Open Day Entertainment

Kristoffer entertaining our visitors during MECS Open Day
Learning in Wild Spaces

Outdoor nature play for 5 year old children

Our motto for the MECS Kindergarten is ‘Full of Wonder’: to marvel at and wonder about the beautiful world that God has made. I am always amazed at how children see the details in life. Bugs, in particular, hold a fascination for young children like no other time in their lives! They dig relentlessly under logs, turn every stone until I’m quite convinced that there could not possibly be any slaters left in the garden, and then, low and behold a child has suddenly found another hiding spot with a plethora of tiny creeping things to marvel at. Children admire and proceed to care for their collected bugs; they study carefully all there is to know about them (see the learning: science, maths, oral language opportunities) and with the help of an educator they might even look them up on the internet with the iPad to find out more (more learning - gaining meaning from words). They might record what they see through an observational drawing. As the children assemble bits and pieces to ‘house’ the captured critters we adults make an argument for placing the bugs safely back into the garden at the end of the day, where the natural environment, built and sustained by God, will give the loved bugs the best chance for survival. Some do die in the process. The children become sad, and an opportunity for empathy for the small things in life can be had. We acknowledge that not all of what we see is perfect, and that not all is well with the world. In this process we hope to open up the idea that all of life belongs to God.

Recently the kinder staff have been looking into nature pedagogy - a nature practice that touches every aspect of children’s experience, as an opportunity to take a close up look at nature in its most natural setting. It is a continuation of our philosophy about how children learn: actively involved, creatively, capably and with their differing gifts and interests; from the indoor and outdoor kinder spaces and into a wild and natural space - space that is not tidied up, cleaned or prepared with static equipment and much underneath, rather, a place where children negotiate the environment, are actively involved and are ignited and engaged in God’s beauty all around them. Being and playing in such spaces has many benefits, including the building of confidence and resilience in children. MECS has many such spaces, especially natural bush areas, just waiting to be explored by little children.

Why promote outside learning for children? There are many current theories on bush kinder and children in wild spaces, emerging in the field of early childhood education. However, interest in outdoor preschools has been growing for decades. The concept took shape in the 1950s in Sweden and Denmark; in Germany in 1968, which is now home to hundreds of ‘forest kindergartens’; and more recently in the United Kingdom. In these schools, children spend almost all of their preschool day outdoors. At MECS kinder our multi-faceted approach aims to include some regular visits to the natural bushland on MECS property.

Here are 5 reasons why children should spend ample time out of doors, in natural settings, researched and articulated by Sally Haughey from ‘Fairy Dust Teaching’ (2016)

http://fairydustteaching.com/2015/10/5-reasons-you-should-take-your-class-outside/

1. It improves academic achievement. The nurturing of the senses is the foundation of cognitive development. The outdoors provides a direct experience with ideas such as lifecycle, weather, weight and more. Research has shown children who are given plenty of time outdoors score higher on standardized testing in math, reading and writing. It takes learning to a multi-sensory level – touch, smell, hearing, taste and sight. It is the ultimate laboratory for testing theories and ideas.

2. The raw materials of nature ignite the creativity and imagination of children. Loose parts in the outdoor space provide endless opportunities for creativity, inventions, experiments, and resourcefulness. Studies have shown that children engage in more creative forms of play when outside. It is inquiry-based learning in a natural setting. But more than that – it offers up a blank canvas of natural materials – willing to become anything.

3. It increases appreciation & respect for nature. Exposure to the natural world builds a sense of wonder for the beauty of life. Learning outside gives children the opportunity to witness the interdependence of animals, plants and humans.

4. It improves health and well-being. Outdoor play helps to form a life long health disposition. Outdoor play encourages the development of active movement. For healthy reflex development children need spaces to move both up and down and to explore their own capacities to move. A rich outdoor space provides endless potential for developing the complex neutral pathways built only in the rigor of healthy play.

5. It improves behavior and social interactions. Ample time outside has proven to reduce challenging behaviors. Interestingly, the more children are given time outside the less challenging behaviors occur. Children are better able to cooperate and problem-solve social conflicts. Additionally, time outside simply helps to reduce stress.

We want children to delight and wonder in life around them. We are laying a foundation for a love for God’s natural order in the world, an affinity for being in nature, and developing an observation sense that will serve them throughout their lives. Psalm 19 declares that the creation is speaking God’s story every day. As the children explore and learn at kinder, we are able to share these truths and promises together and discover more of the greatness and goodness of our Father God who loves us so much.

