Year 12 Celebration Day

James & Daniel do a great job with their costumes for the Year 12 Celebration Day movie theme.
School Fees

In the October Association General meeting (on 16 October) we presented the draft budget for 2015 and tried to explain the complexities of what makes MECS a financially viable and healthy school. The 2015 budget has a degree of uncertainty because we have not properly been notified about one element of State funding that seems to be changing (I’ll explain below). Nevertheless all parents are keenly interested in what the school fees are for 2015.

Here’s the 2015 fee schedule that the Board approved at its meeting in October.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three year kinder</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>For the first year of schooling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four year kinder</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Due to low levels of government funding for Kinder, fee discounts are not available for Kinder fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>60% of 1st primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school 1st child</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school 2nd child</td>
<td>$4,120</td>
<td>75% of 1st primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school 3rd child</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>60% of 1st primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school 4th child</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>60% of 1st primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School 1st child</td>
<td>$7,280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school 2nd child</td>
<td>$5,440</td>
<td>75% of 1st middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School 3rd child</td>
<td>$4,350</td>
<td>60% of 1st middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 1st child</td>
<td>$8,140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 2nd child</td>
<td>$5,100</td>
<td>75% of 1st senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 3rd child</td>
<td>$4,880</td>
<td>60% of 1st senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum fees per family</td>
<td>$15,500</td>
<td>Kinder fees are not included in the ceiling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts</td>
<td></td>
<td>5% for all fees paid by the end of February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3% for half fees paid by the end of February and half fees paid by end of July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fees shown in the table have risen approximately 5% above the 2014 rates. Many will be wondering why an increase of 5% is needed when inflation is around 2 – 3%. I want to share a few of our considerations.

Education cost increases are greater than CPI.

Whilst the CPI rate is pretty normal, school business managers and education departments use a Bureau of Statistics measure called the Education Price Index (EPI). For quite a few years now this has been well above the CPI rate. In the year up to June 2014 the EPI was 5.1 (in the previous year 5.7%).

Take a comparative look at local independent schools.

A look at the fee rates of other local independent schools will quickly show you that the MECS fee rates are comparatively affordable. It would be convenient if you could do a simple comparison of fees between school but it’s not quite ‘apples and apples’. Scholarships at other schools; significant discounts for 2nd and 3rd children and the family fee ceiling (rarely seen in other schools) here at MECS don’t always lead to easy comparisons. Also, MECS works very hard at the ‘one fee, pays all’ approach. We don’t want to advertise one fee rate and then later ‘load on’ a whole lot of hidden extras that mean the real actual rate is a lot higher. The only extras you’ll see on a MECS bill are for optional things like Instrumental Music Tuition (if your child learns an instrument) or optional VET courses. And the only other items that may come as additional costs are items such as sports tops, a small number of textbooks in secondary, and if you use the bus – our very economical transport fees. Other than some Catholic providers, we are probably the least expensive provider of independent education in our immediate region.

Government grants have a huge influence on our budget.

Each time we budget we have to make estimates of what we’ll be receiving through government funding. Our overall school income is subject to the vagaries of State government funding being dependent on the number of families that receive the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Next year the EMA system will no longer exist but the State Government funding model still requires information about EMA – we just aren’t sure about what they will do to replace the EMA part of their funding model. On the other hand there is now a good tool provided by the Department of Education to estimate Commonwealth funding.

Viable financial planning.

The Board requires the Finance Committee to always plan for a modest surplus, a practice in keeping with a ‘not for profit’ organisation that seeks to be financially sound and viable for the long run. A modest surplus for us usually entails something in the order of 2% of income (some school economic advisors recommend 8 to 10%). This allows for the ongoing maintenance and development of our campus, and enables us to pay off debt. In a real sense then the surplus is our investment in the school’s maintenance and development.

MECS has a significant but manageable level of debt because it has engaged in a building and development phase to create our vibrant learning environment. The Board has a very strict set of limits around how much debt the school is allowed to take on. Those strict limits mean that the infrastructure development that has taken place over recent years has not caused undue pressure on school fees. Of course, the present school community assists in paying off some of this debt (from each year’s modest surplus), but so will the future community, as they will also benefit from the new and refurbished facilities. The Board currently plans that the school will be debt free by the end of 2021 while still undertaking some developments of our facilities.

