A Camping Experience for Cycle A

Bailey enjoying the beautiful beach at Wilsons Prom
Academic Scholarships have no place in Christian Education

This week Principal Martin reflects on a difficulty faced by Christian Schools in the independent sector. We live in the market place of needing enrolments in order to maintain a sustainable business model. Isn’t it reasonable to use ‘best competitive practice’ in order to survive?

The School Marketplace

Many years ago I remember a businessman enquiring with us about enrolling his rather troubled son. He was very honest. His son was a difficult kid who had been asked to leave several previous schools. The businessman had done his homework and put up a strong case why he thought MECS would be different. The further we looked at the situation the more obvious it became that this father didn’t quite get partnership, but he did get ‘money’. In the end he offered to pay double fees if we took his kid, saying he was at his ‘wits-end’ and he knew we’d have to put extra resources in to make it a successful educational experience. Up until the point of this extraordinary offer I was seriously considering the request. I know MECS does well with troubled students. However, a basic first base for all enquirers is, ‘Do you understand partnership?’

This scenario is an example of when a parent applies a simplistic ‘commercial relationship’ attitude to their choice of school. This ‘you get what you pay for’ outlook is a pretty common view of the independent school sector. Obviously other factors like history, proximity, affordability, specialisation and social expectation all weigh in.

Parents can use money to buy what they want. So do schools. Because independent schools have to charge fees they need to make many decisions about income and enrolment. This leads onto the difficult matter of academic scholarships.

Don’t get sucked in

Christian schools can be tempted to go down this ‘market-shaped’ road with all sorts of justification; we want to set a high academic standard… God calls us to excellence…. parents wouldn’t be able to afford the school except for the scholarship… the offer acknowledges their God-given academic giftings…. it’s attractive to parents ….my smart child needs a more pushy, competitive academic context, and so on. When Christian schools ‘get’ into this ‘marketplace’ they can start to offer academic scholarships (AS’s).

Playing the market game and academic scholarships are a treacherous road. I would go so far as to argue that, ‘Academic Scholarships have no place in Christian Education’. These are strong words. Specifically here’s why...

1. What is a school saying about its values

Academic scholarships send all the wrong messages — that there is a hierarchy of gifts of smarts above all else; that one child is a better image bearer of God’s than another; that the school is being led by an elitist market place; that the school is an elitist ‘wannabe’, and so on.

The cynic in me, says AS’s are all about ‘buying your marks’. In a society that is increasingly evaluating school success based on advertised NAPLAN and VCE results, when a school ‘purchases’ a number of 90+ students, the results look impressive and no one would know how they were acquired. At times in the media you’ll hear of ‘elite’ (interesting word to define) schools in the $20,000+ bracket, competing to put up the most attractive package for the ‘cream’ kids. Behind the scenes, the hostility and poaching between these competitors is blood curdling.

2. We don’t love one kid more than another

Academic scholarships play ‘favourites’. It goes without saying that we love our children no matter what their giftings or abilities/ disabilities. However, what’s the message when a school advertises academic scholarships? In a society where the key determinant of something’s value is its monetary worth, you cannot read this in any other way than the school giving extra value to the smarter child. Should this be the message of a Christian school?

3. The sledge hammer that’s needed to manage this

Schools manage their enrolments in multiple ways. Positive discrimination happens in the form of scholarships, bursaries or fee assistance. Negative discrimination can occur through finding some means by which you keep out those you don’t want, whilst of course complying with ‘anti-discrimination’ requirements relating to disability or learning needs.

Academic scholarships need to be advertised and no matter how else they are dressed up (written applications, endorsements, character qualities, etc) some form of tested academic performance standard needs to be applied. It’s a most tricky business as the school plays ‘favourites’ whilst parents are playing ‘pick me’ and sometimes question whether the process is fair, consistent and transparent. It certainly isn’t transparent as blanket confidentiality gets applied and the detail of who’s in is kept ‘under wraps’. Meanwhile everyone else is subsidising those who get the priority queue status.

Another negative implication of AS’s is that families and schools get split up. AS schools will obviously not state ‘we don’t want your less capable child’, but when the family can’t afford the high full fee rate, the family ends up sending children to different schools with the less ‘capable’ child going to a state or lower fee school. This isn’t healthy family partnership. We’d rather press home the ‘whole family partnership’ (WFP) criteria for enrolment.

