Hello Everyone,

Welcome back to our exceptional school. As is always the case for me, it was euphoric seeing everyone again, especially our happy and contented children. It was also great to welcome back Ty and Kellie from their visit to China and official visit to our sister school, Jinling Primary School. At Whittlesea Primary School we are continually striving to improve in all that we do to meet and challenge the teaching and learning needs of all of our students. Next year we will introduce a social and emotional learning curriculum called PATHS. PATHS is an evidence based whole school approach to social and emotional development taught twice a week (one hour a week) by classroom teachers from Foundation to year 6. It will also be introduced to our pre-prep children in 2016. PATHS teaches, self-control, emotional understanding, self-esteem, peer relations, and problem solving. PATHS is an acronym for: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies.

PATHS has been found to:

- decrease aggressive behaviour
- decrease anxiety and depression
- promote a happy, safe and positive school culture

Research in Western Australian classrooms found PATHS significantly reduced overactive and inattentive behaviours after 16 weeks. This social and emotional learning curriculum supports and strengthens our KidsMatter program. KidsMatter provides the proven methods, tools and support to help schools work with parents and carers, health services and the wider community, to nurture happy, balanced kids. One of our teacher Action Teams is responsible for Kids Matter and the team will also embrace the implementation of PATHS in 2016.

In 2016, the children’s first day of school will be Friday 29th January. This will be a manageable immersion back into the school routine after the long Christmas break. Thursday 28th January will be dedicated to familiarisation with the PATHS curriculum and will be facilitated by Ros June. Ros is a psychologist and teacher who has been supporting the implementation of this curriculum
in WA and Victoria over the last 14 years. She is also part of the Austin Health CAMHS (Child Adolescent & Mental Health Service) and the Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health, University of Melbourne.

PLEASE LET US KNOW ASAP
I would appreciate it if parents could let me know before the end of October, if they are planning to exit their children from Whittlesea Primary School, not to return in 2016. I am also interested in having an exit interview if this is the case. Families move schools for many different reasons – moving to another area, career/job opportunities, separations and so on. Before leaving however, I am interested in gaining feedback about your experience at our school- positive as well as improvements so that we can continue to get better at meeting the needs of our families.

Knowing the number of families leaving our school is also critical for staffing purposes. Your assistance in this matter would be appreciated.

YOUR FEEDBACK IS VALUED
You have now had two Interim Reports that reflect the social and emotional learning progress of your child/children. We would appreciate your feedback for the purpose of improving the report. It is attached to this newsletter – please add, cross out and make helpful comments and return to the office by: Friday 16th of October, 2015.

CLASS COMPOSITIONS FOR 2016
Your children will have the opportunity to identify five friends with whom they would like to be with next year. Every child is guaranteed at least one friend.

It is at this time of the year that we ask parents to forward any requests about their child’s placement – in writing and addressed to the principal. Parents cannot select a teacher but may have valid reason for their child not to be with another particular child.

Forming classes is complex and many, many hours of thought go into the process. The formations are fluid for the first month to ensure compositions are workable. Our consideration is always about what is in the best interests of every child’s teaching and learning and mental health.

As we only have two classes in a couple of the year levels it may be problematic to accommodate a request but we will do our best.

PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY
Last term I said that I would respond to comments that were a concern – remembering that every response (113) indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience at Whittlesea Primary School and strongly agreed or agreed that their child/children are receiving a quality education at our school. There were seven comments in the area of concern. Below are a few of them-

- ‘I realise that this is out of the school’s control but it would be great to find a way to get more parent involvement in parent run things like canteen, stalls etc. Also ongoing problems with disciplining those students who constantly cause disruption.’

It is problematic to get parent helpers in many schools. Parents have very good intentions but most are going to work and just don’t have the capacity to contribute during school hours. In saying that, we did introduce a ‘parent contact’ for each class in the hope that we could strengthen school community and school community involvement. It was the first year and we can and will improve this parent role for next year and hopefully address your concern.
We do have a few children who require additional ongoing support to develop the skills to be socially competent and well behaved. There is a lot that happens behind the scene that parents are not privy to – confidential information that cannot be shared. We work with many personnel – including psychologists, doctors and speech pathologists. We employ many support staff and our teachers follow our Student Management Process. All parents can be confident that we work very hard to support all children to be well behaved, socially competent and to be the best that they can be. This is of course our moral purpose for all children.

