us some of the interesting phenomena about flight. He explained to us why, when you’re driving past a large truck you get sucked towards it. It is an example of Bernoulli’s theorem. Soon we were practicing this in flight when I was walking to the taxiway with Volkher. Once in the sky he took me through a series of steep turns up to 60 degrees of bank, pulling about 2 G’s (gravities). He then demonstrated a technique used in the mission field to descend without gaining speed. It involved using the opposite rudder motion to the ailerons to make the aircraft almost fly sideways. It is a complicated manoeuvre, but very effective. We then used the drop in altitude to land and the fun was over.

Raymond

Other GTs this term:
12/11 JPS
26/11 MPO
10/12 Preps Christmas GT

Melissa
SP Teacher

MECS Notes

**PRIMARY GTs TERM 4**
Thursday, November 22nd, 11.30 am
Keep this date free for a very special Primary GT to be held in the MECS Theatre. This extra special GT will be the launch of the as yet unnamed poetry booklet that MECS Primary is producing with the help of Performance poet Cameron. The booklet is part of a anti bullying project in which MECS has been selected as a lead school. The poetry explores not only the issue of bullying, but how we can create a culture that is the antithesis (contrast) to bullying. The launch will include performances by Cameron, some students’ poetry and an exhibition of the students’ art work responding to the themes, amongst other things. All Primary parents are warmly encouraged to support us in this venture by attending. Grandparents welcome too. More information to come!

MECS Matters
Year 6 Rock Climbing

Moving on to Middle School is a big step... you have to scale the heights of the unknown, step carefully, know what’s ahead and how to negotiate the path safely. For some the steps are more scary than for others, some do it more easily than others. There’s things in place to help us on the journey... a bit like rock climbing actually. That’s why the Year 6s went to Hard Rock Indoor Climbing centre on Monday. They scaled the walls - using the right equipment, confidence and courage to help them. Later in the week they reflected on their rock-climbing experience and how moving up a rock climbing wall might be like moving up to the Middle School. This is part of the Year 6 Core Studies unit ‘The Next Step’, where students prepare for the transition to Middle School and for their Year 6 Graduation. Apart from being a useful analogy, we had a lot of fun and many students were very proud (and very tired!) at the end of the day. Thank you to all the parents who came and belayed and made it possible for students to have so many climbs.

Melissa
SP Teacher

MECS Notes

Fast ForWord

‘Fast ForWord’ applies the scientific principles of brain plasticity to help children, adolescents, and adults learn more effectively. For many people, frequent and intensive training, exercises that adapt to the individual’s level and timely feedback are effective strategies to help them learn. They simultaneously develop cognitive and language skills.

Fast ForWord offers a series of computer based educational training programs that help improve memory, attention, and ability to follow instructions plus language and reading skills including phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, spelling and comprehension. It is an effective intervention for those diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder, autism, or a learning difficulty. (taken from www.fastforword.com.au)

Our visiting psychologist, Tom, has undertaken training in this program, as he is excited by the evidence of the results. Tom will hold an Information Session about Fast ForWord on Tuesday 20 November, 2.00pm, in the Primary PUMP Room. For further information visit the Fast ForWord website www.fastforword.com.au and http://www.fastforword.com.au/content_common/pg-fast-forword-for-primary-school.seo.

Jo
Ed Support

Congratulations to Michelle & Ryan

Congratulations to Michelle and Ryan on the birth of Charlie Glen on October 28, weighing 7’11. His big sister Grace in Prep, and brothers Freddie and Harry in Busy bees Playgroup, are thrilled to have a baby in the family.

Amanda
Community Relations Officer
Primary Athletics

It was glorious sunny day for the Primary School Athletics. Our students performed exceptionally and behaved beautifully. Many records were broken and we will report on this next week.

The Preps participated in their first ever Athletics carnival and as expected this was one of the highlights of the day. Walya (red) won the day, but in typical MECS fashion that wasn’t the key focus. It was a wonderful day of community, participation and a healthy level of competition.

Carissa
Primary Sports Coordinator
MP Camp

We all have stories from our camping adventures and over the years, it seems that finding the truth gets harder as the legends take on lives of their own. Well, asking an imaginative group of eight to ten year olds to write some narratives about their time at camp was fraught with danger but it cuts out years of memory tampering that occurs naturally. Here are some of the stories arising from our Middle Primary “Plants” camp at Merricks. I know where the saying, ‘never let the truth get in the way of a good story’ comes from now! We hope you enjoy them…. and still trust us to take your children with us again next year.

Meredith (on behalf of MP)

Camp Recount

Middle Primaries went to camp at Merricks Lodge near the beach. When we got there Mem read out the cabin groups. I was in ‘Cactus’. Then we did some activities. My first one was planting trees outside the main room. I planted three plants. Then my group went orienteering. The first course we did was ‘yellow’. It was easy. The next one, ‘blue’, was a bit harder than ‘yellow’, then we did ‘green’, then ‘orange’. The last bit of ‘orange’ was hard. Then we had dinner and went to bed.

