Welcome to our final newsletter for 2012. We hope you have enjoyed reading the news and keeping up to date with parent issues. Please remember to provide any feedback you may have or items you would like included.

The State Government has worked with the Catholic and Independent sectors in recent weeks to solve the issues around the Service of the Advisory Visiting Teachers in 2013. The government has agreed to provide this service in 2013 for those students who would otherwise have no access to this expertise. QCEC, along with the P & F Federation, will continue to work towards arrangements for 2014 and how these services might be provided to our students with Visual, Hearing and Physical Impairments. These students and their families are very important and valued members of our Catholic School communities.

Our Catholic sector is also working through the issues of the fluctuations in the overall level of recurrent funding over the next two years and attempting to find a solution to this issue so that schools have certainty for their school budgets. The Education Minister has written to all Principals this week on this topic.

The Federation is also doing some preparation work leading up to the Council of Australian Governments meeting in February after which we understand the Gonski Review of School funding rates for each school may be released. The Federal Minister for School Education, Hon Peter Garrett has said ‘Funding for every school - government, independent and Catholic - will continue to rise under our plan for school improvement. We always said no school will lose a dollar of funding per student and that is what we will deliver.’

We need to be sure that is not just when the new system comes into play but there is no dwindling of Catholic School funding during the transition period of 2014 – 2020 and thereafter.

We will keep you up to date with the latest information – even over the school holidays – just remember to keep an eye on our website for news. (www.pandf.org.au)

We hope you have an enjoyable school holiday period and the State Committee and Staff of the Federation of Parents & Friends wish you all a very happy, holy and safe Christmas and all the very best for the New Year.

We look forward to keeping in touch in 2013.

Carmel Nash
Executive Director

CHRISTMAS CATECHESIS THROUGH CAROLS

There are now at least three distinct Australian Versions of The Twelve Days of Christmas commonly sung at this time of year. Christmas time, we now discover, is a time when possums play, lizards leap, wombats wash, crocs snooze, dingos dig, brolgas dance, sharks surf, koalas cuddle, parrots prattle etc. It’s all nonsensical good fun – ‘tis the season to be merry, after all!

It would be a pity, however, if the original purpose of carols like The Twelve Days of Christmas was somehow lost in cultural translation. Although it was always intended to be a joyful, comedic song, this sixteenth century English carol carried a deeper level of meaning. It was written at a time when it was difficult and dangerous for Catholics to live their faith openly and to pass it on to their children. It became necessary to make up secret codes to outline their Catholic system of beliefs and so make it possible, through memory alone, for the faith to be passed on from one generation to the other without benefit of churches, schools or clergy.

The Twelve Days, silly as the words may sound, is nothing other than an Aide-mémoire for parents and lay catechists to hang their teachings on. In this case:

**The Twelve Days** – the time of celebration from Christmas Day until the Epiphany

**My true love gave to me** – God is the giver of life and love who gives the sinful world

**A partridge in a pear tree** – His son Jesus, who by his cross (pear tree) and resurrection offers us the gift of salvation.

**Two turtle doves** – the Old and New Testaments in which salvation history is recorded

**Three French hens** – the three gifts of the Magi acknowledging Jesus as priestly king whose Kingdom is not of this world and established through suffering

**Four calling birds** – the four gospels which sing out the Good News

**Five golden rings** – the Pentateuch, those first five books of the Bible recording the story of creation and the faith journey of the people of Israel

**Six geese** – the six precepts of the Church urging fidelity to the Eucharist and other sacraments and material support of the Church.

**Seven swans** – the seven sacraments of the Church

**Eight maids** – the eight beatitudes of Matthew’s gospel

**Nine Ladies** – the nine choirs of angels, guardians of God’s faithful

**Ten Lords** - the Ten Commandments, the great ethical guide

**Eleven Pipers** – the company of Apostles (minus Judas), the original leaders of the Church and their successors

**Twelve drummers** – the central doctrines of the faith as found in the Apostles Creed
What better time than during the family Christmas festivities for old and young to give recitals of favourite rhymes, songs and dances and, at the same time, for Catholic faith to be taught and reinforced along with other family traditions.

