Preps and Pets

Middle School at MECS

Last Thursday evening, small groups of parents were challenged to find ten things they had in common. After several minutes of intense chatter in the packed PUMP room, we had a variety of responses. The first was obvious given the focus of the evening: “We all have a child starting Year 7 at MECS next year”. We then heard of a shared love of a glass of wine, each group member being born in Australia, and even strong opinions on the topic of Australian Rules Football. One group’s answer was typical of what a younger teenager would come up with: the parent, who doubles as a Middle School teacher, in the group may have influenced it. She announced, “None of us are Astronauts!”

Every one of the adults gathered together at last week’s Year 7 Information Evening have an understanding of the characteristics of children in these transition years. Whether we are a parent or a teacher of these young people, we all have the privilege of being in community with them. For the Middle School teachers at MECS, it is a joyful and rewarding challenge to work alongside our Years 7-9 students. It seems we learn just as much from them as they learn from us. One of the best advocates for Middle School education I have come across is Rick Wormeli. He writes,

“In transition from child to adult, these morphing humans are amazing doers and thinkers. Their comments can be profound, pithy, honest, absurd, and juvenile, all at the same time. They reveal developing wisdom, deep understanding, free spirit, and a generation of thinkers in the making. They are a far cry from the inept persona some journalists assign to this stage of human development.”

If you spend time with our Middle School teachers, you will quickly discover the insight they have into working with these young teens. All teachers have stories of students who have shown wisdom beyond their years as they discuss world issues; only to have the same students struggle to regain their composure after a classmate passes gas. They will stand up for injustices and rally to raise funds for a worthy cause, and then walk out of the room and laugh at a classmate who trips over. We do not judge them for their inconsistencies; adults are sometimes no better. We recognise that they are in the midst of a significant stage of their lives. We guide and nurture them, and are advocates for them. “Our classes are full of humans in the making and we have a front row seat as coaches and referees. Never, however, do we use student indiscretions and confusions to paint the whole picture of the charges before us” (The Collected Writings (so far) of Rick Wormeli, 2013).

At MECS this year, the Middle School teaching team have dedicated over ten after-school sessions to further developing our understanding of the characteristics and learning needs of this particular age group. The book we have been using as a guide is ‘This We Believe In Action: Implementing Successful Middle Level Schools’. This book has come out of over forty years of active research in the middle grades led by the Association of Middle Level Education (AMLE). They conclude that an education for this age group must be: developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering and equitable. A number of professional learning opportunities have arisen out of this study, including a Mental First Aid training day held for all MECS staff during the most recent Workbreak. As a response to our new learning, and to other key factors such as the ongoing roll-out of the Australian Curriculum, there are some exciting additions and tweaks to the Middle School Curriculum. From the beginning of 2015, Health will be introduced as a subject from Years 7-10. This will be closely linked with our Physical Education and Sport program. We are currently fine-tuning the overall program for this subject. Topics will include: transitions and changes, identity and positive relationships, online knowledge and safety, self care and developing healthy habits, mental health and resiliency, sources of support, and contributing to the health and well-being of our communities. Our Health and PE teachers are looking forward to exploring these issues with students, and encouraging them to seek the Lord’s guidance and wisdom in these areas of their life.

The subject ‘Core Studies’ in Middle School will be renamed ‘Cultural Studies’. Some aspects of this subject will stay the same while others will change. Cycle A will have a focus on History, Civics and Citizenship, and Information Literacy. Cycle B will concentrate on Geography, Economics and Business, and Media. These curriculum changes will be developed and established over the next few years. These adapted units will look at the effects of the various disciplines on culture, and how they shape/ have shaped the way we interact as communities. The traditional Cycle A Production will no longer be part of the C.S. program. I know this is sad news for many people who have enjoyed this annual performance. However, plans are already underway to ‘re-imagine’ Performing Arts in the Middle School as it is incorporated into our existing Drama program. It is anticipated that we will still have a performance evening to look forward to each year.

Lastly, we have some changes to leadership in the Middle School. After many years of inspiring and faithful leadership, Sue has decided to step down from Middle School Coordinator. Sue is an outstanding leader and support for the teachers in her team. Next year, she will continue with leadership responsibilities in the area of pastoral care of students. We are excited and pleased that Brad has accepted the role as our new Middle School Coordinator. Please keep both Brad and Sue in your prayers as they make these transitions. I would also encourage you to regularly pray for God’s provision and protection over our Middle School staff and students, as we seek to serve and glorify him in this place.