God’s splendour is a tale that is told, His testament in the stars; speaking His story every day from the zodiac of the heavens. His truth is on tour in the starry-vault of the sky; showing His skill in creation’s craftsmanship.

Each day echoes its secret to the next; night with night sharing its revelation knowledge. Without a sound, without a word; without a voice being heard, yet all the world can see its story.

Everywhere the revelation report Is clearly read So all can know.

Wendy
Early Years Coordinator
SKETCHER’S SCOOP

Year 8 Camps

The last two weeks have been a busy time with a number of camps, and we are especially grateful to Yvonne Verhagen for pulling these programs together during a very difficult period with the passing of her father. Last week, the Year 5s were up in Ballarat learning about the history of the goldfields and the infamous Eureka Stockade. I was lucky enough to join this camp for two days and had a fabulous time at Sovereign Hill. It is always great to see the students and teachers in action, working and responding so positively to the experiences that they were immersed in. It is also pleasing to see how our camps are so well supported by our parents – we couldn’t run our program without you and I really enjoyed spending time with the parents on this camp!

This week our Year 6s are enjoying the same Sovereign Hill camp as well as having all our Year 8 students out and about. The Year 8 boys have been doing it really tough on their ‘Man Camp’, sleeping in tents and keeping warm by the side of a camp fire. The girls have had a bit more luxury on their Inspiring Girls Camp. Both experiences are designed to speak into the lives of young people about specific issues and challenges around having a healthy self-esteem, making positive choices and ‘growing-up’ well.

Year 12 Mentor Supper

Tonight our Year 12s will come together to share supper with their mentors. This evening provides an opportunity to touch-base about how they are going, what’s working and what’s not in regard to their studies and what can be put in place for our Year 12s to continue on with the demands of this year. Our mentoring program provides another ‘voice’, apart from teachers and parents, that can speak into the lives of our young people and so we are grateful to those friends and family members who take on this role. It’s good for our year 12s to know that they are surrounded by the love, prayers and support of so many people. Thanks to Sharon, our Year 12 Coordinator, for her faithful service and coordination of this program.

Reports

Teachers are working hard at the moment preparing the written reports that parents will receive at the end of this term. A huge amount of work goes into preparing reports that provide accurate and helpful comments about each child and their learning progress. A key aspect of our partnership with parents is clear communication of learning progress so I commend these reports to you.

Student Satisfaction Survey

Our secondary students have recently completed a satisfaction survey, similar to the one that parents and staff completed during the last two years. We have just received the data and summary report and I look forward to sharing more of the details with you over the coming weeks. However, very briefly, our students report on the caring and loving relationships they enjoy with their teachers and generally feel well supported and would recommend this school to their friends. These things are all good to hear! However, they have expressed some concern in their access to technologies to support their learning, the range of service opportunities on offer and the need for more leadership and sporting opportunities. These are all things that we will look at in more detail, and chat further to our students about. We will keep you posted!

Open Day

It was a beautiful day last Saturday and the school was looking radiant in the sunshine! We were so pleased to welcome over 60 families to our school to find out about what makes MECS so unique. We hope and pray that the vision and ‘vibe’ of our school was well communicated and that many of these families will find their place in this community over the months and years to come. Thanks to all our staff, parents and students who came along to make this a great day!

FOCUS On... Having a go

“What’s the point of this?”

You may have said this a number of times during your schooling or heard your children say it in regard to their schooling. What’s the benefit of having a go at something that you may never do again or that you may find quite difficult?

The point is character. It builds character.

In Romans 5 it talks about suffering producing perseverance, character and hope. Although suffering through an undesirable task or activity is a lot different to the suffering spoken about it Romans 5, the benefits can still be along the same lines.

Having a go at something not only allows for growth in that particular skill or knowledge base, but also allows for growth in a person’s perseverance and resilience. In Transformational Education it says, “Formation of the mind is not primarily intellectual contemplation and conceptual mastery, but a learning that nurtures wisdom and skills in living”. If education is for the formation of the whole person, then more can be learned by ‘having a go’ at something than just the learning obtained by the skill being attempted.

If we declined to have a go at something each time we felt overwhelmed, underprepared or ill equipped, a more than likely learned response to anything remotely difficult will be to shy away and refuse to engage. On the other hand if we are willing to have a go at most things, that can only help but grow us into more resilient and confident people.

It’s much less about what you’re having a go at and more about the fact that you’re just having a go.

Jason
Primary Sports Coordinator
Introductions...

This article on Chris continues Brit Bailey’s interview series to help us get to know some of the teachers at MECS.