Of course the first Christmas storytellers were the Shepherds who so effectively communicated to others the angel’s message: I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all the people. Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10)

Whether openly or secretly, fostered or prohibited, this simple story of Christmas has been told in every language and culture. Each country produced its own catechetical aids - carols, stories, trees, wreaths, candy canes, puddings and special treats, bells etc. These traditions and symbols were also designed to take us beyond the actual events at Bethlehem to an appreciation of all the gifts that the Christ child brings: peace, gentleness, compassion, forgiveness, hope and joy. We pass these stories and the values in them on to our children every year at this time.

In Australia, it matters little whether the child Jesus becomes a kookaburra in a gum tree rather than a partridge in a pear tree as long as the meaning of Christmas is not obscured, so long as children once again have the opportunity through song, story and symbol to encounter that generous God who invites them to walk with kings, kneel with shepherds, sing with angelic choirs, and approach the child in the manger to be filled with wonder, surprised by joy and overwhelmed with love.

**AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL, MELBOURNE, 5-7 DECEMBER 2013**

Biggest Youth Gathering planned since WYD 2008

Australian Catholic Youth Festival, Melbourne, 5-7 December 2013

Bishop Anthony Fisher and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference announce the first Australian Catholic Youth Festival. Revisiting the themes of Sydney’s World Youth Day 2008, the Festival will celebrate the communion of the Catholic Church in Australia, and be a unique opportunity for dialogue between youth and Church leaders.

While memory still lingers in school and parish communities of the great appeal and success of WYD 2008, now is an excellent time to begin promoting and preparing for the Festival and supporting young people from Year 9 students to young adults aged 25 to attend.

From Thursday 5 December to Saturday 7 December an estimated 4000 youth will gather at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) St Patrick’s Campus in East Melbourne and the East Melbourne Catholic Precinct (including St Patrick’s Cathedral, and other nearby churches and facilities).

Registrations begin in March 2013. More at youthfestival.catholic.org.au or contact Malcolm Hart, Senior Youth Ministry Projects Officer, Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life on email: youthministry@catholic.org.au P: 07 3109 6806 M: 0419 951 417.

**UPDATE ON HOT ISSUES**

**Australian Education Bill 2012**

‘Making sure no child misses out on the education which could change his or her life has been the ruling passion of my life’, said Prime Minister Gillard as she outlined her Government’s plan for the future of Australian education.

At the second reading of the Bill to the parliament on 28 November, the Prime Minister prophesied, ‘This is tomorrow: national education goals, an ambitious national plan, a commitment to smarter funding; parents, teachers, authorities and Governments working together. Higher standards, better schools, educated children, creative citizens Australia winning the education race and winning the economic race’.

She hopes to see Australia ranked as a top five country in the world in Reading, Science and Mathematics by 2025, and by the same year, for it to be ranked as a top five country in the world for providing a high-quality and high-equity education system.

‘This is a distinctively Labor plan for a matter of the highest Labor purpose: to eradicate the great moral wrong which sees some Australian children denied the transformative power of a great education,’ she said.

The legislation initiates the government’s response to the Gonski schools funding review and provides directions for the National Plan for School Improvement.

Funding will flow to States, Territories and Catholic and independent schools who agree to the actions, targets and reporting for improvement, to which the Commonwealth agrees under the National Plan.

The full text of her speech can be found at http://www.pm.gov.au

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**The Bill lacks substance**

The Independent Education Union of Australia has expressed its disappointment with the new Australian Education Bill.

While the commitment to a base recurrent grant per student is welcomed and the school improvement principles are laudable, the Bill lacks substance.

“The Bill brought before Parliament today doesn’t contain anything about how much money is actually available to deliver the expectations,” Federal Secretary Chris Watt said.

Indeed, the IEU is supportive in principle of the Federal Government’s focus on continual improvement in school education, but we’re not convinced this Bill delivers on that agenda.

“Disappointingly, this Bill doesn’t assist schools planning for significant changes and learning arrangements for 2014 and beyond.”

“This is a grand opportunity not to be missed to ensure that non-government schools, especially low fee Catholic and Independent schools, have sufficient resources to meet the challenges ahead.”

**Gonski - an Opportunity for Historic Change**

The Australian Education Union today called for all political parties to support the Gonski legislation, saying it was an opportunity to make a historic change in the way schools are resourced and children are educated.

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said nothing would be more important for the Federal Parliament in 2013 than the passage of the legislation introduced today.

“This is a test of the commitment of our political leaders to the education of all children in Australia,” he said.