Jacqui
Director of Teaching and Learning
Year 12s Celebration Day
As I focused solely on our recent Parent Satisfaction Survey last week, I didn’t have the opportunity to congratulate the Year 12s on their Celebration Day that was held on 23 October. What a fabulous day of colour and festivity as the students celebrated their time here at MECS. We were so proud of the way they conducted themselves as they interacted with staff and students throughout the day. Many other schools find this a difficult day to navigate as students sometimes ‘step over the line’ in the way they choose to commemorate the day. At MECS, long-standing expectations of respect, gratitude and reflection mean the day is really one of celebration and thanksgiving. Our prayers are still with them as they continue with final exams over the next two weeks. Our final celebration with our Year 12s is on Friday 21 November at their formal graduation.

Centre Trip Presentation Night
Last night was a fabulous night as our Year 10s reflected on their recent Centre Trip. Through poetry, prose and art, each student shared something of the impact of this experience on their own growth and maturity, but also on their learning about indigenous issues and the path to true reconciliation. The special Centre Trip booklet that is produced each year will be a lasting memento of this special time together. It was great to see so many family and friends there to support the students.

Prep and Year 7 Orientation
It’s been great to see so many excited young people around the school lately! Our Preps for 2015 have already met a couple of times to get a taste of what school is going to be like, and last Thursday all our 2015 Year 7s had an energetic night of activity with their parents as they found out about the challenges and opportunities of high school! We hope these have been valuable experiences in making sure the transition into these important years goes smoothly.

Changes to Middle School Leadership
As Jacqui’s editorial mentions, there are some key changes to the Middle School Leadership team next year. After many years of looking after ‘everything’, Sue will now have the opportunity to just focus on the pastoral needs of our Middle School students. This has opened the way for Brad to become the teaching and learning leader in the Middle School. He will be working closely with Karissa (Assistant Principal Secondary) and Jacqui (Director of Teaching and Learning) to make sure the changes to our curriculum program are well introduced and the culture of great teaching and learning is a key priority in 2015. We thank Sue for her outstanding contribution over recent years in what was a very demanding and broad role.

Farewell
At an assembly held in the Senior School last week we farewelled some students going to Ranges TEC and some other institutions for further studies or apprenticeships. Daniel, absent on the day was also farewelled. We wish all these students God’s richest blessings in their new ventures.

Amanda
Community Relations Officer

Book Fair Nov 6-11
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

Book Fair Nov 6-11
Times
Thurs Nov 6: viewing only.
Fri Nov 7 & Mon Nov 10: 8.15am-4pm
Tues Nov 11: 8.15am-2pm

Finding Jamie Ryan
by Marlene TONIGHT!
Two school monitors, one mission: to bring in Jamie Ryan.

The Principal has given Rory and Quinton a job to do but can they succeed before the day is out? Their quest takes them to Woodwork, Band Practice, School Production Rehearsal and an English class, all to no avail. Meanwhile, there’s an exchange student who can’t speak English, a boy causing trouble in the school yard and the teachers are letting their hair down in the staff room. Finally the monitors find the student they are looking for. Or is he?

This is a play about the pitfalls, predicaments and perils of a place we call High School. We’ve all been there! So be there tonight, at the Theatrette, 7.30 pm, for a fun show presented by Performing Arts students. Entry by gold coin donation.

Marlene
VCE Drama and English Teacher, Middle School Drama Teacher
Both our Senior Primary and Middle Primary teams did an awesome job making it to the Hooptime regional finals. The Senior Primary team unfortunately didn’t win any of their games but still did a great job and represented MECS really well.

Our Middle Primary team won enough games to make it to the final but unfortunately lost by 2 points in a really tight and competitive game. This is the first MECS team to make it to the final game at the regional finals in a number of years so well done!

The Middle School coaches were fantastic again in coaching and encouraging the primary students and thanks to the parents and family who came to watch and cheer on our teams.

Bring on Hooptime 2015!!