Affordability

The Finance Committee and Board are very conscious of the MECS mission - “We provide Parent-governed, Christ-centred schooling … at a price affordable to those who are committed”. In order to make sure that Christian education is ‘affordable’, firstly fees need to be kept as low as possible and secondly, a mechanism needs to exist where some help can be provided to those who are committed but who can’t afford it. Where the fee rate is beyond those who are committed, the school helps out. We do not use the allocated help to offer academic scholarships (a dubious practice that we believe has no place in Christian education). Rather, once folk have shown they are committed they can apply for assistance through a confidential fee assistance mechanism that assesses need.

Thanks

We know that each family in our community makes a financial sacrifice to invest in their children’s education. We know it is not easy. We hope that we have struck the right balance between keeping the school affordable and keeping it viable. Thank you for partnering with us.

Gerry
Administration Manager
Parent Satisfaction Survey

Thank you very much for the terrific response to the Parent Satisfaction Survey that many of you completed at the end of last term. In fact, over 60% of our families took the opportunity to share their views about various aspects of the school which was great as the ‘average’ response rate for such surveys is usually about 35%! We take this as a sign that as partners in the education of your children, you care about what happens, what could be improved and what we already do well!

The purpose of such a survey is exactly that; we want to celebrate the strengths of our MECS community and we want to identify the challenges and address them. Therefore the information and insights gathered will help us establish goals and set priorities going forward.

The results of the survey are now on our website, so can I encourage you to have a look?

Certainly they suggest that on the whole, our parents are very happy with the overall school culture that seeks to bring the biblical story and associated values and character to bear on the learning and development of our students. Similarly, parents feel that their children think positively about the school, feel comfortable about expressing their faith and are encouraged to be strong and resilient. It was also pleasing to see a strong confidence in the teacher quality and leadership of the school. These are all good things to hear and celebrate.

Two of the areas that were identified as needing further work are a) the perceptions around the academic rigour of our programs, and b) the nature and role of our governance structure.

Let me first address academic rigour. It is true that academic success is not the sole and dominant emphasis at MECS, and deliberately so. Parents choose our school because they want the character of their child to be developed, their spiritual journey nurtured, their capacity to be able to think and critique enhanced. Who you are matters more than what you become! The challenge for Christian schools such as MECS is that in this environment, it can sometimes be interpreted that we are not setting the academic learning bar high enough; students don’t value their learning highly enough; they’re not challenged in their learning; the school does not offer enough choice in subjects.

This is something MECS constantly has to evaluate, because the truth is we want both! We want a school where the whole child is developed and challenged, AND we also want a place that honours the value of academic learning and celebrates the learning gifts of our students.

The appointment of our 2 Assistant Principals this year, and the ongoing work of our Director of Teaching and Learning are two initiatives that reflect the existing and ongoing commitment to striving to reach these two goals; to continually value learning, side by side and integrated with our celebration of each and every child, regardless of their level of academic gifting. We’re continually seeking ways to do this – and we hope that as we make changes to the way we talk and promote learning amongst our students and parents, our community will increasingly see that providing an outstanding academic environment is not separate to or in conflict with our core vision and mission, but rather enhances it.

In regard to the nature and role of our governance structure, there seems to be some ambiguity around what the Board does and what the role of the Association is. We are thinking through some creative ways in which to increase the understanding of the importance of this structure, as our Association is at the heart of keeping our school ‘distinctive’ in what it means to be a Christian school. It is vitally important that our Association is a strong, dynamic voice in our school; one that keeps true to the vision and mission of the school now and into the future. We want every parent to be part of this, and so it is important that the whole community is informed and know how our Association and governance structure works.

This survey has provided some valuable insights, but surveys, by their very nature, are somewhat limited in their ability to capture all the things that are important to those being surveyed. As a follow-up to this survey, we will be conducting Parent Focus Groups in 2015 which will provide further opportunity for you to have a say on a range of issues. If you are interested in participating in these, stay tuned for further details in the coming year. We will also be giving staff and students the opportunity to participate in comprehensive surveys next year. All these steps combined will provide us with the information needed to make sure MECS is meeting the needs of all those who are part of this fantastic community.

Thanks again for having your say!

Book Fair Nov 6-11

It’s Book Fair time again!

It’s also less than two months until Christmas. Come along to our Book Fair in the Library and you are bound to find some great Christmas gifts. Prices start from as little as $1 and there are some terrific gift ideas with books, posters, diaries and other stationery items available.

Book Fair will run from next Thursday until the following Tuesday. Come along, we would love to see you.

