Dear Parents and Caregivers

Last week I mentioned that I had learned a lot attending the four-day Leading Learning program in Brisbane and that I would share a few insights with you in the future. So here goes..

One of the many articles read that particularly resonated with me summed up research carried out in schools in low-performing, economically depressed neighbourhoods in Los Angeles County, California. Basically, student achievement data was used to identify the highly effective teachers and then those teachers and their students were observed and interviewed to better understand what set them apart. The findings resonated with me because I believe that teachers with these beliefs, commitments and approaches bring out the best in students worldwide, regardless of context. I have also seen that these same attributes, applied in parenting, produce the best results for children as they move to responsible adulthood.

So to set the scene, I share with you the response of a Year 4 student when she was asked why she thought her teacher taught her so much. She said, “When I was in first grade and second grade and third grade, when I cried, my teachers coddled me. But when I got to Mrs T’s room, she said, ‘Suck it up and get to work.’ I think she’s right. I need to work harder.” Although we might not choose those exact words, the teacher obviously knew that girl well enough to know what she needed to hear. She got through to her and made the world of difference to her self-esteem and self-belief as well.

All recent research points to the need for both high demandingness and high responsiveness in the teaching and parenting of children. One without the other does not achieve the best results for children. High demandingness and low responsiveness likely produces compliance at the expense of relationship while low demandingness and high responsiveness produces students who under-achieve and are likely disempowered and ‘coddled’ as that wise Year 4 student recognised.

So let’s have a look at the classroom characteristics of these highly effective teachers. Firstly, these teachers believed that strictness was necessary for effective learning and teaching and for the purposes of safety and respect. Their students understood that this strictness served a larger purpose; it wasn’t strictness for the sake of it. Students explained that their teachers were strict because they wanted them to succeed, to do their best, to make a better future for themselves. Students knew that these teachers cared for them but they were not going to make excuses for them. Doesn’t this equally apply to effective parenting?

The second most obvious characteristic shared by these teachers was the intensity of academic work. There was rarely a time when instruction wasn’t going on. Teachers didn’t waste their own time or the time of their students. One teacher really had this down pat; she even had her Year One students walking to the playground at lunch time happily chanting, “3, 6, 9, 12, 15, …… 30” or “2, 4, 6, 8, ……” By the end of the year they could multiply. There was also no time wasting in the transition from one lesson to another or from playground to classroom. Once the bell went, students knew exactly what was expected – conversations ended and they prepared for work.

Perhaps the single-most productive practice identified was these teachers’ frequent movement around the classroom to assist individual students. This provided them with feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction, kept students on track and focussed, offered individual students extra instruction and encouragement and allowed for brief personal interactions between teacher and student. In other words, by walking around their classrooms, teachers came to know their students. There is a very similar application to parenting, namely, that to really know their children, time must be spent with them – sharing activities, discussing, observing, encouraging, correcting, providing feedback, teaching new skills and teaching about life in informal ways. Children do not do a good job of raising themselves; they need love, guidance and wise counsel offered by adults who are present in every sense of the word.

These effective teachers consistently encouraged their students to practise particular virtues – respect for self and others, persistence, diligence, responsibility, commitment, excellence, trying their best, hopefulness, honesty, thinking critically and considering consequences being foremost. Respect was of most importance, however, and its lack brought swift consequences. The role of parent, equally if not more-so, calls for such teaching.

Strong and respectful relationships were also a hallmark of effective teachers. These teachers showed profound care and respect for students and their students recognised this. They held a genuinely optimistic view of their students’ future and even provided them with ‘a vision of their best selves.’ But this did not come at the expense of high expectations and a bit of ‘tough love’ when needed. Is this not a recipe for effective parenting as well?

The teachers were strong, make-it-happen people; they were responsible, hard-working, emotionally stable, organised and disciplined. They were also comfortable in their own skins, humorous and energetic. These qualities equally apply to parents.

And finally, I finish with the central beliefs that underpinned these teachers’ practice; a set of beliefs that formed the firm foundation from which they operated. They believed...

‘Every one of my students has much more potential than they use; they must be encouraged and ‘pushed’ to use it; it is my responsibility to turn this situation around; I am able; and I want to do this for them.’

They made no excuses for themselves or their students’ lack of achievement. They made positive things happen and changed lives in the process. Here’s to making a difference...

Have a great week everyone.