Introducing Chris

This bright, funny man can just brighten up your day. If you start a conversation with him, he may not just talk your ear off, but make it jump right off your head and not even wave goodbye. He will happily sit around for hours and talk. Don’t be afraid of him! Ask him one question and bam! You have started a conversation with him.

What is your favourite movie?

My favourite movie is “Field of Dreams” from 1989 starring Kevin Costner. It’s an unusual movie. The story is of a farmer who hears a mysterious voice whilst out in his field of corn. The movie never speaks of it being God who is speaking but to me it’s about hearing the voice of God and obeying even when sometimes it doesn’t make sense.

If you could banish anything from the world what would it be?

Mental health disorders and mental dysfunctions.

What food will you not, under any circumstances, eat?

My Malaysian friend got me to try durian and it’s the most vile thing I think I’ve ever tasted. It’s a Malaysian fruit delicacy and my Malaysian friend loves it.

Have you ever met or seen anyone famous?

Yes I have. I had a fluke encounter with Stephen Schwartz who is the composer of the musicals “Wicked” and “Godspell”, the movie “The Prince of Egypt” and many other works. He was out here promoting his shows and did a live interview on stage. I was there with some friends who happened to have a spare backstage pass. We got to hang out with him for probably 15 minutes after the show and chat. It was totally unexpected but very cool.

What is your favourite thing to do?

Apart from hanging with friends, catching a good movie, or eating at a nice restaurant, I really love to indulge in an AFL footy fix. I bought my first membership this year for my beloved Melbourne FC (go Dees!). Whether it’s watching live, on TV, or reading about it, I can’t get enough of the footy!

By Brit, Year 9

Cook Off Day

On Monday morning a wonderful team of volunteers chopped, sliced, mixed and stirred the morning away as they prepared over 95 meals for our Community Freezer! Thank you to the 10 volunteers (4 of which are grandparents of students in the school!), who so generously donated their time and to Amy who capably headed up the team. Our thanks also go to the Year 9 students who helped out and to those of you who donated groceries and money. We couldn’t run these days without the support of our community!

Nicole
Community Relations

Mother’s Day Stall

Last Friday the PUMP room was a hive of activity with students buying fair trade and locally made gifts for their Mums. We hope all our Mums, step Mums and Grandmas were made to feel special. We took nearly $2000 on the day - all proceeds go to the organisations that supplied the fair trade gifts.

A huge thanks to Josie Jones who did the majority of the work in sourcing the gifts; to Jenny and Geoff (past MECS parents) from ‘Jewels of Hope’ and to Cath who was selling goods made in the Klong Toey Slum in Bangkok.

Thank you to all our families who supported the stall - we hope our Mums enjoyed the gifts.

Nicole
Community Relations

Entertainment Book

The 2016/2017 Entertainment Book has been launched. In the office there is a sample book for you to look through.

There are many things you can save money on throughout the year:

- Woolworths Wish Cards - save 5% on your groceries/petrol all year
- Big W gift cards - save instore 5% all year
- Hoyts and Village cinema - discounted tickets
- Dinner vouchers for many local and not so local restaurants
- Coffee vouchers and much more.

You can either purchase a book or a digital membership which you can have on your phone everywhere you go.

To order, please fill in the flyer that was sent home today (or collect one from the office) or go online to: www.entbook.com.au/193f695

20% from every membership sold contributes to supporting our school.

Evelyn

Friends of MECS
**Year 11 Biology Excursion**

On Tuesday May 3, Year 11 Biology students took on the mandate of good stewardship and conservation and went down to Phillip Island to conduct some field work along the intertidal zone. The students braved gale force winds and dark clouds in the name of science. But God was good, and held the rains back until we finished our sampling and just as we left the rains came. Along the intertidal zone students were not only able to gain valuable experience in the art of quadrat sampling but took the time to enjoy the small treasures of creation that lived just beneath their feet. Students enjoyed seeing the patterns of creation and seeing God’s order take place in the intertidal zone. Overall it was an awesome day and the students enjoyed themselves.

*Duc*

*Year 11 Biology Teacher*

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**Mother’s Day In K3**

The K3s did their first little concert for their proud mums on Thursday, before Mother’s day. The children sang the 2 very rehearsed songs beautifully before giving their mums lovely hand made gifts, that portrayed our kindergarten motto - Hearts and Hands.

*Lee*

*3 Year Old Kindergarten Teacher*

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**MECS Notes**

**Primary Baby News**

We are so excited for our staff members who are expecting babies. We must have something in the water in the Primary School! As you may have begun to notice, there are a number of babies on the way. In fact there are 6!