“The Gonski Review made it clear that a fundamental change was required in the way we resource our schools because too many children are missing out on the opportunity to get a high quality education.
“This is a chance not only to better resource our schools but to set Australia on a path towards being a fairer and more prosperous nation.

“There must be a commitment now from State and Territory leaders to sit down with the Commonwealth and negotiate the new funding arrangements that are necessary for the final legislation as a matter of urgency.

“This legislation needs to be updated and passed as soon as possible in 2013 with new funding arrangements to commence in 2014.

“As the Gonski Review final report warned, the need to act is urgent and a failure to act will have profound social and economic consequences for the nation.

“A failure to act would also have major financial consequences for public schools which are facing a real cut of over $670 million a year without change.

Mr Gavrielatos said the Coalition needed to make clear its position on this legislation as a matter of urgency.

NAPLAN – What do you think?

NAPLAN (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy) has come under fire in the news in recent weeks following the publication of a research paper called The Experience of Education: The impacts of high stakes testing on school students and their families: An educator’s perspective released in November 2012.

This research is based on a survey of teachers (not parents or students or educational authorities) and suggests that NAPLAN has unintended negative consequences such as:

• Teachers spending too much time ‘teaching to the test’ which reduces time for teaching curriculum content
• Teachers spend class time doing practice sessions for the test
• Negative impact on student well-being such as increased levels of stress at test time
• Negative impacts on staff morale,
• The press and parents use the results as a school ranking tool
• Negative impacts on school reputation and capacity to attract and retain students and staff.

Peter Garrett, the Minister for School Education, strongly defends NAPLAN and says that this survey is ‘unhelpful’ and indicated that some teachers did not understand how and why NAPLAN was being used. When asked about the report findings, he described NAPLAN as ”a really valuable tool to help track student performance and direct attention and resources where they are needed”. In other words NAPLAN is supposed to help individual students.

NAPLAN started in 2008. Every year since then, in the second full week in May, all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Australia are tested on reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. The Government website says that NAPLAN ‘tests the types of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life’.

The website also says that ‘National assessments provide useful nationally comparable evidence about student achievement. By participating in these assessments schools benefit not only their own students, but also the students in every state and territory’.

The MySchool website provides a wide range of NAPLAN data for every school in Australia under the following headings:

Results in graphs
- Results in numbers
- Results in bands
- Student gain
- Comparison with similar schools

Clearly NAPLAN results are very public and can be used and interpreted for different purposes. For example, teachers can identify particular student needs or class trends; schools and school systems can identify gaps in performance and increase professional development for teachers in specific areas; parents or Governments use it to compare and rate school performance.

Both the Labor Government and the Coalition support NAPLAN testing. However some politicians have questioned if the results should be reported in the way they are. Perhaps less public reporting of results would reduce the ‘high stakes’ effect.

Give us your feedback by going to the Quick Contact section in our website at http://www.pandf.org.au and responding to the following questions.

What do you think of NAPLAN?

What effect is it having on your children?

What do you think about the reporting of NAPLAN results?

PARENTING INFORMATION

The BIG FIVE Parenting skills continued

Parenting skill #1: Encouraging kids to be brave
(The lion is the king of the jungle & encouragement is the king of parenting skills.)

Parenting skill #2: Teaching Kids to Behave well
(Just as an elephant is hard to ignore, you can’t ignore poor behaviour.)

Parenting skill #3: Hooking Kids unto Learning
(Just as the buffalo is basic to the survival of all species, a parent’s attitude is the building block to successful learning)

Parenting skill #4: Speaking so kids will listen
(Just as the leopard chooses where to eat its prey parents need to think carefully where and how they are to speak if they want kids to listen.)

Parenting skill #5: Teaching kids coping skills
(like the rhino kids need to be able to bounce back in this sometimes difficult world.)

This month we continue with Michael Grose's - BIG FIVE Parenting Skill #4:

Speaking so kids will listen

The leopard is the fourth of the Big Five African animals, and one of the smartest. While it often finds and kills its prey out in the open, it will always drag it’s kill up into a tree to eat it.

The leopard knows it’s vulnerable out in the open so it chooses the safest place possible to eat.

Communication is one the most important skills a parent can have. But like the leopard, parents need to consider the best place possible to make sure kids listen.

Here are five great ways to make sure communication works for you at home.