Day 2: At 9am we went on a beach walk. We had to sketch plants, which I did not like! Then we went to the homestead and did four activities. At the wetlands we went looking for birds in a hideout. Next we chose five flowers and wrote about them.

Day 3: We went for breakfast and to the Botanical Gardens and looked around there and went back to school. I liked camp!

Tom

Sporting fun

It was a perfect throw from Mr Brown. I could hear it whistling through the air like a rocket. Desperate to catch it, I sprinted like Usain. I take a giant leap into the air and feel the frisby connect with my hand like a rock hitting a wall. I’m filled with joy.

Brandon

In the Dark

It was dark. Knick knocking is hard... but fun. I approached room 20 which had Adam, TJ, Harry and Charlie. No wonder they were together. They are very good friends. I hid under the window, walked to the door and knocked. “Ding dong!”

I heard Mr Harris shout out “Hey!” As soon as I heard that I sprinted back to my room, opened the door, but accidentally slammed it. I quickly crawled back into bed, pretended to be asleep, then Mr Harris came in. He stayed for a while, then left. After that I thought, “I’m never going to do that again!”

Adam Hains

The Scary Knick-knocker

There were scary shapes on the wall and I couldn’t see a thing, except for a light on the window and two red flashing eyes on the roof. I heard a loud “Bang” and a humungous snore that made me as scared as I’d ever been before, so I closed my eyes, grabbed onto my teddies and put my sleeping bag over my head and went to sleep!

I awoke to five big, huge banging noises. I tried to sleep but the noises kept going. Finally it stopped and before I knew it, it was morning. “Time to have breakfast,” called all of the teachers.

Emma Vale
Second Hand Market
Ringwood Community Church, 1 Tamar St Ringwood, are holding a Second Hand Market 17 November from 9am-12noon. All welcome.

Double Bed Wanted
A double bed is needed for a young lady leaving home. If you have one available please phone Sandy. Thank you.

Queen Bed for Sale
Wooden Queen bed with mattress. Good condition. $100 negotiable. Pick up in Kilsyth. Pauline.

Bunk Beds for Sale
Wooden bunk beds with one mattress. King Single, good condition. $120 negotiable. Pick up in Kilsyth. Pauline.

Local Community Meeting on Internet Safety
Surf between the flags - the Internet safety roadshow. Hosted by Tony with internet security expert Alastair. Wed 14 Nov, 7pm at the Life Ministry Centre Auditorium at Oxley College (Melways ref 37 D6). RSVP.

Looking for Soccer Players & Coaches
Lilydale Eagles is a church league association and have been established for 35 years. We are currently based in Mt Evelyn and are seeking both coaches and players of all ages. We play on Saturdays in local area. It’s great fun and exercise!

For any enquiries please contact: Nick (President).

Monster Garage Sale
There will be a Monster Garage Sale to raise funds for Hope Village Uganda on 24 November, car park, Ringwood Uniting Church (30-32 Station St), Ringwood.

You are invited to drop in and get some great bargains from 8am.

If you wish to donate any goods please contact John, or you can drop items in to Natasha in the school of office. Your contribution of saleable goods will be greatly appreciated by the children in the Village, as we aim to help them break the cycle of extreme poverty.

Mon 19 - Sat 24 November
Year 9 Canberra Camp
Mon 19 - Fri 23 November
VCE Exams
Year 10 Work Experience Week 2
Year 6-MS Transition Week
Cycle A Prom Camp (Years 7 & 8)
Cycle B Ecology Camp (Years 7 & 8)

Thur 22 November
Kindergarten Information Evening 7.30pm
Fri 23 November
ELC Open Day TBC
Primary Poetry Booklet Launch

Sun 25 November
DAMOTE Family BBQ
Mon 26 - Fri 30 November
Year 11/12 Orientation Week 1
Mon 26 November
Year 9 Students not at school in lieu of Canberra Camp
Wed 28 November
Year 9 Open Village Information Evening 7.30pm Year 9 Rooms
Thur 29 November
Kids with Courage Parent Follow-up
Evening Pump room 7.30pm

Found
Tupperware lunch boxes Blue x 1 and Blue/purple lid x 1
Available for pickup at office

NOTICEs Sent home this week
- Year 7-10 Interschool Athletics
- Primary Interschool Athletics Letter
- MS Helpers Interschool Athletics
- Year 5 & 6 Orientation Day Correction

Book Fair November 8 – 13
Book fair starts today... come join the fun!
Today, your (Primary school) children will come home with Book Fair wish lists. Please note that these are only wish lists and there is absolutely no obligation to buy. Prices start from as little as 50c and there are some terrific gift ideas, with books, posters, diaries and other stationery items available.

The Book Fair is being held in the Library and will be open from 8.30am to 4.30pm tomorrow and Monday and from 8.30am to 2pm Tuesday. All commission raised will go towards purchasing books for our new Kindergarten, so come along and help support a great cause. Hope you can join us.