ST PATRICK’S Welcome New Graduate

ST PATRICK’S Primary School Stratford is pleased to welcome Miss Catherine Boyd to its teaching staff for 2015 where she will be teaching Grade Prep/One.

Catherine completed her Bachelor of Education (Primary) at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus last year.

Catherine is well known to the Gippsland Region having lived with her parents Allan and Carmel Boyd in Stratford. She attended St Patrick’s Primary School in Stratford as a primary student and Catholic College Sale as a secondary student.

Catherine has always dreamed of being a teacher as she believes education is not only a professional field, but a way to make a difference in the life of someone else. That support the students and families in the Catholic schools of the diocese. The year ahead promises to be an exciting one for Catholic education here in Gippsland. We are looking forward firstly to officially welcoming our new Bishop, Patrick O'Regan, who will be installed as Bishop on 26 February in what is promising to be a wonderful celebration for our Catholic communities at the Bishop Phelan stadium of Catholic College Sale. The involvement of many staff and students at this event is an opportunity for them to experience first hand a significant ritual in the life of the Church in the diocese. Having attended many such occasions myself over the years the solemnity as well as the joy of such celebrations never ceases to engender a sense of being present at something deeply significant.

Leadership in the Church of today is a challenge and the prayers of all are going to be with Bishop-elect O'Regan as he prepares to formally take up this particular commitment to the people of the Sale diocese.

Throughout last year the Catholic Education Office – Diocese of Sale (CEOSale) at the instigation of our previous Bishop, Christopher Prowse, embarked on a review of Religious Education in the schools in the diocese. A committee, chaired by Mr Chris Randall, principal of Catholic College Sale and supported by principal and religious education leaders from primary and secondary schools, along with priest, parent and catechist representation and staff from both the Catholic Education Office of the Sale diocese and Melbourne archdiocese, completed this extensive review and have provided a comprehensive document to Fr Peter Slater, Diocesan Administrator and Bishop-elect O’Regan. The recommendations from this review will form a significant element of the work of the Catholic Identity and Religious Education Staff group of CEOSale throughout this year.

CEOSale welcomes a number of new staff to its ranks this year across all staff groups. I would especially like to welcome Ms Debra Punton who has commenced as the Deputy Director Catholic Identity, Learning and Teaching and Mr Martin Keogh and Mr Dom Ryan, Managers of Learning and Teaching and Catholic Identity and Religious Education respectively.

I look forward to highlighting further the work of all our schools and the staff of CEOSale through this regular insert in Catholic Life as the year progresses.

From The Director

Happy New Year and welcome to this first edition of “Around Catholic Schools” in its new guise as a regular addition to Catholic Life. In each edition of Catholic Life throughout this year, a range of Catholic schools, primary and secondary, will be featured. As the year progresses it is hoped that these highlights of what is happening in and around our wonderful Catholic schools will give readers an understanding of the diverse range of people, programs and projects that support the students and families in the Catholic schools of the diocese.

Education is the key to a brighter future as it cultivates critical thinking, allows a child to be challenged each day and to reflect on their place in the world.

BOUNCE!

On Friday 12 December 2014, the students in Yrs 4, 5 and 6 at St Patrick’s Stratford had an end of year excursion at Bounce complex in Glen Iris Melbourne. The students and staff members travelled by train to the venue and on arrival were welcomed by an enthusiastic staff member from Bounce.

After an information session the students spent 2 hours participating in activities such as: Free Zone, basketball, tight rope and wall bouncing.

The students had a great time and were very appreciative of the fun activity organised by their classroom teachers to celebrate the school year.

Building Works at St Patrick’s

OVER the school holidays building works at St Patrick’s Primary School in Stratford commenced refurbishing an unused classroom into a specialist art room.

The room was completed ready for the commencement of the 2015 year.

The new art room has new cupboard storage, new sink area and new pin board display area.

Art teacher Liz Magnuson is looking forward to working in her new art room and proudly displaying the children’s art work.

St Patrick’s students enjoying their end of year excursion at Bounce.

St Patrick’s welcomes new Graduate Teacher Catherine Boyd!
**ST MARY’S Catholic Primary School in Newborough promotes ‘The Buddy Program’ as a social educational strategy within the school. During the school’s transition program senior students are paired up with the new Prep students. The senior students read stories to the younger students; they also take the younger students on a school tour to help the new students feel comfortable at school. As part of the Buddy Program the senior students write a letter to the new Prep students introducing themselves to the family. The letters are sent out in January. The parents of the Prep students often report back to the school, how excited their children were to receive a letter in the mail from their school buddy.

Building strong relationships has always been paramount within St Mary’s school and the Buddy Program focuses on students forming positive relationships with each other. One of the positive outcomes of this program is that the Prep students feel comfortable approaching their buddy in the yard asking them to help or support them. The program also has many benefits for the senior students including the value of supporting a younger student rather than just doing everything for them.

