PRINCIPALS REPORT

Dear Students, Parents and Staff

This will be our last Newsletter for 2015 and an opportunity for a brief reflection on current educational issues and their influence at Fairhills.

Under the new government there has been a renewed commitment to the Gonski funding model which is very encouraging particularly for government schools. Among other initiatives we have seen:

1. A doubling of the money spent on capital works across the state which hopefully will speed up the process for Fairhills to get the $8M for our ‘Regeneration’ building program.

2. The introduction of the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. About 25% of our parents have health care cards and are eligible. 2016 application forms will be available early in Term 1.

3. Government funding of State School’s Relief, the charitable organisation that assists parents with uniform costs. All parents of year 7 students in 2016 with a health care card will receive a uniform package free of charge. Other parents can seek support with uniform by contacting Kath Middleton, our Associate Principal in charge of uniforms.

4. Equity funding. Fairhills will receive an extra $336,000 in its budget for 2016 to:-
   a. assist students who come to secondary school with NAPLAN reading scores below the National minimum level (about half a dozen each year).
   b. assist students who come from homes where the parents have had limited educational opportunities themselves and/or are employed in low paying jobs or even unemployed. At Fairhills we will use this money to employ extra staff to maintain/extend direct programs such as Bridge, Numeracy catch up, Literacy extension, learning engagement strategies and secondly, to assist class teachers to further develop their skills and strategies to assist students with particular learning needs. All these additional items have been put into place ready for an immediate start in 2016.
5. Present facilities management. Throughout 2015 we have worked hard to improve our facilities process so that we get better value from the money the government provides to look after our buildings, grounds and services. As a result we have saved some money which can be used to upgrade our lighting to LED and time switches. Not only will this reduce our carbon footprint but this strategy will also reduce our electricity bills in 2016.

The very generous working bee support we received from 230 members of the nearby Hillsong church has significantly upgraded a number of classrooms and improved our grounds so they are tidier, more attractive and easier to maintain. This saved us many $1,000’s which can now be put into further improvements in our facilities.

6. Victoria is now described on car number plates as ‘the education state’ as a tangible expression of the government commitment to prioritise education. Under this badge, the Education Department has put together a most impressive package of school reforms designed to raise the learning outcomes of students no matter what school they attend. Fairhills looks forward to being actively involved with their initiatives in 2016.

May I wish all members of our school community a meaningful Christmas and an enjoyable and safe summer holiday.

Harvey Wood
Principal

Instrumental Music Concert 2015.

On the evening of Monday 30th November, 35 of our budding instrumental music students performed to their peers and parents at the Swinburne TAFE Knox Theatre.

This new venue provided a professional and intimate backdrop for a showcase of wonderful student performances. The event provided the perfect opportunity for students to put their talents on display after ten months of scheduled lessons and committed practice. Representatives from the Choir, Flute, Keyboard, String and Woodwind ensembles entertained the audience with selected pieces and it was a pleasure to see even the beginners bravely make their stage debut. The support and efforts of our Instrumental Teachers has been outstanding and it was clear on the evening that the students very much enjoy working with these staff members.

Thankyou to all involved for a wonderful evening and in particular to Nicole McAlister (Instrumental Music Coordinator) for organizing and coordinating the event.
Thailand Community Service Tour 2015

On November 21st 2016 eleven students and three adults left on an adventure of a lifetime. The trip had three key parts to it: a community project in the far north west of Thailand near Chang Rai; a trek in the mountains outside of Chang Mai and finally an introduction to the slums of Bangkok. In between each of these activities we played tourist by visiting temples and an elephant sanctuary where we were able to be a “mahout” for a day.

Each part of our trip brought unique opportunities and insights into the lives of the Thai people. The stories that we heard and the people we met, made this trip a truly unique experience and one which will change our lives forever.