4. An alternative type of scholarship

As I’ve been wrestling with this issue the thought has come to mind, wouldn’t it be interesting if we offered scholarships for kids on the autism spectrum. Isn’t that the sort of reverse value that Jesus alludes to in his upside down kingdom. If we had discretionary money (what others would put into academic scholarships) we’d be putting it into the area of Education Support. Whilst initial parents and gov’t grants also contribute here, the MECS budget puts in excess of $150,000 on top of the Ed Support Coordinator’s wage into this area.

5. Celebrating giftedness

Christian educators who argue for AS’s make the case that academically gifted students make very positive contributions. There’s no doubt this is true. The argument continues that if they don’t do it, another school will. Why should they suffer the ‘brain drain”? The difficulty of stepping onto this treacherous treadmill is getting off, once you realise the breadth of negatives that accompany the insatiable appetite of the competitive market place.

In not going down this road, how does a school like MECS still celebrate giftedness and aspire for students to realise their full academic potential? That’s a whole other subject. One way to see our holistic and inclusive approach would be to witness the Year 12 Graduation event tomorrow night. It’s a wonderful testimony of how to celebrate each child minus the awards night, trophy cabinet or scholarship list.

We’ll celebrate all of our Year 12s by speaking about each one with personal insight, affirming their giftedness, acknowledging their contribution and wishing them God’s richest blessings beyond MECS. This is a group of Year 12s who came to MECS not because we offered them free tuition in return for a high ATAR but because their families wanted partnership, a well-rounded education and the opportunity for the very best in their child to be drawn out, not matter what their gifts might be.

In conclusion, one can hardly blame parents who are offered AS’s for taking them. If you were offered a partial or full scholarship, would it be tempting? I’d admit I’m proud when my own children do well, and an academic scholarship would be flattering. This challenge therefore is not for individual parents but to school leadership and to us as a whole, in terms of the type of community we seek to be – an inclusive one rather than a selective one. My beef is more with Christian school leadership who have been (surely, it’s accidentally and unhappily) sucked into this position. If we stood up as Christians to this ‘way of the world’, I don’t think academic scholarships would exist.
School Notes from Martin, Principal

A Week of Great camps & Work Experience

The whole Middle School were off exploring our great country last week – Canberra for Year 9s, Inverloch for Cycle B and Wilson’s Prom for Cycle A. And whilst lots of fantastic learning was happening outside the classroom, the Year 10s were going hard at Work Experience - discovering the challenges and delights of the workforce. Now they’re back and ready to get into Orientation with the Year 11s. SS staff will be busy introducing the new courses. Thanks to all the staff and parents who made these programs possible.

PS Poetry Book Launch

I’m sorry to have missed this (being in Canberra with the Yr 9s). It sounds like it was a terrific event showcasing some amazing talent and creativity amongst our primary students. Thanks to Mel for the significant amount of time and energy that she put into the project and it was great to have Melbourne poet, Cameron involved. The book looks most impressive.

Primary Teaching Team for 2013

Di Primary Coordinator, Prep - Jan, Rebekah, JP - Ange, Daniela, Matt, MP - Mem, Jess , Ali, SP - Mel, Ben, Carmen
Specialists: Janine – Music; Liesje - Scripture/JP support; Derek - PE/Sport, Rachel - Ed Support team. Carissa will be joining the Secondary section and Wendy heading up the Kindergarten. Bec and Sandra are heading off travelling.

Kindergarten Parent Information Night

I also missed out on this – another big success. Things are going so well for the kindergarten – it was great to be able to share the excitement and progress with the parents.

We’ve finalised the staff for the kinder – Andrea is coming back to MECS to be one of the 4 year old program assistants and new to MECS is Robyn (other 4 year old program assistant), Cherie (4 year old program teacher), Lee (3 year old program teacher) and Karen (3 year old program assistant).

Parents & Friends

Later in the newsletter the P&F group have announced that they will be wrapping up as a volunteer organisation. A lot more needs to be said by way of acknowledgement and thanks, which I’ll take up next week, as this group of volunteer mums have served the community over many years, in a wide range of extraordinary ways. For the moment we recognise that communities change over time and so does the broader societal context. It’s a positive and helpful thing when these changes can be managed so positively by both the P&F group and the school.

National Science Curriculum

Two of our great scientists, Roger and Gerry (he was an Agricultural Scientist before he reinvented himself as a linguist and Admin Manager) spent two days last week working for CEN National, reviewing and critiquing the new National Science curriculum. They are preparing a briefing paper to assist all CEN science teachers in understanding how to respond as a Christian to the prescribed Science curriculum.

