A Musical Showcase!

Brianna enjoys performing at the Primary Music Recital
We’ll give it a shot

This week Principal Martin reflects on venturing down roads where outcomes are unknown. There’s always a risk, but there are reasons why the risk has been taken. Should a Christian school take a more cautious and steady course? Are there responsibilities to provide security to the whole community rather than risk with particular individuals?

Risks and considering enrolment

There are many times in life when we are faced with the dilemma of ‘what to do’. "Will she like this gift that I think is great? Do I buy it or not?" You will have lots of images or examples of when you’ve faced a risk-taking moment. At school, particularly around enrolment issues, we have the same.

MECS has a reputation, particularly amongst local social workers and educational therapists, that we do a pretty good job in looking after students with extra needs. Sometimes it’s not a helpful reputation because you can’t take on every needy child. It is a reasonable consideration to weigh up what’s a ‘balanced’ community and to expect every school community to embrace those with extra needs (and not screen these students out). Because this is such a difficult issue, it is best to place ‘parent partnership’ at the top of our criteria for considering enrolment, and not just our capacity. A key question becomes: ‘Do the parents understand the sort of school we are, or do they just want the extra pastoral care we can offer?’

However, there are times when you’re presented with circumstances out of the ordinary and normal guidelines don’t work. Here are three MECS stories that I have permission to share.

Kristen

Back in 2009 our long term Science Lab Technician Wilma came to see me about her daughter Kristen, who was born with profound deafness. Kristen had been in specialist schools throughout her primary and early secondary years. However, despite the wonderful care and specialist support she had received, she was quite unhappy and getting along to school was becoming increasingly difficult. I had previously talked with Wilma about whether MECS could adequately respond to Kristen’s learning needs compared to what she had. We both knew that MECS couldn’t match what she was receiving.

Wilma, a persistent and loving mother, couldn’t bear seeing her desperately unhappy girl so she returned to enquire whether there was anything MECS could do. There were so many reasonable justifications to decline, but it seemed that this was one of those moments where risky discretion was needed, and out popped the words “Let’s give it a go... It seems to me to be the right thing to do. I make no promises, but let’s take these steps together and be open to see what happens.”

Normal enrolment management would tell you, ‘this is madness’. There’s a high likelihood of failure; you haven’t got an exit strategy; you haven’t put in place contingency planning; what is the learning plan and resources needed? And you’ve jumped in the deep end. Here’s Wilma and Theo’s reflections...

I remember going to see Martin, desperate for Kristen to be in a happy school environment. We had prayed about it and hearing the ‘yes’ from Martin was an answer to our prayers. Within weeks of starting, Kristen was returning home back to her happy self and enjoying each day. The nastiness, bullying and isolation she had felt were things of the past and she has continued to blossom in the nurturing, caring and loving educational environment that is MECS.

Esther

The H family who have spent quite some time working with Missionary Aviation Fellowship in East Arnhem Land, recently returned to our area. A seventeen year old Yongulu girl’s family had asked whether she could stay with them and get schooled in Melbourne away from some of the difficulties of her community. Kathy, the mother, came past to ask whether there were any possibilities for Esther.

To say there were multiple issues would be an understatement: language and cultural barriers... vastly differing educational and chronological levels... custodial status issues... who was going to cover the fees and what would be the rate... how long was the arrangement for... would/could Esther express her desires... were there background issues... and so on.

This was unknown territory for us. We’d previously had discussions with leaders in Yuendumu about providing scholarships for Warlpiri boys. This wasn’t a partnership, but a one-off arrangement, with MECS having no specific expertise or preparation. We’d be ‘flying by the seat of our pants’... "We’ll give it a shot". What was I saying? Here’s Kathy’s reflections...

When we first thought of what life would look like for Esther down in Melbourne the obvious question was where would she attend school? Who would be willing to give her a chance? Other schools hadn’t worked out. Our oldest son had previously been at MECS and we thought there was a slim chance that they’d take Esther on. I’d hoped that their indigenous interests as shown in the SS program might present possibilities. Martin was willing and with the much appreciated support of Sue De Pyle, Yvonne Verhagen and the wonderful Year 9 girls, Esther has loved her time at MECS thus far.