Glenda
Assembly This Week
This Thursday, the Year 7 Leadership Induction ceremony takes place at assembly time in the presence of the student body. Parents are welcome to join us. No Principal’s Awards this week.

Shave for a Cure
This Friday, 15 March, one of our mums and ABC radio employee, Kylie Bartholomew, is having her head shaved as part of a team effort to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation. Please support Kylie’s brave effort if you are able to do so; it’s a big call to shave one’s hair, especially if it’s the longest it’s been in 15 years, as is the case for Kylie! Donations over $2 are tax deductible and can be lodged at my.leukaemiafoundation.org.au/teamabc
You can also follow the story, with pictures at http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/03/05/3703735.htm?site=sunshine&ref=front-page-slider-sunshine-regional-landing
Well done Kylie. Hopefully, the donations flood in.

Fundraiser Concert Returns
Many of you will recall the SOS fundraising concert two years ago performed by the Stella Maris staff and supported by the P&F to raise money for Catholic school communities who were devastated by the floods in Brisbane.

With the devastating floods in our area this year, the Stella Maris Staff, with the support of the P&F, will present another SOS Concert on Thursday 6.30pm May 2 in the School Hall. The recipient will be St Joseph’s School in Gayndah whose school community is suffering from the heartbreaking damage to their school and surrounding area.
The one hour concert will feature the varied and surprising talents of our staff here at Stella Maris. Rehearsals are well under way for this “One Night Extravaganza”.

Keep reading this space for weekly updates on concert details.

Peta Neill, Todd Wynyard & Inez Durrer

Dear Parents/Caregivers,
This fortnight’s Virtue is Compassion. Having Compassion means that we deeply empathise with others who are suffering. Sometimes it is only after we have suffered ourselves that the full impact of Compassion hits us as one of the most essential virtues of the Christian life. It is understanding and caring deeply about others which moves us to a strong desire to ease distress. Compassion flows freely from our hearts when we let go of judgements and seek to understand the plight of the other. Our compassionate presence helps people to know that they are not alone. Sometimes they don’t need us to ‘fix’ anything – they only need to be heard with compassion so that they can connect with their own inner wisdom. By showing that we care through prayer, we join our own inner wisdom with the grace of God which goes where it will. We need our own compassion as much as others do. Whether in the form of a silent prayer, a gentle touch, or a gift to alleviate poverty, Compassion is a priceless gift to both the giver and the receiver. It is a gift from the Spirit of God.

One of the ways we act with Compassion at Stella Maris is to pray for those who are suffering through illness, sadness or loss. It is as simple as writing a prayer request in the Stella Maris Prayer book that ‘lives’ on the prayer table in the staffroom. We place these prayer requests in the sacred space each Wednesday morning during Staff Prayer and again on Thursday mornings on the prayer table in the Chapel where we gather as a community to pray the Rosary at 8am. While we are a very small group at the moment, with just a handful of staff and students present and the occasional parent, we hope that this gathering will grow to be a very prayerful and supportive group who are willing to pray for the needs of community members. The following is a short piece written by Lorella Armijo, one of our Year 1 Teachers, about the importance of praying the rosary in her life.

Why do I pray the Rosary?
For the past two years I have been praying the Rosary down at the chapel on a Thursday morning. Why do I do this? As a busy working parent I make time for meetings, checking emails, catching up with friends, going for a walk and so on. There are not many moments in the day where I have the chance to fully centre myself in God’s presence. Through Mary’s maternal gentleness, I can take the time to feel and listen for guidance, peace, wisdom and grace. In these prayerful moments of saying the Rosary, I allow my heart to open to the needs of others and share my fears, doubts and worries with Mary, my mother. Saying the prayers of our Catholic tradition also reminds me to be grateful for the many blessings of loving family and friends, good health and a purpose filled life. It is in these times of tranquil recitation that I know Mary is taking me into a deeper relationship with her son, Jesus. So if you’ve ever thought about making the time to pray – then why not try the Rosary. I hope to see you there.

If you would like to join in the Rosary yourself please be at the Chapel by 8.00am. We have Rosary Beads and Pamphlets outlining the sequence and the words of prayers used for participants. There are usually a few children present along with teachers, so we would feel very blest to have a few parents there as well.

If you would like prayers said for a particular intention, please just call in and let us know. We would be delighted to help.

God bless, Judith.

