Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome to the new school year and a special welcome to the students and their families who join us for the first time. I hope you all feel ‘at home’ in no time and that students, staff and parents welcome you wholeheartedly into this community – not as part of any exclusive group but the sort of welcome that says, ‘We always have room for others to join in.’ It can be a daunting prospect starting fresh in a new place.

So, here we stand at the beginning of another year, some eager to start and glad to be back; others wondering what the year will bring and perhaps fearing possible challenges ahead. I remember finishing the front page of the final newsletter last year with a list of things to which I looked forward, the last one being, ‘A New Year full of new learning and new challenges – taking whatever comes and turning it to good.’ I guess that’s an appropriate place, then, to pick up the beginnings of 2013.

Life, of course, can be full of challenges – some minor and annoying, others major and confronting, calling on all our wisdom and strength. We tend to categorise these challenges and life events as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but when we really get down to it, they ‘just are’. Arguing with what is’ or demanding that things be other than the way they are, only causes us to suffer.

Responding to an unwanted turn of events with statements such as, ‘I shouldn’t have to put up with this!’ ‘Why is this happening to me?’ ‘It’s not fair.’ ‘I don’t deserve this,’ will never make it better or change a thing; thinking like this takes us deeper into a world of pain and hurt. But this sort of thinking seems to come very naturally to us, doesn’t it, and it’s so easy to slip, unconsciously, into this pattern of response. It takes a fair degree of awareness to recognise ingrained thinking habits for what they often are – flawed and unhelpful. It is certainly easier and more satisfying to blame others or events for our unhappiness and suffering.

Another cause of self-inflicted suffering is the fact that each of us believes what we think to be true and real. Thoughts come uninvited into our heads and we attach ourselves to some of them. Strangely enough we don’t believe other people’s thoughts to be true, but we hold onto our own, identify with them and even build an identity upon them – no matter that they cause us pain. You know those times when you just can’t let go of a particular thought? When you build whole stories in your head and you just get more and more unhappy / angry / anxious / discontented / frustrated? Sometimes these thoughts get so intrusive that getting restful sleep is difficult and you are trapped inside your head with a string of thoughts that play in a repetitive loop. This thinking takes us out of the present moment and makes us a prisoner of our past or sometimes our imagined future. At times such as these, it helps to grow in awareness that these are just thoughts – our imagination if you like. We know this because when we stop thinking these thoughts, the pain disappears. Of course, sometimes we don’t want to stop the thoughts because they allow us to feel sorry for ourselves and to feel aggrieved and hard done by. They ‘justify’ the way we feel about ourselves or others or events.

Life, of course, can be full of challenges – some minor and annoying, others major and confronting, calling on all our wisdom and strength. We tend to categorise these challenges and life events as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but when we really get down to it, they ‘just are’. Arguing with what is’ or demanding that things be other than the way they are, only causes us to suffer.

Another cause of suffering is the desire to control others and the environment. The more we see ourselves as separate from other people and things, the greater is our inner sense that life is threatening and something to be controlled because we want to feel safe. As we begin to realise that all people and all things are connected – one in the Spirit, if you like – then our tendency to see other people and their ideas as a threat diminishes and, with it, comes a new-found peace - regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. The situation may not have changed but we have changed because we are looking at life differently.

Happiness is no longer measured by the degree of predictability, comfort, control or power we have established in our lives but rather by our willingness to search for that which brings lasting, rather than temporary, happiness. Of course it is hard to find the way to lasting happiness because we are so reluctant to be disturbed. After all, who would willingly choose a path that is difficult? Isn’t it easier and better to avoid difficulties? And, of course, that is why most of us do not find happiness that lasts – because we attach our happiness to external things, be that people, success, praise and approval, possessions or position. They all have their place but they cannot deliver lasting happiness because they can be taken away in the blink of an eye. Many of us have discovered this already and many more will come to this in the future.

There is no external path to happiness; it’s an internal journey undertaken in willingness to be disturbed and surprised, to find out that much of what we thought was real and true is simply imagination, that our assumptions about people and life have been wrong all along, that control is an illusion and that we will survive that ‘deep well of unknowing’ (as it has been called by people who have experienced the journey) and move closer ‘to fullness of life,’ which Jesus identifies as the reason for his coming.