It is always good to reflect not only on what students from different backgrounds receive but also what they bring to the school.

It is always good to reflect not only on what students from different backgrounds receive but also what they bring to the school. Instead of viewing different students as ‘taking away’ from others who have it all together, it actually presents new opportunities for growth and appreciating intelligence in other areas that many Melbourne kids would never perceive. If you saw Esther at home in her community, fishing, communicating, handling herself in situations we find uncomfortable, dealing with community problems, protecting those she loves, and dancing with the women, you would see that at times we are the uneducated ones and lacking in cultural sensitivity. Thanks to the students and staff at MECS for the love you have shown Esther and the opportunities that you’ve opened for her.

Editorial continued next page...
Gillian

The last example is a little too close to be specific, so I’ve changed some of the detail.

We’d taken on a secondary student, Gillian. The application, tour and enrolment interview with the single father hadn’t shown too much that was alarming, though there were questions about why things hadn’t worked out at the last school. As the weeks and months turned over, multiple difficult and complex behaviour and learning issues emerged. It usually starts with the teacher, moves to the Coordinator and then onto the Principal. I was involved and we were calling in the father in our attempt to understand what was happening. This wasn’t easy and it wasn’t what we would call ‘partnership’. The family was in all sorts of difficulty and it stretched back a long way. The conditions I’d put down for continued enrolment (all reasonable and addressing the specific problems) weren’t happening and I was preparing to ‘call it a day’. the father, who was used to avoiding problems, knew he was failing to do his end, and was enquiring elsewhere looking for easier solutions.

Into the picture steps Jo, our Ed Support Coordinator and the queen of ‘going into bat for those who need many extra chances’. A separate family member had rung in and explained to Jo why MECS was needed and ‘moving on’ was another example of dad’s avoidance. Jo ‘comes in to bat’ and I’m explaining to her why we had done all we could. Jo’s response was to explain why our approach was never going to work and why we needed to start over, with a clean slate and strategy. We’d never understood the complexity and applying standard procedures was bound to fail... Was it possible to do a re-take?

“Okay, let’s give it a shot”. Jo does a little jig and says, “I love it when you change your mind”. We backed off, adjusted

the shaping of expectations, put down some negotiated conditions, and started working with some of the external agencies involved. It’s the long road. Here’s Jo’s reflection...

“There are times when “You’re on your last chance” is unrealistic and impossible for some of our students. The difficulties they face are not of their own doing. I often use the analogy of a person who is blind, and those around them saying “If you try hard enough you’ll be able to see one day.” In these situations we (who are part of their environment) need to make the adjustments and not only accommodate them (which can sound patronising) but, with genuine heart of service and hospitality, WELCOME them. That’s the hard stuff. That’s where Jesus turned the world upside down by his responses. How do we balance that with all the other complexities of being a community? – With great difficulty, prayer and much discussion. We don’t always get it right, but we always give it a go, and do our best. We make ourselves, as a school, vulnerable to the criticism of others who don’t recognise the heart of what we are doing. This criticism often comes from within the community, and can be hurtful. However, the joy of seeing positive changes in a student, hearing them recognise their challenges and work WITH us, and them recognising that we love them with Jesus’ love, is worth all the pain and anguish about our decision to enrol or keep them at MECS.

When to... when not to?

If I had to write the manual on ways to handle enrolment, would I include a chapter titled “Times when you need to give it a shot”? It would make a mess of the rest of the guidelines because it breaks all the rules. I’m sure that at times it’s wise to do just that, and other times when you’d be saying, stick with the good practice. Aagghhhhh…. Give us wisdom Lord.
MUSIC in 2013
Enrolment forms for 2013 are currently being handed out to instrumental students. Next year might seem a while away, but we’re planning for Term 1 already - and we’re hoping that all our young musicians re-enrol. Get your form back soon to reserve your place in the programme and to be eligible for lessons from Week 1. Return your form to school now.
If you’d like to join the Instrumental Programme you can enrol for 2013 - just pick up a form at the office. Learning music is a great experience!