The Project we undertook was organized through the Mirror Foundation and enabled us to work alongside the locals of the village building an irrigation channel that would restore water to their rice fields. Part of our fundraising money generously donated by Ferntree Gully Rotary provided the materials for the project. The name of our school will be forever etched on the surface of the drainage wall in this village. Whilst in this village we connected with an inspiring couple who had set up an orphanage for school aged children.
The 30km trek travelled through lush jungle, small remote villages and farms. We climbed up to 1400m and we felt like we were on top of the world. The trek was quite challenging with many steep climbs coupled with many steep declines, but the views were spectacular.

Our final days in Bangkok saw us “Cooking with Poo” and working with Urban Neighbours of Hope in the Klong Tuey slum – a unique experience working alongside Stewart Mac Cartney’s brother and sister-in-law.

Congratulations to the team of Jose Melegrito, Louis Rendon-Perez, Kyle Caulfield, Callum Mac Lachlan, Pam Hanthaweekoon, Milly Owen, Nikita Miele, May Ou, Marnice Marjee, Bree Hardy, and Rachel Harriage. Their positive attitude and willingness to open their hearts and minds to the experience made this a trip to remember.

This trip really is an experience of a lifetime. Currently we are looking to plan another trip for 2016. So we encourage any 2016 Year 10 and 11 students to speak to this year’s group and to take a leap of faith. If you are interested please see either Stewie or Miss Tanner for details.

Adrienne Tanner
Senior Girls Basketball

Last week the Senior Girls Basketball team travelled to Canberra to play in the Under 20’s National Schools Championships. It had required the nine players to make a huge effort in fund raising through a BBQ, choc drive and a mega raffle.

The girls played some very good basketball at times but struggled to put four quarters together. They also came up against some very good teams but still managed to finish 13th in the competition.

The other side of the trip was to experience Canberra’s attractions like the Australian War Memorial, Telstra Tower, the Parliament Houses, the AIS and many more. This capped off a big week for all concerned.

On a personal note, the week before I coached the School Sport Victoria 18 and under Women’s State Basketball team to a silver medal at the Pacific School Games in Adelaide, losing to NSW by two points in overtime. Thank you to the school for supporting both these tournaments.

Andrew Potter

Instrumental Music

On Friday 23rd November three students attended the North Eastern Regional Concert Band workshop and recording session.

Those who attended were Jessy Cai, Flute - Year 8, Rhianna Ludbrook, Flute - Year 8, and Erin McCombe, Saxophone - Year 7.

The three girls worked extremely hard all day, learning many new skills. They were part of an 80 piece concert band conducted by Ingrid Martin. At the conclusion of the rehearsals the concert band recorded three songs. Congratulations to the girls on a wonderful achievement to be part of this regional event!

Nicole McAlister
Instrumental Music Coordinator
Luna Park

A fun day was had by all those who attended Luna Park last Thursday as can be seen by these happy faces.

Host Families Needed

Thanks you for your help with the search for host families in your school. It would be greatly appreciated if you could place an update in your next school newsletter letting your students and families know we are on the search for host families.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in contact if you have any further questions by calling 1300 131 736 or emailing aus.hosting@afs.org

Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures
Welcome the world to your home!

Why not host an overseas exchange student with AFS Intercultural Programs? We have participants due to arrive in February and they require volunteer host families for their stay in New South Wales. Make a friendship that can last a lifetime. Participants come for 5 months to 11 months and attend high schools and become an active member of the school, community and your family. They come from countries including France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Canada, Japan, Costa Rica, Argentina and Brazil. If you are interested in going on an exchange overseas we would also love to hear from you to discuss the opportunity of becoming an exchange student.

For more information please call Sharon Toohey on 02 9215 0077, aus.hosting@afs.org or contact the AFS Hosting team on 1300 131 736 or visit www.afs.org.au/host to make an inquiry!

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Wellbeing Report

Parents Guide to Gaming

96% of children and young people play video games and many of them provide great benefits and opportunities. But there is also a dark side to video games. 10% of gamers are addicted, the gambling industry has moved into the video game space, many popular games feature inappropriate content like violence and sexisms and virtual competitive environments often feature trash talk and cyberbullying. Videogames.org.au is a resource website for concerned parents and professionals about the impact of video games on children and young people. It features game suggestions, parenting advice, helpful resources and the latest research about benefits and concerns with video games. Parent’s Guide to Gambling is available as a free download from the www.videogames.org.au website.