MECS Kindergarten Information Night

Last Thursday night approximately 70 of our excited kindergarten parents came to our ‘Kindergarten Information Night’. We started the evening with a walk-through of the nearly completed Kindergarten building. The builder Jonathan King was there to answer our questions. It is wonderful to see the buildings nearly finished and being fitted out with all the fixtures and fittings.

Once we were all back in the PUMP room Wendy Mason (Early Years Coordinator and 4 year old teacher) introduced the new Kindergarten team. The new staff are:

4 year old teachers - Wendy and Cherie, 3 year old teacher - Lee and assistants Andrea, Robyn and Karen.

Wendy gave an outline of the Kindergarten program, told the parents lots of helpful information and expressed her excitement at heading up this team and doing Kindergarten at MECS in 2013. Orientation packs were handed out and each family with a student in the Sunflower room received a pot, pack of seeds and some gardening gloves. The ones in the Gumtree room received a small gum tree to nurture and grow and bring back to MECS on their first day of Kindergarten.

We still have some places available in the 4 year old group - if you know of anyone who may be interested please encourage them to contact us via the office.

Amanda and Nicole
Community Relations Officers

Kindergarten Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunflower Room</th>
<th>Gumtree Room</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koalas 4yo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Possums 4yo</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 9am-1.15pm</td>
<td>12.30pm-3.15pm</td>
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<td>Tuesday 9am-3pm</td>
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<td>Friday 9am-12.15pm</td>
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### 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**

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### Middle School Second-Hand Book Sale

**Attention all Middle-School students and parents!**

Second-hand books are offered for sale each year on the two Stationery pick-up days. This year we will be selling the English books from Yr 9. The Maths books from Years 8 & 9 will be sold to the school to make class sets (a letter has gone home explaining this).

If you want your child’s text books (see list below) to be sold through the school, here’s what you need to do:

- **Write your child’s name clearly on the inside front cover** (this allows us to refund the monies to the correct people)
- **By Friday December 7** either leave the books in a specially marked box (Year 9 only) which will be located in the Year 9 classroom. (We realise school does not finish until a week later so if students still need them – books can be handed into the office after this date).

Alternatively books may be handed in at the Main office in a clearly marked bag.

We will have some books for sale at the first stationery sales day on 3 December, otherwise your name will be placed on a list so that one can be put aside for you to collect on the second sales day on January 31 or in the first week of school next year.

Books are priced according to their condition (approximately half of their new price.) Any books that came with a CD included in the back, need to have the CD returned to the school to make class sets (a letter has gone home explaining this).

If your books are sold, there will be two options for reimbursement:

1. Sale price can be deducted from your School Fees in the New Year.
2. Cash reimbursement will be available early in Term 1 (dates to be announced). The first option is our preferred option so if you would rather a cash payment please ring me on the number below to let me know. If I don’t hear from you then any proceeds of sales will automatically be credited to your school fees.

* Please be advised we will no longer be sending cheque payments. Books that are not sold are held over to be sold the following year.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

**Evelyn**

**Stationery Coordinator**

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### Books accepted for Sale

- Heinemann Atlas (3rd or 4th Edition only please)
- Macquarie School Dictionary
- Guidelines For Referencing and Bibliographies
- NIV Bibles (as sold by school)
- Maths Zone 8*
- Maths Zone 9*
- Move into English 3 (Yr 9)

*Please make sure all CD’s are in the back of the book if it was supplied with the book.

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### Canteen Menu Changes

The Canteen has suffered a significant loss of a large amount of stock due to a power cut so for the remaining few weeks of the year, lunch orders will be limited.

**Things that will be available:**

- **Chicken twist,** as usual  $4.50
- **Pizzas,** commercial brand $3.50
- **Hamburgers** from butchers made with beef (not the sausage meat ones) $4.50
- **Sausage Rolls,** commercially made $3.00
- **Steamed dim sims** 80c
- **Hot Potatoes,** as usual $4.50
- **Corn cobs** $1
- **Sushi - tuna only** $2.50
- **Toasted sandwiches,** as per the menu
- **Just Yummy sausage rolls & pizza slice** as usual.

**Weekly specials = hot dogs for the rest of the year + Sauce 20c + cheese 50c** $2.80
MECS Parents & Friends

It is with a degree of sadness that we are announcing that we have come to the end of an era – shortly our Parents and Friends group will cease to operate at MECS. We recognise that this will bring sadness to many people who have been involved with us over the past 40 years and it is with gratitude that we thank you all for your dedication and commitment to MECS through Parents and Friends (or Mothers’ Club as it was previously known) over the past four decades.