Mrs Megan Tomasetti articulates the value of the program: “Our school Buddy Program is certainly about building strong social relationships and it is also most definitely about learning together. We know that students learn from one another and this program builds on this understanding. Scheduled class time is provided for the students to work together on different projects. Last year the buddies participated in an excursion to a local dairy farm to learn about the process of milk production. This was a successful and memorable learning experience for all.”

The Buddy Program is often celebrated within the school community. At the first school assembly the senior students individually introduce the Prep students to the community. Also at the opening school year liturgy, a Powerpoint presentation highlights the Buddy Program by displaying photos of the buddies working together at school.

St Mary’s Primary School promotes a positive educational community in Newborough where everyone learns together, and the Buddy Program is a practical and valuable example of this.

**Learning Together at St Mary’s Newborough**

**Special Morning Tea for the Helpers at St Kieran’s**

FAMILIES have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and throughout life. When schools, families and communities work in partnership children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more.

Helpers play a vital role within the school and without them it would be difficult for our school to function effectively. We are lucky to have classroom helpers here daily for our maths and literacy classes. Many extra-curricular activities need the helpers such as sporting programs, excursions, school productions and multicultural days to name a few. Parents and community helpers need to know the difference they make and how active engagement is vital to their child’s learning. St Kieran’s are very lucky to have a wonderful group of helpers both from the parents, school and wider community. The staff acknowledged the role of the helpers with a special morning tea.

The Prep children sang “Pita-Pita-Pat” a thank you song, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the visitors.

**Focus on Reconciliation at St Kieran’s**

WE have concluded another year of world turmoil. Sad events dominate headlines with our world struggling to find peace and resolution. It is maddening that so much of the chaos and tragedy gets linked to God.

Here at St Kieran’s Moe we’ve decided on reconciliation instead of conflict. We wanted our school community to be active leaders in the promotion of goodwill and humanity.

Our action plan has seen us make contact with a Muslim school in Melbourne - East Preston Islamic College (EPIC).

Children from Year 6/5 sent a personal letter to students of EPIC. An introductory letter to the school principal, Mr Ekrem Ozyurek OAM was also included. The envelope carrying its precious ‘cargo’ was handmade and decorated by all students. We were welcomed by EPIC with the open arms of friendship, and received, in return, beautiful individual letters from their students. Our endeavour is that this will continue into 2015 and beyond.

**Christmas Card Design Competition Winners 2014**

THE 2014 Christmas Card Design competition was an outstanding success once again with entries from 23 schools across the Diocese, over 2060 entries received. The obvious artistic and creative talents of students made judging very difficult.

Judges selected the design entries from Denver James of St Michael’s Berwick and Kayla Kennedy of Lavalla College Traralgon as the Equal Best Entries. These students received a $100 art supplies voucher and a $250 voucher for their school to purchase art supplies.

The following students received Highly Commend- ed awards with their entries being judged in the Top 10 - Abigail Balderstone St Michael’s Berwick, Rovelle de la Guuz St Thomas Cranbourne, Gabi Majstorovic Mary MacKillop Narre Warren, Mya McDonnell Lumen Christi Churchill, Sayosh Perera St Catherine’s Berwick, Jayden Taula St Therese’s Cranbourne, Rosie Tuffnell St Therese’s Cranbourne North, Charlie Tweedale St James’ Nar Goon.

Students also received awards for Best Entry from their School. Congratulations to all these students and we look forward to viewing entries for the 2015 competition.

**Equal Best Entry**

Equal Best Entry Kayla Kennedy (Year 7)
Lavalla College Traralgon

Equal Best Entry Denver James
Stanmore College Nar Goon

Equal Best Entry St Michael’s Berwick
St Mary’s Berwick

Students make contact with a Muslim school in Melbourne, East Preston Islamic College, by writing personal letter to students.
STAFF from the Religious Education (RE) Department at Catholic College Sale offer all students from Year 7 to Year 12 the opportunity to participate in an engaging RE curriculum. Social Justice always plays a huge part in the curriculum, especially in the Yr 8 R.E program and Yr 10 and 11 Catholic Schools Youth Ministry Australia (CSYMA) program.

Year 8 classes are involved in many community projects such as knitting for the homeless, making bracelets for East Timor and creating fantastic short movies on random acts of kindness. The Year 10 and 11 CSYMA classes participate in a variety of activities and campaigns including ‘Just Leadership’ day run by Caritas, Project Compassion, social justice camp, the annual Homeless Sleep out held in the College quadrangle each August and the Melbourne Soup Van.

Working on the St Vincent De Paul Soup Van in Melbourne provides a fabulous opportunity for students to engage with the St Vinnies volunteers and the homeless and witness life from a different perspective. The students, staff and College volunteers find the experience very enlightening. There will be more opportunities in 2015 for Year 11 and 12 students to participate in the Soup Van experience in Melbourne.

Students certainly gain many valuable life experiences through the College’s Religious Education program and truly ‘walk the talk’ in many different ways.

We look forward to another great year with our students in 2015.