• ‘The lack of acknowledgement regarding National Science Week and celebrating other things like Halloween and the Grand final – sending the wrong message about what is worthwhile. My partner emailed the school the week before National Science week over the past two years and did not even receive a reply.’

This is true. We haven’t celebrated National Science Week for some time, however, we do value science learning and teaching in our school. In fact our inquiry learning is heavily weighted towards science and has been for the last five years. We had an early years Science Expo just prior to the holidays and the year 3 & 4 children’s inquiry last term was also science based. Every year level has science based inquiry learning for at least one term every year – not just a week.

I apologise that this email did not reach me. The school email account receives lots of mail and is re-distributed from the office. This email must have been overlooked. I would encourage anyone to make a call to myself or Ty if they feel that their concerns have not been addressed or an email is not responded to.

• Lunch is too early – eating time is too short

I tend to agree and would welcome a solution. Many schools have their lunch time at 1.30 pm which we believe is too late. It is then a long time between breakfast and lunch. It is problematic fitting lunch into the five mandated learning hours a day. Many of our teachers provide time for the children to snack on something healthy during the day to keep up their energy and concentration. We encourage children to being their water bottles and leave them on their tables so that they stay hydrated too.

The children only get ten minutes to eat (unless they are in foundation) but are able to take the rest of their food outside to eat in the designated eating areas. I see many children leaving the classroom with apples, oranges and carrot sticks. The children also get five minutes to eat their snack inside later in the day and once again can take food outside if they wish. We have ensured that there are two eating times timetabled in the day so that the children can keep their brain nourished and able to sustain concentration. As I said we are more than happy to listen to other ideas.

• “The availability of a canteen daily for lunches and expense of uniforms, passion projects, swimming.

It is problematic having canteen every day in a school our size. You will find that only very large primary schools or secondary schools offer this service. We have investigated the possibility a few times in the last six years but with no success. Having the canteen open one day a week has been possible due to a small number of parents lead by Vanessa Luscombe and for this we are thankful. It is becoming increasingly difficult to organise with a shortage of parents available to assist with their time.

Swimming and Passion projects are optional opportunities for children and their parents. We keep the passion projects at five dollars for an hour with some having a small additional cost for
materials. We endeavour to keep the prices as cheap as possible. The swimming prices are dictated by the YMCA.

The uniform prices are similar for all schools I would think. Our uniform garments are well made and of quality materials. There is opportunity to buy some second hand uniform from our school for a gold coin donation. Judging from the overflowing lost property box with unnamed new jackets there must be quite a number of families who find the prices affordable.

FEEDBACK PLEASE – ATTACHED IS THE INTERIM REPORT – PLEASE RESPOND BY ADDING, DELETING, OR PROVIDING A WRITTEN RESPONSE. SCHOOL COUNCIL, STAFF AND STUDENTS WILL ALSO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE COMMENTS.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Take care,
Kindest regards,
Bente Stock
Principal

Hello Everyone,

Welcome back for an exciting term 4 at Whittlesea Primary School. Kellie Redmond and I were fortunate to have the most amazing experience during the holiday period. We were participants on the Victorian Principal’s Association Chinese Study Tour. Throughout our travels we were immersed in brilliant cultural experiences including experiencing life in the cities of Beijing, Nanjing and Shanghai. The trip gave us the opportunity to develop a true appreciation for the Chinese culture, from the people and their customs to the rich history which extends back thousands of years.

The highlight and key purpose of our 2 week tour were the days spent at Whittlesea Primary School’s sister school - Jinling Primary School. Throughout our visit we had the opportunity to engage in conversations with school leaders on a variety of rich topics including approaches to classroom instruction, student engagement, internationalising education and languages. We also observed a number of classroom sessions including Chinese and English language, mathematics, science, calligraphy and specialist programs such as music.
The students at Jinling were just like our students – happy, fun loving, enthusiastic and curious. In fact, it were the similarities not differences that stood out the most. We pride ourselves on having a community of confident learners who always welcome adults respectfully into the school and the students at Jinling were no different.