Templar Society Australia; Summer Camp

2016 Summer camp in January (Sat 9th to Fri 15th). Most suitable for 10 – 14 year olds

TSA Summer camp is a 6 night camp in Torquay at the Grossman's Country Cottages group lodge. It includes: indoor bunk room accommodation, with lots of great outdoor activities, games, excursions and fun stuff planned for the week!

Transport via 24 seater Rosa bus, all leaders are highly qualified with many years of camp leadership experience, all have WWC Checks and are trained in first aid.

Please find attached Summer camp info and TSA Medical & Contact forms. For further information contact Susi Richter, Community Youth Coordinator, Temple Society: susi@templesociety.org.au or t: 0400 764 257

Knox City Council: Immerse- 30 Exhibitions, 30 Days, 30 Venues in Knox

Immerse is a new exhibition program developed by Knox City Council. For 30 days from 14 November to 14 December 2015, more than 30 artists will display their artwork in everyday places around Knox, from cafes and parks, to community centre’s and libraries.

One of the venues is the Youth Information Centre, Ground Floor 2 Capital City Boulevard Wantirna South where the Knox Youth Events Crew have an exhibition called Time Capsule.

For more information visit: www.knox.vic.gov.au/Immerse

School Holiday Robotics Program – IC Robotics, Robo Camps

An exciting new robotics program right here in Knox! Robo Camps are a unique and innovative way to engage children in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). This program is designed as a beginner program run by local Knox group, IC Robotics. In these Robo Camps young people from 8 – 16 years will learn how to design, program and build your own Lego robots. All sessions are held at Knox Library on a number of different dates in January!

Regards,

Paul Graham
Student Wellbeing Coordinator

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Important Administration Information

Electronic statements were recently emailed to parents – it would be appreciated if any outstanding fees / charges could be settled as soon as possible.

All students returning to Fairhills in 2016 will have received an ‘Enrolment Information Kit’ during last week – please return the necessary documentation for each student at your earliest convenience.
The school immunisation program is significantly important as it is the last opportunity for people to be protected against vaccine-preventable diseases as part of Council’s larger programs. Research has found that once a student leaves school they are less likely to go to the GP for immunisation purposes. Additionally, the recently announced Commonwealth Government initiative of “No Jab No Pay” will adversely affect recipients of Government financial allowances.

The Knox City Council immunisation team acknowledges your immunisation coordinators, teachers and principal for their assistance and support to complete the expanded school immunisation program for 2015; which offered the catch up program to all year 7, 8, 9, and 10 students, allowing a simplified program affecting only year 7 students to commence in 2016.

With the help of the immunisation coordinator and teachers of your school, Knox City Council immunisation team delivered the program for students on three separate occasions through the year.

Results Summary
Conclusions from statistical result

Both consent card return rates and vaccination rates are falling just below the average for the schools within the Municipality. Increased awareness within the school and the vaccinating of all year 7 students starting next year will hopefully bring these figures up.

Upcoming 2016 Service

- All year 7 students to be offered Gardasil (three doses), Boostrix (single dose) and Varicella (single dose) vaccinations.
- Council will be, or have already, delivered consent card packs to your school prior the start of first term.
- These cards will need distributing to all year 7 students and returning to us for processing.
- To facilitate Council chasing cards that have not been returned and increase card return rate, we would appreciate an electronic copy of parent/guardian contact details and class lists at the earliest opportunity in 2016.

Council’s Health Services Department thanks you for your ongoing support and would welcome your suggestions and assistance in ensuring a greater immunisation uptake during 2016. We seek your active participation in the State wide initiative to increase vaccination uptake rates within the secondary school program.

If you wish to discuss councils Immunisation Program, the State wide initiative or the results of this report, please contact Tim Robinson, Team Leader – Health Development on 9298 8879.