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator

MECS Notes

Book Fair News
A big thank you to all of our students and parents who came along and supported the Book Fair. Thanks to you we managed to raise $1200 to purchase books for our new Kindergarten, which is fantastic! Pictured here is our Kinder Teacher Wendy with a small selection of the books purchased.

Fiona
Library Technician

Fast ForWord
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.

Our visiting psychologist, Tom McCrimmon will hold an Information Session about Fast ForWord on Tuesday 20 November, 2.00pm, in the Primary PUMP Room. For further information visit www.fastforword.com.au.

Jo
Ed Support

Parents & Friends

Urgent Stationary Help Required
Thank you to those who have responded to the call for stationary helpers on Thursday 31 January. A few more people are still required. For those of you who have never done this before, it is not hard to do. It is a great time to meet other parents from the school and to help with this great fundraiser. Please contact me.

Evelyn
Stationery Coordinator

School Banking

Hot off the Press!

Win an IPAD Mini for Christmas.
How? Bank at school before 14 Dec (11.59am) and you will automatically go into the draw to win.

It couldn’t be easier, so remember to bring in your banking. Good Luck Everyone!

Refer to www.commbank.com.au for terms & conditions

School Banking

Q&A

“I can’t seem to find history or geography on the timetable. Where are they?”

When I attended a government secondary school, one of my favourite subjects was history, especially ancient history. The idea of flying off to far away lands in my mind’s eye was most appealing. (I wish I could say the same for geography but I can’t.)

As soon as it wasn’t a compulsory part of the curriculum I dropped history, as I perceived there to be no economic value in retaining the subject (after all, what worthwhile jobs come from pursuing history?). On reflection, it is somewhat ironic that now all of what I teach I try to ground in an historical and hence geographic framework.

The subject based approach for organising curriculum is popular in the majority of schools and my secondary school experience was no exception. Our curriculum was divided according to the traditional subject areas. This approach to organising knowledge is efficient in terms of conveying information, however, by its very nature it compartmentalises the learning and so doesn’t provide context or connectedness. This can result in students compartmentalising their faith to certain parts of their life, (e.g. church or witnessing) rather than allowing it to impact all areas of life, including their vocation.

MECS seeks to operate from a holistic perspective. Rather than starting with the separate subjects or parts, it begins with the big picture in mind. The God-given whole - all of creation, provides context and connections to investigate, explore and delight in. By focusing on big slices of life such as the Year 9 ‘City of Melbourne’ unit, not only will different ‘subjects’ like geography and history be discussed, but these will be seamlessly connected to many other ways of knowing such as aesthetically, socially and devotionally.

So do we have geography and history on the timetable? Except for VCE History, no we don’t. However the more interesting question to ask is do we teach geography and history within a holistic context? And that answer is definitely – yes we do – with the benefit that our students have a richer and deeper understanding and appreciation of history and geography within God’s dynamic creation.
A Musical Showcase

Primary School Recital

Last Wednesday was our final recital for the year! Our wonderful Primary students entertained us with solo, small group and ensemble numbers.

We had the pleasure of hearing Kerrie as our guest artist and we were hosted by Zoe & Elfie who did a great job! Thank you for all who attended it was great to have your support! Thanks go to Steve for the photos.

Annora
Music Performance Coordinator
Secondary Interschool Athletics

We took a team of 60 students from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 to compete in the Interschool Athletics carnival. Placegetters in the Tribal Athletics are invited to go to the Interschool event. This year we had to get others to fill in gaps in the team left by sick, injured or absent students. Thanks to those students who were prepared to step out of their comfort zone and do an event that was not their strength. Overall, we came 5th out of the 8 schools, narrowly missing 4th by 5pts. Students who came 1st in their events were

Joseph - 15 boys long jump
Charlotte - 15 girls long jump
Claire - 14 girls shot put
Shane - 16 boys high jump
Bec - 14 girls 800m

Thank-you Tim and Adam for coming and doing the duties for our school.