1. Talk on their turf: If you want to be heard by your kids think carefully where you deliver your message. Many kids will open up in the privacy of their own bedroom or while you are driving in the car. Choose a time and place to speak when kids are more likely to
2. Put processes in place to ensure kids communicate: When I first researched effective families over 20 years ago I discovered that parents with the most harmonious families had processes in place that encouraged communication. These ranged from family mealtimes through to more formal family meetings. Whatever methods you choose, you do need to have some processes in place that bring kids and adults together so you talk.

3. Ask good questions: If you have conversational clams in your family you need to ask good, open questions beyond “How was school today?” to get them to open up a little. Use open questions “What’s different about your new teacher from your previous teacher?” or directed questions “What’s the best thing that happened at school today?” to get some chat happening.

4. Listen up, don’t parent down: Listen more than you speak and learn to bite your tongue Nothing shuts kids down more than parents who always want to give advice.

5. Try shoulder-to-shoulder parenting: Some boys (and girls) communicate better when eye contact is removed. That’s why cars can be great places to talk with some kids. If it’s hard to strike up a chat with your child then try doing something together, which removes the need for eye contact and takes the focus away from the chat.

Stay in touch and learn!

Four great ways to stay in tough & get more ideas from Michael Grose to help you bring out the BEST in your kids:


You’ll get a great Kids’ Chores & Responsibilities Guide when you do.

There’s plenty of fun, informative ways to interact with Michael on Facebook.

Visit http://www.facebook.com/michaelgroseparenting

Reward or bribe - is it bad to reward children for good behaviour?

A Bribe – I give my 5 year old a lolly to stop him crying and arguing at the shops.

This is an example of accidental bribery because I am giving a reward to someone to stop a negative behavior.

The negative result is that a child learns to misbehave in order to receive a treat.

A Reward - I give my 5 year old a snack because she is making a big effort not to whine or cry at the shops.

Here I am rewarding or giving recognition for effort and improvement.

There are those who think that any giving of rewards is ‘bad’ because it teaches a child to do only such things as are likely to be rewarded. However, is it really fair for children to have to change their ways, out of the goodness of their hearts, when most adults are more likely to adopt new habits more readily if there is some positive incentive?

Do not adults work towards a holiday bonus or raise, recognition, presents, kind words, quality time spent with family and friends? These are all rewards. The difference is, most adults are in charge of deciding which behaviours they need to practise in order to receive the reward. Children often need a little help in this area. If you still don’t like the language of ‘rewards’ maybe you could call them ‘recognition’ or ‘our helping each other learn bonuses’.

You don’t have to buy rewards or think up new and exciting activities.

Make the rewards / recognition of effort, things that they already get for free, regardless of their behaviour. For example, think of the things you are already doing with your children, such as: going to the park, having special afternoon tea, playing a game, listening to their favourite songs in the car, having a story at night etc, etc...... and make them your rewards.

Keeping your child motivated to use positive behaviours through the use of rewards, causes your life and the child’s to be much more pleasant, while helping him or her to learn new skills.

For more information on how PEPA can support you with your family http://www.pepa.com.au

iSpoke Flash Cards

iSpoke Flash Cards were designed originally as an educational application for children and children with special needs.

These interactive flash cards give you the ability to create your own flash cards for a myriad of purposes, store them in albums and record or overdub your own voice. Easily receive files from web or PC for externally created content or DIY on the spot, a versatile tool! The application contains 5 examples of flash cards introducing animal types.

- Uses include Early Education, Disability Services, Travel Logs, Test Cram Cards, Subject primers, Therapy, even just as a handy sticky note!
- iSpoke donate 50c from each sale to ASPECT (Autism Spectrum Australia) to help children on the autism spectrum.

You can download the FREE lite version here to try out:


QAST (Queensland Association of School Tuckshops)

QAST (Queensland Association of School Tuckshops) has a number of Tuckshop Convenor Representative positions still to fill on its Management Committee.

If you have a passion for the work done in school tuckshops and would like to find out more information about becoming part of the QAST Management Committee please contact us on 3324 1511. (Karen)

SCHOOLZINE

Schoolzine is proudly at the forefront of this exciting and innovative platform, connecting communities Australia wide, ...the online school newsletter! Schoolzine’s multi-functional, interactive newsletter can be accessed wherever you have internet …at home on your PC, via your mobile or perhaps on an iPad - at your convenience.