I write about this at the beginning of a new year because, each of us as an individual and as part of the broader community, can live, love and grow through whatever this year brings if we can step back, check our thinking and responses and make a decision for wholeness, for compassion, for unity, for peace, for balance and for a little detachment from our habits of thinking. We might even find happiness together regardless of our circumstances.

Have a great year everyone. It’s good to be back.  

Glenda

Welcome to the World - We share the wonderful news with you that Lynsey Koch (nee Martin) and husband, Michael are the proud parents of Willow May Jeanette, born on 3 January at 8lbs 7oz. Besotted parents and child are doing well.

New Preps - Congratulations to everyone involved in getting the Preps off to such a great start to their school life. The classes have started in a very settled fashion and the young ones seem ready to put in a big learning year as they live, play and learn together.

Prep Enrolment 2014 - Applications for 2014 Prep are now being accepted. Existing families with young ones due to begin Prep next year are encouraged toget applications in as soon as possible. If last year is anything to go by, places may be hard to come by. Thank you.

First Assembly next Thursday 14 February. Parents welcome.
Dear Parents/Caregivers,

A Virtues Moment: COURTESY

In a large community such as ours, the way we interact with children, adults and outsiders reflects our core values. One of the most basic of these values is Courtesy. Courtesy is treating others with kindness and tact, warmth and respect. We take the time to speak and act graciously, showing people that we value and respect them. It means according dignity to people by being considerate, responsive, and kind in our dealings with them.

Questions for reflection:
1. How can I treat others, especially my family members, with utmost courtesy each day?
2. How can I speak courteously, even when I am frustrated or angry?
3. How do I model courtesy with the people in my life?

As a consequence of this development, Jeffery Ross has been moved to Year 6 which means we have at least one male teacher on each year level from 4-7. We thank Jeffery for this accommodation at such late notice. With the necessity to fill a Year 7 spot, we advertised and appointed Ms Danielle Ramia who taught Year 5 with us when Lynsey Koch took maternity leave at the end of last year. Danielle has experience teaching secondary, as well as primary students and we are very fortunate to retain her services this year.

New Staff - Welcome to the following teachers, new to Stella Maris: Danielle Ramia (Year 7), Jeffery Ross (Year 6), Nicole Jenkins (Year 5), Julie Reuter (Year 3), Frais Marrinon (Year 1) and joining us mid-year, Paula Rowan who is currently on maternity leave. Everyone seems to be settling in well. We know you will make them feel very welcome in their new school.

Fee Statements - Don’t forget that School Fees will be billed across three instead of four terms this year, so the yearly total will be divided by three instead of four. This will make these invoices seem as though there has been a steep rise in fees which is not the case. You are still free to spread payment across the whole year if that best suits your budget.

Before School Reminders - Parents, a reminder that supervision of students begins at 8.20 each morning, therefore students should not be dropped off and left unsupervised before this time unless they are proceeding to some supervised activity (eg choir, running club). From 8.20, teachers are on duty for Prep and Year 1 on Conway Oval, and for the remainder of the students, under the hangar and on Hunter Oval. Please also remember that there is to be no play on equipment before the teacher arrives and after the teacher leaves and that younger siblings are not to play on the equipment at all. Thank you for your cooperation in promoting a safe environment at all times.

Immanuel After School Care - After school care is now available 5 days a week. A mini bus leaves Stella Maris at 3.00pm. For further details please contact Tamara Scutts Outside School Hours Care Coordinator on 5477 3418.

Parent Teacher Partnership Evening - After discussion with the School Board and staff, this year, we will run one evening only. Last week we sent home a flyer with full details. Suffice it to say here that we will run three sessions on this evening – Session One for four of the Year Levels, Session Two in the Hall for whole school information and Session Three for the remaining four Year Levels. Parents will therefore attend one evening only. It is hoped that those attending the first session will stay on to attend the whole school information meeting (30 mins only) and that those attending session three will arrive earlier and attend the middle session as well. Some parents, of course, will attend all sessions as they will have children in both sessions 1 and 3. Let’s see how it goes and we will ask for your feedback afterwards.