Jason
PS Sport Coordinator

Moving on to Middle school is a big step... you have to scale the heights of the unknown, step carefully and 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 Tuesday. They scaled the walls - using the right equipment, confidence and courage to help them. Later in the term we will reflect 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
Assistant Primary Coordinator and Senior Primary Coordinator
Care in the Car park

Just a reminder please take extra care when opening car doors in the car park. A few parents have experienced some damage to their cars because of accidental bumps from other car doors. Please also remind your children to open doors with care! Thank you.

MECS Office

MECS Employment Opportunity

The following position is currently advertised on the MECS website:

- 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. Thanks.

Evelyn
Friends of MECS

Thankyou to Donna

At MECS we are very thankful to the many parent volunteers in our community. One such person we would like to thank is Donna. Last week was her last day of volunteering in the canteen with Sheryl, having done over 20 canteen days in her time at MECS. We are very thankful for our parent volunteers!

Amanda
Community Relations Officer

Year 7 Orientation

Last Thursday night, students going into Year 7 in 2015 and their parents had an Orientation evening. The aim of the evening is for families to meet each other over a meal, meet the Middle School staff and gain information about the Middle School program. After the meal, students went to the gym for ‘get to know you games’ followed by an information session on High School. They talked about topics like: feeling nervous about high school, where are the rooms, how many classrooms, what to do at lunchtime… The parents also had a ‘get to know you game’ and an information session about Middle School. The evening helped relieve a lot of the nerves that the students had about going into high school. They are looking forward to meeting each other again at Orientation Day on Tuesday December 9.

Amanda
Community Relations Officer
Preps and Responsible Pets

Last Wednesday morning, Prep children had a visit from Mount Evelyn Veterinary Clinic nurse Debbie and her dog Hugo, who run ‘Pet Pet’, a program about Pets and People.

Debbie talked to the children about the role of vets and vet nurses in helping animals; caring for them when sick and even having them overnight in the hospital part of the clinic when they have had an operation. She demonstrated a microchip and how these can be scanned to tell them who owns the pet and where they live. Injured wildlife can also be taken to the vet, who may send them on to a wildlife carer to look after them and release them back into the wild.

She explained that dogs and cats have to learn to socialize just like children do. The clinic runs classes called Kitten Kinder and Puppy Pre-school.

The key word for pet care was ‘responsible’.

The children were taught that pets should be micro-chipped and have their needs met, and be handled gently – no pulling ears, fur or tails.

Debbie taught the children 4 steps for patting an unknown dog:

• Ask permission from the owner, who knows if they are friendly or not.
• Come up in front of the animal quietly so they can see you and you don’t shock them.
• Let them sniff your hand with thumb tucked in.
• Pat the pet on the back or shoulder – not on the head.

Never pat a dog when he is:

• eating
• sleeping, or
• playing with a toy.

When pets are scared they might bite.

Debbie talked about the body language of animals and how to tell if a pet is happy, scared or angry.

The children were also taught what to do if a dog came up to them without an owner, and looked threatening.

• Cross your arms,
• look at the ground and
• stay as still as a statue.

The children practiced these new skills with Hugo, who finished the routine with some clever tricks!

They then got to dress up as vets and nurses and treat some zoo and pet animals.

The children loved the visit and listened and played very eagerly. Many thanks to Debbie for visiting and helping our children learn about this very important topic.

Jan
Prep Coordinator/Teacher
Our original plan was to hike on Monday last week, but that didn’t eventuate due to crazy weather! We sorted ourselves out for Wednesday 29 and ended up with perfect weather. This time students knew what to expect and had a great walk. On our way up to Silvan Reservoir Park we set a good pace and got to our destination by 11.15am. There was plenty of time for us to set up tents, cook our delicious lunches and enjoy the lovely sunshine. Well done to Cycle A students and parents for their organisation - it’s only about 2 weeks until camp now! We are getting very excited and can’t wait to get to the Prom and enjoy God’s creation.