P&F News
P&F meeting
Tonight 12 March, commencing at 6.30p.m. in the staffroom.
All are most welcome with all contributions viewed as valuable.

DATE CLAIMERS
Stella Family Fun Day
Watch the P&F Facebook page in case of cancellation. Decision should be made late Friday.
Where: Stella Maris School (near the Soccer Shed)
When: Sunday 17 March 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Stella Chick Flick
Cost: $25.00
Where: Birch, Carroll & Coyle, Maroochydore
When: Friday 22 March 7.00pm
RSVP: 19 March Tickets available via tear-off slip sent home or at front of school from 11 March.

God bless,
Judith
QUOTE OF THE WEEK
“Bach gave us God’s word. Mozart gave us God’s laughter. Beethoven gave us God’s fire. God gave us Music that we might pray without words.”

TIP OF THE WEEK
Always practise hard sections of music very slowly and gradually get faster. If you can’t play slowly, you definitely can’t play fast!!

TEN FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL MUSIC
Continuing from last week, the following is the third fact about music education.

3. Learning music helps under-performing students improve.
US researchers found that young children aged 5-7 who had been lagging behind at school had caught up with their peers in reading and were ahead in Maths after seven months of music lessons. The children’s classroom attitudes and behavior improved too.

GUITARS FOR SALE
We still have a small number of guitars for sale. These guitars are all in good or very good condition will be sold as is. The cost is fixed at $50 per guitar. Proceeds from the sale of these guitars will assist with the funding of ukuleles (to be purchased in Semester 2) for use in classroom music for multiple year levels. If interested in a guitar, please email Mr Wynyard to arrange a time to view / purchase. The hooks to hold guitars will be sent home with students once they have been removed from the wall.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC NEWS
As we are now within the last four weeks of this term, parents are reminded that any changes to enrolment in instrumental, singing and speech tuition are to be advised to Mr Wynyard ASAP. This is a condition of enrolment to avoid additional charges.

If you are interested in your son or daughter joining the program to learn an instrument you can collect an Information Pack and Enrolment form from the school office. Further enquiries regarding available spaces should be directed to Mr Wynyard.

Assembly performance - Thursday 21 March - SM Singers and Percussion Ensemble. Parents are most welcome!

If you have queries regarding anything musical – please feel free to catch up with us before or after school, by contacting us in writing or via email.

Inez Durrer
Classroom Music Specialist
idurrer@bne.catholic.edu.au

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

Year 8 2014 Enrolment Interviews
St John’s College, Nambour
For your information:
- A Parent Information Evening will be held on Wednesday 13 March at 7pm at St John’s College in the Multi-Purpose Centre.
- Enrolment interviews will be held from Tuesday 16 April to Thursday 25 April.
- Year 6s will be interviewed in September for Year 8 2015 enrolment at St John’s College with a Parent Information Evening held on Wednesday 21 August at 7pm at St John’s College in the Multi-Purpose Centre.
- There will be an opportunity for prospective parents to visit the College on our “Back to School” morning on March 5th & 6th between 8.45am to 12.30pm. Please contact the College office if interested in attending.

At St John’s College, we provide quality education in an environment that nurtures children in their Catholic faith.

Uniform Shop Hours
Monday 8.00am - 10.00am
Wednesday 10.15am - 3.15pm
Thursday 8.00am - 1.00pm

Tuckshop News

Week Ending 15 March - D Bury, D Cracknell, D Lusio, D Lyndon, D Mills, E Peters, E Rawlings, F Ellis, J Camp, J Collins, J Ellery, J Fuller, J Gilligan, J Lee, J Ratcliff, J Robinson, J Williams, K Elder, K Holzer, K Kapolos
Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People

Friday, 17th May, 2013; 9am-5pm @ Southbank Institute of Technology

The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People is a seminar run by Generation Next, an organisation concerned with issues being faced by our young people today. The aim of the seminar is to provide knowledge and practical skills to those who can work with them to help maintain their emotional, social, mental, and physical wellbeing. Recommended for teachers, parents, social and youth workers, counsellors, and anyone else who might have an impact on the wellbeing of young people. For enquiries please call Generation Next on 1300 797 794 or see our website www.generationnext.com.au for more details.

Volunteers:
Please email ccraig@bne.catholic.edu.au to ask for Volunteers handbook and instructions for completing Volunteers student protection training processes.

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