Unforeseen Staff Changes - Late in the holidays, Gerard Fiegler reluctantly tendered his resignation as he was unable to gain a third year’s leave from EQ to work with us and we are unable to offer permanency to any new teacher due to the uncertainty around future staffing due to the move of Year 7 to secondary in 2015. We are very sorry to lose Ged who was due to teach one of our Year 6 classes, nevertheless we understand his position and wish him well in a newly-created position he takes up, next door, at Maroochy High.

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MUSIC NOTES

QUOTE OF THE WEEK
“Music is an essential part of everything we do. Like puppetry, music has an abstract quality which speaks to a worldwide audience in a wonderful way that nourishes the soul.” ~ Jim Henson ~

TIP OF THE WEEK - Compose your own music. Be show to include a time signature, and use a variety of different pitches and rhythms. Now play it!!

WELCOME BACK - Welcome to 2013! To our returning students as well as new students to Stella Maris. May your year be filled with music, whether it is Classroom Music, Instrumental Music, or any of the ensembles offered to our students.

CLASSROOM MUSIC - We have a busy year ahead and look forward to many wonderful musical experiences for students. Students will be organizing their materials this week as we begin our lessons, ensuring a strong start to the 2013 school year. Your support and encouragement of the Music program is greatly appreciated.

There are a few students still require resources for the new school year. Year 2 – 7 students should have a display folder and an Introducing Music textbook (returning students in Years 3, 5, and 7 should already have these at school from last year). Year 1 students need a display folder. These are available at Swan News Agency at Sunshine Plaza; however, you will need to contact them ASAP so an order can be placed. Year 2 – 4 students also need a recorder. If your child has misplaced their recorder from last year, I have some available for $2.

CHOIR NEWS - The three choirs will remain the same for 2013 as follows: Piccolo Choir – for students in Years 2s and 3, Stella Maris Singers – for girls in Years 4s – 7, Stella Fellas – for the gentlemen singers in Years 4s – 7

I will be speaking with all of the students this week regarding these choirs and an invitation will be extended to all students who are interested in joining these choirs commencing next week (Week 3).

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC NEWS - Lessons commenced on Monday this week! And timetables for students enrolled in instrumental, singing and speech lessons at school have been sent out via email. If you did not receive the email, please update your details via email to StellaMarisMusic@bne.catholic.edu.au. Lesson timetables are also displayed on the notice board outside the music room.

This year we welcome Ms Cecilie Elton (Piano) and Ms Julie Dean (Flute and Woodwind) to Stella Maris and farewell Mrs Lyn Wordsworth and Ms Marita Schlink. I am also pleased to welcome back all our wonderful tutors from 2012. Currently, we have 200 students enrolled in the program and I send out a particular welcome to the 70 students who are starting in the program in 2013.

Tutors will hand out information and commitment letters this week for ensemble sessions, which will commence next week (week 3). Please keep an eye on this and return the slip to your tutor, the music room or the office ASAP. Rehearsal times for these ensembles are as follows:

- Concert Band: Wednesday 7.30am Music Room
- Junior Band (from Term 2): Tuesday 7.45am Music Room
- Junior String Ensemble: Thursday 7.45am Cult Lit Room
- Speech Choir: Monday 11am Music Room
- Senior String Ensemble: Friday 7.45am Cult Lit Room
- Percussion Ensemble: Friday 7.45am Music Room

If you have queries regarding anything musical – please feel free to catch up via email and we will be in contact asap.