Fiona
Librarian

Times
Thurs Nov 6, Viewing only.
Fri Nov 7 & Mon Nov 10, 8.15-4pm
Tues Nov 11, 8.15-2pm

Finding Jamie Ryan

The Performing Arts group (students from Years 8-10) are looking for a fun, light-hearted audience to come and enjoy some quality drama and dance next Thursday night, November 6, 7.30pm in the Theatrette. They have been working hard during the year to perform a comedy about the mishaps and craziness of high school, written by our own talented Marlene Magee. It is called ‘Finding Jamie Ryan’, presented with permission from Maverick Musicals and Plays. There will be dancing, singing and hilarious characters who you may be able to relate to! Please come and support these wonderful students. Entry cost is a gold coin donation.

Marlene & Nicky
Performing Arts teachers
MECS Notes

MECS Employment Opportunities

The following positions are currently advertised on the MECS website:

- IT Support Administrator
- Learning Assistant
- Ed Support Coordinator – Secondary School
- Administrative Assistant – Senior School

Michelle
HR Administrator/VASS Coordinator

Friends of MECS

Stationery Helpers

Thank you to all those who have offered to help with the packing and sales days for stationery. There are still some times that need more people:

- Wed Dec 3 - 12.30-3pm
- Thurs Dec 4 - 9-12noon
- Thurs Jan 29 - 8.30-12noon & 1-3pm

If you can help at any of these times please let me know by either emailing or messaging.

Evelyn
Friends of MECS

VCE Timetable. Please pray for our Year 12 Students

Celebrating Learning in the Kinder

On Wednesday the four year old kinder children celebrated the completion of a ‘stay at kinder’ project. Early in the year we talked about beautifying the entrance to the kinder and the children came up with many ideas of what they would like to make. As we were also learning about God’s wonderful creation at the time, we started to think about making a mobile - the children said: “It should be sparkly”; “It should hang and move in the breeze”; “It should be strong”; “Beads and beautiful things”; “It could have mirrors”. Teachers went away to plan and provide the necessary materials that could be included. Each piece reflected some of the talking we had done about Creation. We decided to hang them from some old bicycle wheels, after a discussion about recycling and reusing. Thanks to Lee Koole who provided the bike wheels, and Pete Beams who came to hang off a ladder to help with the final display! All learning projects should end with a celebration, so we gathered together to sing some creation songs and dance, finishing with a ‘resounding Hooray! Nothing without joy!’

Wendy
Early Years Coordinator
Year 11 Icehouse Excursion

Last Friday the Year 11 PE class went down to Medibank Icehouse to do ice skating and hockey.

After we all got ice skates and a helmet, it was out onto the ice. Only a very small percentage of the class had ever ice skated before, and even less were confident from the get-go. However this didn’t stop anyone. After a short technique and safety talk from an instructor, confidence was quickly gained on the slipperier-than-anticipated ice, and soon we were all skating around happily aside from the occasional spectacular fall. After about 90mins of skating we had a short lunch break and came back for ice hockey.

Once we were decked out in the full gear: pants, shin/knee pads, vest with shoulder pads, elbow pads, helmet with cage and of course skates, we were back out onto the ice rink - this time armoured and armed with a hockey stick. As you can probably imagine the game got very intense very quickly between the two teams, with more spills in the space of ten minutes than accumulated in the whole day so far. The class would love to formally thank Emma for taking us out to try a new sport and for a really, really fun day.

Asha
Year 11 Student

MS Interschool Basketball

We had 4 teams attend the recent Interschool basketball, but unfortunately only 3 could play, due to a mix up in the draw. The team that missed out on playing still played an important role - scoring and cheering and will have a chance to play at a later date. Of the teams that played the year 7 girls played in the Year 8 competition and came 5th, while the Year 8 girls came 4th. Our Year 8 boys were 5th overall and had a last-game win to finish off the day. These sports days are always a great time with a combination of physical hard work, relaxation and relating. Thanks to Ben who came and helped supervise.

Anne-Maree
Secondary Sport Coordinator

MECS Notes

Congratulations Jodi

Jodi (MECS class of ‘88) was recently featured in the Age newspaper (Business Day section, 12/10) for her massive contribution to the nursing care of patients with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Jodi is a manager and MS nurse consultant at the Eastern Health MS service, delivering care, education and support to people with MS.

After completing her HSC at MECS, Jodi studied Nursing, then went on to complete a Masters degree in Nursing from Deakin University. She has recently qualified as an MS nurse practitioner candidate and next year hopes to be endorsed as a nurse practitioner. This will make Jodi only the second person to have this qualification in Australia.

