

WELCOME TO TERM 4, 2009

Welcome back for the final chapter of the 2009 school year. I hope you all enjoyed the vacation period and are ready for the excitement of term 4. My thoughts are particularly with our year seven students who have only 10 weeks of their primary school education remaining. If you know of any parents who intent to enrol their children with us for 2010, particularly new PREP aged students, please remind them to come and see us as early as possible to confirm their enrolment.

A number of our classrooms have had internal painting and carpeting over the holidays as part of the commonwealth government's Building Better Schools program. Thank you to the teachers who spent many hours packing and re-organising resources for this to happen. Thank you also to Frank Cattorall and Greg Topping who worked tirelessly to move furniture and equipment. Our boys' toilet has also had a coat of paint thanks to Ross Helmore who carried out the work in addition to his other cleaning duties without being asked. I certainly appreciate the fact that so many people go the extra mile at our school to make it a better place for students to learn.

We are nearing the completion of our Triennial School Review, which has been valuable in planning our priorities for the next three years. Thank you to all the staff, parents and students who participated in our surveys and focus group discussion or interviews. Your input has been very valuable. The full report with all our recommendations will be published on our web site in the near future. In the meantime a summary of the feedback and key findings are listed below:

Our Survey and Consultation Process consisted of:

- On-line surveys for all staff and parents. (46 staff responses, 162 parent responses,)
- Online surveys for year 6 and 7 students (18 responses)
- Individual interviews or small focus group discussion with all staff.
- Focus group discussion with parents.
- Focus group discussions with students.
- Review of the last Strategic Plan by program managers and the TSR project Team.

High level responses in these surveys and processes demonstrated wide agreement that as a school community we demonstrate:

- Excellent relationships between staff, parents and students
- Personalised attention and a high client service
- Warm, caring and welcoming school
- Genuine care and concern for all students
- Quality programs delivered by quality teachers who are willing to go the extra mile
- Excellent extension programs
- A wide range of excellent "support programs"
- A wide range of extra curricula activities to give opportunities for students to shine
- High expectations and standards
- Strong values base
- Very effective communication

- Excellent school organisation and support at all levels
- Great personalised attention from administration staff and teachers

One of the key findings of our review relates to the importance of increasing our focus on the continuity of quality of teaching and learning, in every classroom across every year level, across the school. Strategies put forward for consideration include the introduction of uninterrupted learning blocks for literacy and numeracy every day, the continued use of our data to track every student's performance more closely to ensure both extension and support for those students who need it most, at both the classroom level and through specialist support. Quality professional development based on individual teacher needs to support teaching and learning practices across the school, will continue to be a strong focus.

This could mean some changes in our routines and practices, such as shifting assembly times to the afternoons, limiting any extra curricula activities to outside prime learning time in the morning sessions and developing more effective tracking and borrowing systems for curriculum resources. It may also mean that we review teacher aide allocations to classrooms based on need and support for key intervention programs. These ideas are highlighted in more detail in the link above.

Parents should have received their child's NAPLAN reports this week. While there was some good news in that Mountain Creek SS was similar to or above other schools nationally in the percentage of students meeting basic standards in literacy and numeracy, I would have to say we had a disappointing overall result in relation to our expectations, given the hard work by teachers in relation to preparing students for the test.

The best way to clarify this is that minimum standards are simply that, minimum standards. A fairer comparison for school such as Mountain Creek is against the National and Like School's mean which compares the average performance of all students, in all bands against each other. Generally the performance of our 2009 cohort of students is below the national average in many areas. In summary while we are doing well in supporting our students at the lower end to meet minimum standards but we have fewer students in the higher performing bands than normally expected. While NAPLAN is only one measure of a school's performance it is an important one. Please be assured that this will be a key focus of our ongoing commitment to school improvement.

Warm Regards,
Glenn.