We are excited that a new way of organising support for the school, more suited to the demands of modern families, is being developed to take over the important elements of what Parents and Friends provided for our community. More information on this new entity ‘Friends of MECS’ will be available in 2013 – our Anniversary year. We believe the timing of our 40th Anniversary celebrations means it is appropriate to not only encourage parent involvement, but to also offer that opportunity to past students, families and grandparents in our wider community by giving them all opportunities of engagement and to be involved in supporting the wonderful MECS community.

Stay tuned and look forward to new and exciting opportunities in 2013 and beyond.

The Parents and Friends Committee

Poetry Performance

What a talented bunch of students we have! Last Thursday many Primary students showcased these talents at the much anticipated launch of our poetry booklet ‘Listen Up’, written and illustrated by some of the MECS Primary students. The launch featured an art display and poetry performances by some Primary students in a GT led by the SPUDS. The audience was treated to a performance by poet Cameron, who performed two of his poems for us.

The production of the booklet and GT launch of it was the result of a government grant program from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as part of their Stamp Out Bullying campaign. MECS was chosen for a seedling grant, and we are now considered a leading school in this campaign.

Although bullying is thankfully not a big problem at MECS, we endeavour to do all that we can to keep it that way and to be faithful to being the kind of community and having the kind of relationships that God wants us to have. Classes explored together the theme of what bullying is and how it affects people and what we can do about it. A large part of the project dealt with how we can create a culture at MECS that is the antitheses of bullying – a place where bullying just doesn’t fit in.

Cameron worked with small groups of children and Primary class teachers worked with their classes on producing some more poetry and artwork centred around the themes of bullying and our idea of antitheses – practising the fruits of the spirit.

Each Primary family received a booklet as a gift. Further copies are available for $5. If you would like to order one, please fill out an order form available at the office.

Melissa
SP Teacher
Cycle A Wilsons Prom Camp

Cycle A went on a fantastic camp to Wilsons Prom last week. There were 6 hiking groups, and 4 of them began their hikes on Monday (we had to get to school at 6.30am!). The groups had about 2 leaders and 10 students, and groups went out for 3 nights, 2 nights or 1. Many of the students surprised themselves with how far they could walk, and how they could take everything they needed to survive, on their backs.

The students wrote goals before they left, and had time to reflect on whether they had succeeded. Many of these goals were about preparing well for the camp, having good attitudes (not complaining!) and being able to simply complete their hike. Everyone did complete their hike, and students were very proud of their achievements. Many students had time at Base Camp, where they were able to enjoy time at Tidal River, doing water colour painting, learning about the Prom and spending time with one another.

This was a brilliant camp set in a beautiful location, and the students had a wonderful, memorable experience!

Nicky
MS Teacher

My Camp Experience

What I thought was going to be a challenge before camp was the first day. We had to do 17km which included crossing from one side of the Prom to another with a full pack on my back with about 18kgs in it.

The actual challenge was (believe it or not) the second day when we did 7km – because it was mostly uphill it was a lot harder, and the fact that we got lost for an hour didn’t help either. Most of the camp goals that I set for myself I completed. One of them was to pack neatly - I thought I was being neat, but my neat is Brenton’s messy. Another goal was to drink heaps of water which I did with ease - I drank over 2 litres a day.

The advice I would give to next year’s cycle A would be pack neatly so everything can fit in, expect the unexpected and enjoy every moment. The experience I will remember from camp will be the beautiful landscape at Wilsons Prom.

Josh
Year 10 Work Experience

Last week, (19 to 23 November) the Year 10s did a week of Work Experience. There was a variety of places which the students attended, including Kindergartens, Cafes, Vets, Pet shops, Retail stores, Car Garages, Opportunity Shops and much more. Several people found this a challenge as it meant working from early in the day to much later than school. There have been some good stories coming from the week and many employers who have rung to say how happy they have been. The students had a week full of different but exciting experiences that will benefit them in the future with choosing their careers.

Hannah, Chloe and Laura

Reflections from the ‘Bosses’!

Work experience was a great success. Here are a few of the success stories.

“Originally agreed to 2 days work experience but extended because we were impressed with the quality of work, attitude and initiative”

“He has been rewarded for his efforts with the offer of a casual job with us. Well done.”

“She would be an asset to any employer and we wish her all the best in whatever career she decides upon.”

“He was a fantastic assistance…”

“She has been an asset to us during this busy time of year”

And, a phone call wanting contact details because a customer had come in to give our student a card and a block of chocolate in thanks!

Well done Year 10s.