Justine will be leaving us at the end of this semester as previously announced. The Middle Primary position has been advertised and we will be short listing soon. We will inform you of the hand over arrangements and the new teacher as soon as we can. Amelia will be leaving us later this term in week 8, and her position has also been advertised and we are currently short listing that position. Jason’s wife Fiona is due later this term. Jess will leave us at the end of the term to have her second child. We are excited to welcome back Bec to take over from Jess in teaching Foundation PE and supporting Senior Primary teaching in Art and Numeracy. We also happily have Daniela and Rachel expecting babies. They will leave us during Term 3. More details on their departure and arrangements will be announced as we get closer to the time.

We pray for all of these beautiful ladies and their growing babies and for our Dads to be... May God bless them abundantly and may each baby grow in God’s love and care.

*Diane*

*Assistant Principal - Primary*

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**MECS Notes**

**Layla Nicklas**

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*Duc*

*Year 11 Biology Teacher*
Open Day

On Saturday we were blessed with a warm and sunny Autumn day for our annual Open Day. Usually it is wet and cold!

Pete, Steve and team had the grounds looking fabulous; the teachers set up great displays, talked to visitors and helped out as tour guides; we enjoyed musical performances from our students, and there were lots of activities to enjoy and yummy food to eat. It was a great day of showcasing the school to our visitors and telling them what is distinctive about MECS. We had around 60 new families come for a visit and lots of current families coming to look at their child’s ‘next section’ or to help out where needed. It was so wonderful to see our community coming together to pull off such a wonderful day.

Nicole
Community Relations

Music at Open Day

If you were one of the many students and families who joined us for Open Day on Saturday, you would have heard the sound of music wafting from the main staffroom deck, and pumping outside the PUMP room in the Primary school.

A number of students from our Instrumental Music Program performed a variety of music for all our visitors. They were very accomplished and attracted quite a crowd.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to all the students who performed, and to their parents for getting them there on a busy Saturday morning. The music was wonderful and uplifting, adding to the exciting atmosphere of the whole day.

Many hours of practice go into learning an instrument and it is great to be able to share the achievements of such dedication!

The Term 2 Music Recital is coming up, with more of our talented music students performing on a range of instruments. You are all welcome to come along and enjoy a fun evening of music. Wednesday May 18, 7-9.30pm, Senior School Theatrette. Supper provided.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Penny
Instrumental Music Coordinator
Cycle A Fun

To finish off our unit on Ancient China and Rome, Cycle A enjoyed a fun afternoon together. First we had a Chinese banquet prepared by Ranges TEC. There was a huge amount of food and lots of variety! Most of the students had at least second helpings!! Thanks very much to Glenn Booth and his team at Ranges for the delicious spread.

We then enjoyed some “Roman games” outside. It was a lovely sunny afternoon, and we had a class battle of chariot racing (carrying people up and around a witches hat) and sword fighting (using rolled up newspaper to hit balloons as a team). One team from my class had an unfortunate experience where their balloon got caught by the wind up and over the gym. We didn’t quite win that one. Tim claimed that his class won the Cycle A Trophy, but in reality Sharon’s class showed the highest amount of spirit and competition. Well done to all students for having a go!

Overall it was a great chance to celebrate our learning and do something a little different. We will now be moving on from the Ancient World into the age of the Vikings. I’m sure this will be fascinating to study. We love History in Cycle A!

Nicky
Cycle A & Transition Coordinator/Teacher

Foundation Child & Parent Night

Psalm 139: 13-14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

How amazing it is that God created each one of us so differently from anyone else. Isn’t God the most creative of all? How did God think of all the ways that people can be different? These are just some of the thoughts the Foundation children have been pondering together since the beginning of the year.

We came together, children and parents, to enjoy a special night to celebrate each one of our precious Foundation children and give thanks to our God who made them, differences and similarities.

We sang some songs, drew our family tree and then the children served their parents some supper of juice, chocolate balls and lemon balls that the children had made themselves earlier on in the week. A bedtime story was read and then we all went home with smiling faces.

It was a night to treasure for our special families.

Alison
Foundation Teacher
Ranges TEC Open Campus
Saturday May 28, 1-4pm
1/9 Hightech Place Lilydale, 9738 7100

Car for Sale

Apple Man
The Apple Man is coming next tomorrow - Friday May 13 and the following varieties will be available: Granny Smiths, Fujis, Royal Galas Pink Ladies and Green Pears. Apples $10 a bag, Pears $8. Please put the correct money in an envelope with your order written on the front, and hand it into the office before 10.30am on Friday May 13.

Year 7 Immunisations
This is just a reminder that the second round of Year 7 Immunisations will be taking place on Friday May 20.