Musically Yours,
Inez Durrer
Classroom Music Specialist
jdurrer@bne.catholic.edu.au

Todd Wynyard
Instrumental Music Coordinator
twynyard@bne.catholic.edu.au

February 1 Dance Lessons start every Friday for Years 4-7
February 5 P&F Meeting 6.30 Staffroom
February 12 Parent Partnership Evening
February 13 Ash Wednesday whole school liturgy
February 20-22 Year 7 Camp Maranatha Recreation Centre
February 21 3D class presenting assembly
February 21 School Board 6.30 Staffroom
Feb 25-Mar 1 Year 1-Year 3 Swimming Lessons
February 28 Siena College leadership to visit Year 7
March 7 Year 7 Leadership Retreat with Michael Fitzpatrick
March 14 Year 7 Leadership Whole School Liturgy
March 21 School Board
March 28 Last Day Term 1

Coastal District Swimming Trials - Tuesday 19 February at Cotton Tree Pool. Entry is based on qualifying times. Parents wishing to nominate children born 2003, 2002, 2001 contact Mr Kelleher via email - akelleher@bne.catholic.edu.au by Monday 11 February.

Sign on for the 2013 season will be this Saturday 9th Feb between 9am & 12noon at the soccer canteen on bliss oval (back of school) and Wednesday 13th Feb at 3pm in front of school. Registration forms will be out this week. New players please bring birth certificate or passport.

A new state government initiative ( get started) has started where if you have a pension card or health care card you can receive a $150 voucher to pay for your soccer fee's. Go to http://www.nprs.qld.gov.au/ funding/getintheand/get started.html to register your children. Print the voucher and bring it to soccer sign on.

Any questions call Damien on 0411283065.

Thank you to
Zara Malik

Tuckshop News...

Wed 06/02 Thurs 07/02 Fri 08/02 Mon 11/02 Tues 12/02
C Cleary S Dangerfield L Wallace J Reginato N MacMinn

Lenten Program 2013 for Parents

The Lenten Program will be available again for Parents to attend this year. Meetings will be held in the Chapel at 8.45am to 9.30am on Tuesday mornings with Facilitator, Nicci Mac Minn. It will run for six weeks from Tuesday 19th February through to Tuesday 26th March. If you are interested in being part of the 2013 program, We Wish to See Jesus, would you please return the slip below by this Friday 8th February so that participants' books can be ordered for you at a cost of $7.00 each. I highly recommend this program to you and hope that you may find it helpful in preparing for Easter.

I wish to be part of the 2013 Lenten program, We Wish to See Jesus, and enclose $7.00 for the purchase of a participants booklet.

Name: ____________________________________________

Contact Phone Number: _____________________________

Please complete and return to your child's Class Teacher by this Friday, 8th February 2013.

~ Jim Henson ~

Thank you to
Zara Malik
10 Questions to ask your child!

How was school today?” you ask brightly.

“Good!” your daughter answers.

“I can’t remember,” your son mutters.

In homes across Australia and, let’s face it, the entire world, this is the scenario being played out. When our kids get home from school we are like eager puppies bounding around them and they are like fellow puppies, let off the leash and racing away.

A vague question like, “How was school today?” just becomes part of the getting-home-from-school ritual. A glass of milk, a quick “dunno” and they’re out the door. If we really want to reconnect with them and get to know them through their day, we’ve got to be clever with our questioning.

The trick is to not sound too detective-like. You don’t want to appear over-eager or raise their suspicions – too many questions makes them think you’re fishing for something to get them in trouble over (or is that just my lot?). We need questions that are specific but open-ended enough to result in an answer that the children themselves are interested in.

“Did” questions can often result in a “yes” or “no” answer (Did you enjoy your lunch? Did you play with anyone new?). “What” questions are always good. (What did you most enjoy at lunchtime?) Ask questions that ask for a description of their world and hopefully open up a genuine conversation.

When they get home from school today, here are 7 conversation starters that will hopefully spark their interest.

1. What was the funniest thing you heard all day?
2. What was your favourite thing that happened today?
3. What subject was the most interesting today?
4. What was something new you read today?
5. What did you enjoy most for lunch today?
6. What are you learning in science?
7. Did anyone do something helpful for you today? Did you do something helpful in return?

And a bonus question that is always absolutely lovely to ask: “What are you looking forward to tomorrow?”

Keep the conversation going and maybe, just maybe, you’ll actually get to know the answer to, “How was school today?”

Christine Craig (Guidance Counsellor)
Email: ccraig@bne.catholic.edu.au

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