Anne
SS Careers Teacher

My Camp Experience

28/11/12
Dear Journal,

Camp to Wilsons Prom was surprisingly fun. The hikes were especially entertaining because of all the fantastic scenery like Mount Oberon, the sea hitting the shore and the forest areas. On our way to Wilsons Prom I thought a challenge would be walking across Oberon beach with a 16kg pack but in fact it was walking up Mount Oberon while it was raining.

My camp goals were trying to stay organised and not complaining and I did accomplish my goals. My advice to the next people that go hiking to Wilsons Prom would be to pack as little as possible and to pick an appropriate hike for your fitness level. I will never forget our amazing camp group because we all got on awesomely and we made up a ton of funny songs and dances. Wilsons Prom camp I would rate 8 ½ out of 10. It is a fantastic camp with great views that I will never forget.

Cameron

TURBO SUMMER CAMPS

2013

PRIMARY CAMP ONE: JANUARY 7th - 11th
PRIMARY CAMP TWO: JANUARY 12th - 16th
(school years 3 - 6)

TEEN CAMP: JANUARY 16th - 20th
(school years 7 - 10)

APPLY ONLINE NOW
TURBO.CYC.ORG.AU

EARLY BIRD PRICE $210
IF YOU BOOK BEFORE NOV 30TH
NORMAL PRICE $260

Turbo@cyg.org.au - ph:5967 1594
47 Hoddle Street, Yarra Junction
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
11am Tuesday on published week. Email articles (images attached as jpg) to the Newsletter Office.

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.

Free Guinea Pig
Free to loving home - a very snuggly 3 yr old female guinea pig. ‘Shaggy’ needs to find a new home by the 7 December as her owners are moving interstate and cannot take her with them. She is used to lots of cuddles and handling and is very gentle natured, she also has her own home.
If you are interested please phone Tania.

Caravan For Sale
Future System 1998, tandem independent suspension, 2 sets of bunks, small gas oven, hot plates etc, 3 way fridge, roll out awning and full size annex, bike rack on back plus lots of extras. Very clean, kept under cover when not being used. $18,500.
Phone Bruce.

Girls Bike for sale
Malvern Star Livewire 24” in very good condition $150.
Baby Guinea Pigs: $10.
Phone Jarka.

Gardening Apprenticeship
We run our own gardening business in Mount Evelyn and we are looking for a student Year 11 or above that may be interested in a gardening apprenticeship or is interested in horticulture and may like some experience over the school holidays. If you have any student interested we would love to hear from them. Please contact Robert or email a resume.

3 Bedroom House for Rent

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.

Holiday Home For Rent
In Shoreham (near Flinders) on the Peninsula. A 4 bedroom holiday home is available for rent, in a quiet court, not far from the beach. If you are interested in renting it for a few days, a weekend, a week or longer, just let us know. Very reasonable rent.
Please ring Maria and Henk.

NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK
(can also be downloaded from website)
• Prep Big Night Out
• Secondhand Books Notice
• Year 6 Helpers Prep Big Night Out

Mon 26 - Fri 30 November
Year 11/12 Orientation Week 1

Thur 29 November
‘Kids with Courage’ Parent Follow-up
Evening Pump room 7.30pm

Fri 30 November
Prep Big Night Out
Year 12 Graduation Dinner

Sat 1 December
Working Bee beginning with Breakfast
7am

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
11am Tuesday on published week. Email articles (images attached as jpg) to the Newsletter Office.

Mon 3 - Fri 7 December
Year 12 Orientation Week 2

Mon 3 December
Orientation Day
Stationery in SS Study Centre 9am-3pm
Schoolwear Sales in Canteen 9am-3pm

Wed 5 - Fri 7 December
MS Exams

Thur 6 December
P&F Break-up Dinner

Fri 7 December
Year 6 Graduation 6pm

Tues 11 December
SS Orientation

Wed 12 December
Reports Issued

Thur 13 December
End Term 4

Mon 23 December - 1 January
Office Closed

Mon 28 January
Australia Day Holiday - School Closed

Thur 31 January
Stationery & Schoolwear pickup 9am - 12pm
New MS Student Assessment Day 9-11am

Mon 4 February
Term 1 Begins

MECS Website
See the MECS Website for notices home, colour newsletter pages, calendars and lots of other useful information.
www.mecs.vic.edu.au

Calender
Thursday 29 November 2012
Mount Evelyn Christian School News

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Working Bee
Sat 1 Dec
Beginning with breakfast at 7am

 FOUND
Lego in a black Supre bag – available from the Main Office.
Set of Car Keys - see the Main Office