This year, Jodi received an award for her outstanding contribution to MS nursing at the MS Nurses Australasia Inc. conference. We are extremely proud of Jodi’s achievements and so thankful that she is using her gifts to bring healing and care to those who suffer from MS. Jodi is sister to Melissa (MECS Year 6 teacher) and Natasha (MECS Office Manager). She is also a parent of 2 students at MECS.

Dr Roger F
VCE Coordinator
Year 12 Last Day

It’s Celebration Day...no it’s Muck-Up Day. A compromise? It’s ‘Muckeration’ Day!

For the Year 12s, the last week of school is really a strange time, because it comprises a whole variety of emotions, from a sense of relief to one of sadness. Many students have been at MECS right from the beginning of their schooling, so for them in particular this time of transition is a whole new adventure.

Over the years we have established a number of special traditions for the Year 12s in order to honour and celebrate with them. On their last day of classes a special morning tea is held where teachers from the Primary and Middle school have a chance to reflect on special times and events; this year’s reflections included John’s memorable quote given on entering the state library – ‘You can just smell the punctuation’. At the conclusion of the day the Year 12s transform the SS in accordance with their Celebration Day theme. The theme this year was movies, where a number of classrooms were set up accordingly.

The following day, officially known as Celebration Day to at least one staff member, comprises a cooked breakfast, a visit to the SS from the rest of the school, a visit down to the Middle and Primary school by the 12s, another yummy morning tea, a Year 12 led whole school assembly (this year complete with a music clip and insights on how to transition from boyhood to manhood on the Centre Trip), a staff/student volleyball game that somehow results in a water fight and a special lunch in the main staffroom, where the SS staff and students reflect on the final years of schooling at MECS. The fact that the students were still saying good-bye to each other long after the lunch concluded demonstrates the very strong bond between these particular students.

We sincerely thank all the Year 12s on making their last school day so memorable and for all the right reasons. The Senior School really felt like a mini carnival had come to town. We want to wish our 12s all the best with the final days leading up to their exams. We pray that God might grant them peace and insight into his infinite love for them both now and always.

Sharon
Year 12 Coordinator
MP Plants Camp

Camp is always such a great time in the school year, especially in Middle Primary as there is so much learning and fun to be had. This year’s Plants camp was no exception.

We headed down to Merricks Lodge on the Mornington Peninsula in beautiful weather. Our students took part in lots of activities both on and off the campsite that helped explore learning opportunities about plants as well as help develop new friendships. Students got to plant trees, explore the changing vegetation from the beachfront to the higher wetlands and many other more engaging experiences. With great food, great adult helpers and a great group of students, this was a memorable Middle Primary camp!

Alistair
Middle Primary Cluster Leader

On camp, I learned that the plant ‘Spinifex’ holds sand together so it doesn’t wash out to sea.

Kiara

My favourite thing on camp was the orienteering and making gum leaf bookmarks.

Cody

My favourite thing on camp was having a bonfire with marshmallows and going to the Cranbourne Botanical Gardens.

Isobelle

Visiting Cranbourne Botanical Gardens on the way back to school was such a treat, especially when we were all able to take off our shoes and walk through the Rockpool Waterway to cool ourselves off.

Justine
MP Teacher
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Free Chooks
Free to good home, 4 Isa Brown chooks, approx. 3 yrs old. Still laying sporadically! Call Adele 9725 5820.

Free Ronisch Piano
Pick up only from Mooroolbark area. Old-style piano, plays nicely. Phone Janae on 0468 379 032. Address available on request.

Mount Evelyn Junior Football Club Girls Teams
We are proud to announce that Mount Evelyn are starting up not one but THREE Girl’s Football teams, starting in 2015. We will have U12, U15 & U18’s.

We invite all girls between the ages of 9-17 that love to play AFL to contact Mount Evelyn Junior Football Club and become part of football history. No experience necessary...you just have to love football!

For all enquiries, contact or join ‘Mount Evelyn girls youth football team’ on Facebook.
Bec Corless 0419 390 865
becorless@hotmail.com
Paul Tudor 0403 153 527
paultudor79@gmail.com

Accommodation sought
Single Christian lady in her 50s is seeking quiet accommodation for herself and her indoor cat. She is returning to Melbourne from interstate. Please contact Wysome 0425 275 013.

Free Book Covers
Fluro pink exercise book protective sleeves fits 225mm x 175mm sized books.

If you would like one, or the whole box full, please enquire at the main office.
Cassie Nation
Receptionist

Next Working Bee
Sat 15 Nov, 8am-1pm
Morning Tea Provided