Nicole
Middle School Teacher
### Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thur 6 Nov</td>
<td>Performing Arts Evening, 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 7 Nov</td>
<td>Year 11 Last Classes, Book Fair in the Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 10 Nov</td>
<td>Primary GT 9am PUMP Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 10 - Tues 11 Nov</td>
<td>Year 11 Study Days, Book Fair in the Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 11 Nov</td>
<td>Year 5 IMAX Excursion, Tuning into Kids, Staffroom 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 12 Nov</td>
<td>PS (Selected students) Interschool Athletics, Year 10 Last Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 12 - Fri 14 Nov</td>
<td>Year 11 Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur 13 Nov</td>
<td>Step Into Prep Information Night 7.30pm, Year 9 Open Village Info Meeting 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur 13 - Fri 14 Nov</td>
<td>Year 10 Study Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 15 Nov</td>
<td>Working Bee 8am-1pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 17 - Fri 21 Nov</td>
<td>Year 10/11 Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 18 Nov</td>
<td>Tuning into Kids, Staffroom 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur 20 Nov</td>
<td>Instrumental Recital Families M-Z 7pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 21 Nov</td>
<td>VCE Exams Conclude, Year 12 Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 24 - Fri 28 Nov</td>
<td>Year 7 &amp; 8 Cycle A Wilsons Prom Camp, Year 7 &amp; 8 Cycle B Ecology Inverloch Camp, Year 10 Work Experience Week 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 24 - Sat 29 Nov</td>
<td>Year 9 Canberra Camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 24 Nov</td>
<td>MS Connect Morning Tea, Primary GT 9am PUMP Room SPK Leading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 25 Nov</td>
<td>Tuning into Kids, Staffroom 7.30pm</td>
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**MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES**

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**Keeper for the Day**

**Werribee Open Range Zoo’s Keeper for a Day program**

Are you thinking of a career in working with animals? Come and join us for a day and participate in a range of hands on experiences designed to provide you with an insight into the role of a zoo keeper. For students in Years 7-12. $105; $94.50 zoo members. Bookings 9285 9406. www.zoo.org.au/werribee/whats-on/keeper-for-a-day.

**Healesville Sanctuary’s Vet for a Day program**

Aquatic animals have amazing adaptations. Come and work with our keepers to find out how we care for these amazing creatures including platypus, pelicans and turtles. For students in Years 9-12. $129 (includes morning tea); $116 zoo members. Bookings 9285 9406. www.zoo.org.au/healesville-sanctuary-vet-for-a-day

**Healesville Sanctuary’s Keeper for a Day program**

Interested in becoming a vet? Our Australian Wildlife Health Centre receives over 1,500 injured and orphaned wild animals each year. Come and work alongside our vets in a unique program on real life cases involving Healesville Sanctuary’s animal collection as well as injured wildlife brought to the hospital. For students in Years 7-12. $105; $94.50 zoo members. Bookings 9285 9406. www.zoo.org.au/healesville-sanctuary-keeper-for-a-day

**Quilts for Orphans**

Sat 8 - Sun 9 Nov, 10am-4pm, 345 Macclesfield Rd, Monbulk. Entry $5. Refreshments available. Plenty of parking. www.quiltsfororphans.org

**Large Family Home for Rent**

4 bedrooms plus study/fifth bedroom, all with BIRs, four living areas, double garage with internal access, central heating and cooling, plus solid fuel heater and a pile of firewood! Secure back yard, pets may be negotiated. Quiet court with lots of young families, easy access to Warburton Trail, 8 minutes from MECS. In Wandin North. $480 a week; available December or early January. Phone Janet 0438 394 635 or Ken 0407 541 268.

**Apple Man Tomorrow**

The Apple man is coming again on Friday Nov 7 and the following varieties will be available: Pink Ladies, Granny Smiths, Golden Delicious and Green Pears. Apples $10 a bag and Pears $8. Please drop into the office if you would like to place an order.

**Next Working Bee**

Sat 15 Nov, 8am-1pm

Morning Tea Provided

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**Notices sent home this week and on Website**

- Changes to MS Dress Code (last week)
- Open Village Information Night Letter
- Primary Interschool Athletics Notice (Selected Students)

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**MECS Performing Arts Students present**

**Finding Jamie Ryan**

By Marlene F Magee

With permission by Maverick Musicals and Plays

**Theatrette**

Entry by gold coin donation

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**TONIGHT!**

**Thursday 6 Nov, 7.30 pm**

**Theatrette**

Entry by gold coin donation

**MECS Performing Arts Students**

**Finding Jamie Ryan**

By Marlene F Magee

With permission by Maverick Musicals and Plays

**Theatrette**

Entry by gold coin donation

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Newsletter deadline is 11am Tuesday on published week.

Email articles (images attached as jpg) to the Newsletter Office.

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**Thursday 6 November 2014**

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