AT Don Bosco Primary School Narre Warren, the focus on reading in the Junior grades is having a very positive effect. The Take Home Reading Program commenced a number of years ago with each child from Grade Prep to Grade Two borrowing five books each week from the library to take home to practice reading. Books are linked to reading ability and interests and teachers monitor reading habits on a regular basis.

The thinking behind the program was that practice makes perfect. The connection between exposure to Literature, immersion in Literature and reading practice gives students the opportunity to improve their reading fluency and increase their comprehension skills. The link to home was to encourage parents to be involved in listening to their child read. This has been a very positive aspect of the whole program. Parents are offered school based workshops on how to assist their children at home with reading and other aspects of Literacy and Numeracy.

The Literacy Lead teacher and the Librarian set up a designated area in the library to house all the Take Home Reading books. The collection is color coded and not limited to reading levels. Each grade is allocated a specific time to borrow books and teachers regularly check reading logs to make sure children are practicing reading on a regular basis.

The past four years has seen over 600 new books purchased to support the program. “The commitment of the teachers to the program in reinforcing good reading habits. In addition explicit skill based teaching has meant our students are achieving good results in reading”, expressed Literacy Lead teacher Margaret Di Giulio. “It’s also important to work in partnership with the parents so that they know how valuable it is to listen to their child read and to discuss texts with them.” The value in having a young child take a book home and practice reading with their family is an educational priority at Don Bosco. What started out as an idea has become an integral part of the Literacy Program at Don Bosco.
IN August 2014, Sacred Heart School started implementing their intervention support in a very different way. Like many schools, Sacred Heart supported students with Reading Recovery and E.M.U. (Extending Mathematical Understanding). These programs require a small number of students to be withdrawn from classrooms to work closely with a specialist teacher. While the results and the effectiveness of these programs are well documented, Sacred Heart was keen to investigate the possibility of increasing their effectiveness for a greater number of students.

To achieve this goal, the school made the decision to have a Reading Recovery teacher work for 15 hours a week alongside the Prep teacher in the classroom. Having two teachers in the room allows more children to have their individual learning needs addressed in the context of their learning environment, at the time that they need it.

Teachers Kasey Burrell and Jeanne Mendez have been excited by the progress that all students have made since the program started, “The children are doing things that we never thought were possible. We have had to re-evaluate our expectations” teacher Kasey Burrell stated at a recent learning meeting.

While having multiple teachers in the grade has had a positive effect on student learning, the greater understanding of how children learn has seen profound change in Jeanne’s and Kasey’s practice. Working with Jo Osler and Tamina Taylor, Kasey and Jeanne have re-examined how they operate in the classroom and shifted their focus from what they need to teach to what the children need to learn. Jeanne observed “Having two of us in the classroom keeps us both on track and the discussions we have after each learning session have been so beneficial.”

Based on the early success of the program it was decided to extend this model of intervention program into the senior grades with a focus on mathematics.

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Sacred Heart Morwell Trial New Intervention Model

ON the last day for the 2014 school year, the teachers of St Agatha’s were dedicated to improving teaching and learning at their school. On December 18 2014, teachers took part in unpacking the Daily Five/CAFÉ framework for literacy instruction.

The Daily Five is the researched-based essential skills for literacy development that include the daily practices of:

- Read to self
- Read to a partner
- Listen to reading
- Word work
- Writing

across grades Prep-6 as a daily routine. Through these five essential practices students work towards becoming independent literacy learners as they rehearse and develop the skills that underpin CAFE (comprehension, accuracy, fluency and expanding vocabulary). Each day students move systematically through the series of five tasks which research shows develop literacy achievement.

The Principal Anne Hassall is leading the charge around this focused framework of the Daily Five/CAFÉ as it is implemented across the school. “We want to develop best practices with our students that will encourage confident, independent learners who have well-developed literacy skills. We also want our students to make informed choices around the types of texts they read and the best ways to write and respond.

Close monitoring of students’ progress is an integral component of Daily Five instruction and this supports a priority here at St Agatha’s. That is to meet students at the point of need whether through intervention or extension and have evidence data that informs instruction.”

Each day teachers throughout the literacy block will meet students, as a whole group, one-on-one, or via focused small groups on multiple occasions.

Some teachers have been trialling this framework and they lead lively discussions as they shared their experiences, recommendations and thinking with the whole staff.

“When you have a group of Year 2 students who just don’t want to stop writing and are disappointed when the recess bell rings, you know your learners are motivated.”

“It is such a joy to see and hear Year 5’s enthusiasm for reading and writing”.

Building a greater range of texts available to students is a commitment of Principal Anne Hassall, as the school library and classrooms work to expand the range of books, ebooks, and audiobooks for students. “We will definitely welcome the wider communities support with this project. It is about increasing the amount, range and level of texts available to students,” said Anne.

Regular updates around the implementation will be posted on the St. Agatha’s Blog and newsletter.

First Grade teachers show us their professional reading for the holidays.

Education Support Officers are vital classroom support and were involved in the professional learning session.

Specialist teachers and junior students involved in various aspects of the New Intervention Model.

faith ... learning ... growth