Anne-Marie
Secondary Sports Coordinator
MECS students excel on Athletics Day

Last week 60 students from Year 2 to Year 6 enjoyed a wonderful day participating at the Inter School Athletics Sports. Our students performed exceptionally well and their results were amazing. Overall MECS placed third only narrowly behind 2nd place and only about 50 points off winning the whole day. This is quite a jump from past performances and the students are to be congratulated. Individually there were too many wonderful results to mention, however Rebecca broke the record in the 11 Years Girls Discus and Zoe broke the record in the 12/13 Years Girls Discus. Every one of our relay teams won a ribbon, which was an amazing achievement and most of our students placed in each of their events.

The following students placed first in their respective events:

- Ben: 12/13 Years Boys 800m, 200m (A), Long Jump
- Ryan: 12/13 Years Boys High Jump, Hurdles
- Matthew: 12/13 Years Boys 200m (B)
- Zoe: 12/13 Years Girls Shot Put, Discus
- Jasmine: 12/13 Years Girls Hurdles (A),
- Brianna: 12/13 Years Girls Hurdles (B)
- Aiden: 11 Years Boys High Jump
- Rebecca: 11 Years Girls Discus
- Patience: 11 Years Girls 100m
- Flynn: 10 years Boys Long Jump
- Shin-Hye: 10 Years Girls Long Jump
- Tom: 9 Years Boys 100m, 200m
- Tom: 9 years Boys Discus
- Abbey: 9 Years Girls 100m
- Emmerson: 9 Years Girls Discus

I would like to make a special mention of Cody in Year 2 who ran in the 9 Years Boys Circular Relay. Cody ran first for his team and made an excellent baton exchange to have his team in first place after he handed over the baton. His team ended up placing 2nd which was great and Cody should be very proud of his contribution to his team!

Carissa
Coordinator of Primary School Sport

PS Athletics Records

29 Records written on a lovely sunny day

At the Primary School Athletics Sports day many existing records were broken and the addition of new events saw new records written. Notably Ben in Year 6 rewrote the record books 5 times. Ben now holds the 100m, 200m, 800m, 1500m and Triple Jump records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Boys/Girls</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100m</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>13.89sec</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>16.35sec</td>
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<tr>
<td>200m</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>28.99sec</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>34.43sec</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Addi</td>
<td>34.19sec</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>800m</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>2.41.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500m</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>5.35.05</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sairse</td>
<td>6.32.30</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riley</td>
<td>6.25.50</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Savannah</td>
<td>7.03.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Years Boys</td>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>7.29.35</td>
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<td>Jodie</td>
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<td>Riley</td>
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<td>Jazmine</td>
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<td>Ben</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Patience</td>
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<td>Daniel</td>
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Congratulations to all of these incredibly talented and gifted children!

The Primary Athletics results were as follows

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<th>Points</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Blue</td>
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<td>White</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
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<td>889</td>
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Carissa
Primary School Sports Coordinator
MECS Kindergarten:-

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

Caravan for sale

Free Bed
Single pink four poster bed with net curtains and matching bedside table, base and mattress also available. Blue corner bookshelf (3 shelves). Pick up in Mount Evelyn. Contact Libby (evenings or weekends).

Fridge/Freezer for sale
325 litre Admiral frost free upside down fridge/ freezer in good working order. Will sell for $50.
Contact Sharon.

Housemate Wanted
My housemate and I are looking for a third Christian housemate to live in the Croydon area. We are both past MECS students in our 20s. If anyone would like more information they can call Mel.

Michael Carr-Gregg
Michael Carr-Gregg will present a seminar on ‘Building resilient and happy children and young people in a community’ at the Mooroolbark Umbrella Group community forum.
Mooroolbark Community Centre, 125 Brice Ave, Mooroolbark (behind Senior Citizens Centre), 7:30pm, Thur 22 Nov. Entry gold coin donation. RSVP appreciated.