The trip was a great reinforcement for our schools direction and commitment to introducing Mandarin language / Chinese cultural studies into the future. All state government schools are mandated to introduce a language into their curriculum. Our school took great care in researching and selecting a language which would equip our children for successful futures. China’s geographical location, economic rise and strategic importance were key factors in selecting Mandarin. Within the AusVELS curriculum there is also a cross-curriculum priority named ‘Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia’. By selecting an asian language our school is addressing this curriculum priority through both targeted language sessions and integration across classroom activities that develop cultural awareness.
We hope to return to Jinling Primary School in 2016 - this time with an eager group of our senior students who will have the experience of a lifetime.

Until next week,

Ty Hoggins
Assistant Principal

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**TERM 4 – COMPULSARY SCHOOL HATS**

**BOOKCLUB DUE BACK FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER**

**EARLY YEARS SWIMMING PROGRAM**
The swimming program for children in the Early Years will take place at the Whittlesea Swim Centre during the last two weeks’ of school. The dates will be December 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 15th, 16th & 17th. There are no lessons on December 8th because it is a statewide and school transition day.

A permission note and timetable will be sent home closer to the date.

Cheryl Abbott

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**Nurturing Children**

When people talk about child development, the topic will often move to that of nature versus nurture. The way children are made in the womb, out of a mix of chromosomes provided by prior generations, provides them with their unique personalities and special gifts that they may apply to all of life. So we can wonder if nurture plays any significant part at all. I am one who advocates that nurture does play an equally important part and I’ll use the analogy of plants.

I can liken good care of plants as an example of excellent nurture of children. Plants react to the environment they are placed in. If we plant in good soil and keep it correctly watered and regularly include the right nutrients our plants will thrive. In the same way when we provide a loving, caring and attentive environment for our children, they will be able to grow and develop, strengthening their unique nature and qualities.

I have been told that plants are able to give 30% to the soil each day over and above what they need to survive and grow. That’s very generous. Happy healthy children will also give back to us in loads of love and attention. They wear a child lens that adults find difficult to apply. The wisdom they offer can be priceless. Some may singlehandedly hold a family together through tough times. As a school community, let us be part of this lifelong process to nurture young people so they grow strong, ready to face what the world may place before them.

Peter Ackland - school chaplain
Commonwealth Bank School Banking Update –

The decision to recall the Cosmic Light Beam Torch due to a potential safety issue, a decision has been made to also withdraw the upcoming Lunar Light Band reward from the School Banking Rewards Program. To avoid disappointment there is a new reward item available for redemption in Term 4 while stocks last. Students can now test their skills with a game of frisbee with the new Galaxy Glider! Once students have collected 10 tokens, they can simply include a note, along with their 10 tokens in their deposit wallet on banking day to advise that they would like to redeem their tokens for the Galaxy Glider reward item. Don’t forget the Outer Space Savers Money Box is also available in Term 4.


This qualification will give you the skills and knowledge to provide assistance and support to teachers and students in a range of educational settings. This includes early childhood education, as well as Primary, Secondary and Special schools. Graduates work as education assistants/teacher aides and support workers (working with children with disabilities).

Entry Requirements: Moderate Computer and Internet and Email Skills; English LLN skills at an industry entry standard; and Returning to Learning Program

Location: Merrilands Community Centre, 35 Sturdee St Reservoir

Starts  Friday, 30th October

Days & Times:  Friday: 9.15am to 3.15pm
  Tuesday: 9.15am to 3.15pm (2 sessions only)

Duration: 23 sessions, 2 workshops (TBA) + 100 hour practical placement. (Excludes: 11/3/16 & School Holidays.)

Costs: Concession: $160, Full: $800, Fee For Service: $2,540 (Concession- Limited Places) + Service & Amenities Fee

Enrolment: Please ring early to arrange a pre-enrolment interview.

For more details ring PRACE on 9462 6077 or visit our website: www.prace.vic.edu.au