Dear Parents and Caregivers

Today we are sending home the individual NAPLAN reports for students in Years 3, 5 and 7.

A lot has been written over the years about these annual tests; some love them and place high value on the results, others are ambivalent and still others discount them as over-rated, without merit, artificial or arbitrary. So, where do I sit in this debate?

This is the way I see it: All students at these year levels sit the same tests, however flawed or snapshot-like they may be, so I do want our students to do well. I also know, and want parents to understand, that there are many factors which affect the results of one-off tests such as these and to keep in mind that they are ‘point-in-time’ results only and in no way provide the definitive or holistic measure of a student and their learning. They do, however, provide another piece of the intricate puzzle which is student achievement.

I do have great difficulty with wholesale publication and comparison of school results when it is clear that schools draw from a very wide range of communities, be that in terms of culture, socio-economic reality, facilities and other impacting factors. There is no level playing field in life; there is no level playing field within a school community and certainly none across schools. Studies continue to show that the higher the socio-economic base of the community from which the school draws its enrolment, the higher the academic achievement. This applies whether we are talking about State, Independent or Catholic schools. The ‘high fees factor’ of Independent, and some non-systemic Catholic schools, of course, serves to further narrow enrolment to a more exclusive group within any given community.

State schools and hopefully systemic Catholic schools, on the other hand, are highly inclusive of families who do not have the capacity to pay full fees and whose children have medical, social-emotional or intellectual disabilities, difficulties and differences which may impact significantly upon learning. Catholic schools should be places of inclusion and I know, here at Stella Maris we are committed to inclusion to the point that it is named specifically in our Vision Statement, ‘At Stella Maris, we aim to be an inclusive, high quality learning community in which faith inspires action.’

For these reasons, the most important information often lies in the calculation of improvement over time, from one NAPLAN test (or other assessments) to the next. This makes sense when students do not have the same starting point in the first place.

So, how do we use the NAPLAN results at Stella Maris?
Following on from my point above, we track student progress from Year 3 to Year 5 and then to Year 7. Calculation of effect size of improvement provides us with information about the value we add to student learning over time. John Hattie’s extensive research shows that the average effect size is 0.4 per year. (Basically if student achievement shows an effect size of 0.4 then they have demonstrated a year’s growth for a year’s learning.) So, we calculate individual and then year level cohort effect size (Year 3 to 5 and Year 5 to 7) and use this data, along with data from other sources, to provide us with feedback on the effectiveness of learning and teaching and to assist us in making school (eg staff professional development), cohort (eg class support needs) and individual student (eg targeted intervention or extension) decisions for the future. These decisions are made from the wide-range of evidence we gather, not just NAPLAN. Such evidence includes classroom observations of daily work, student work samples, class results, ACER testing, student feedback and results from various interventions as applicable.

A further point I need to make is that NAPLAN year level cohort results can vary considerably from one cohort to the next. 2014’s Year 3 results in Reading, for instance, may be very different from 2013 and 2012 - the same Early Years teachers but very different results. Each group of students certainly has its own character, its own learning strengths and weaknesses which bring unique challenges and celebrations. There is always a story (or many stories) that accompany individual and cohort results. Once again this makes sense when some schools draw from a more homogenous section of the community while others draw from a much broader cross-section. We are highly committed to the progress and wellbeing of each of our students and to using all available data to that purpose.

Finally, but most importantly, no test or tests can ever do justice to summing up the ability or academic worth of any child and no degree of intellectual ability can predict a happy or successful life. That equation is far too complex. Tests do not tell of hopes and dreams, of resilience, of what lies in a person’s heart; they do not tell of kindness and generosity shown or effort expended. NAPLAN does not measure ability in Art or Music, or PE or Drama or Science. It does not celebrate ability to be a caring friend, a loving son or daughter or a contributing citizen. Recently I have had cause to try to articulate what I believe to be our moral purpose at Stella Maris. What is it that we desire for our students after seven years with us? This is the statement I have put to staff and I now share with you:

Our school crafts a culture that embraces a vision of our students as both learner and person, such that each will -

- Develop the desire and capacity to learn to his/her potential;
- Have the capability to respond, with hope and resilience, to the unknown; and
- Participate and contribute positively in the world through their desire for, and appreciation of, living as a much-loved son/daughter of a loving God.

So, yes we use NAPLAN results, along with other data, to assist with strategic decisions for individuals, groups and our school, but ultimately these results represent a small snapshot of some learning as demonstrated on one day.

Have a great week everyone.

Glenda
Dear Parents/Caregivers,

The Virtue for the next Fortnight is Peacefulness during which we remember those who have died in war and in conflicts the world over. Who can forget the events of September 11th and the bombing of the twin towers in America. With the escalation of the war in the Middle East, it is timely that we think and pray about world peace in a time when the evening news brings with it fresh atrocities being visited on innocent people. Peace in the world begins with peace within us and in our lives.

As we finish third term and look forward to the holidays, we bring with us a sense of inner calm and tranquillity. Inner peace comes from quiet reflection and prayer which is focussed on being thankful; for the positive rather than worrying about the negative. We are encouraging all students to take just a few peaceful minutes during the day to take some ‘quiet time’ for themselves for reflection and personal prayer, releasing the past and letting anxiety go. In this way we do not allow ourselves to be rushed or overwhelmed, but resolve conflicts in our hearts in just and peaceful ways, rather than giving into frustration and anger. Peace is giving up the love of power for the power of love. We choose unity over fragmentation and fear.

In contemplating this connectedness between us all, the following reflection provides a way forward in peacefulness when things are not going too well. For all the negative things we have to say to ourselves, God has a positive answer.

You say: “It’s impossible!”
God says: “God is able” (Matthew 14:31).

You say: “I’m too tired!”
God says: “I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28-30).

You say: “Nobody really loves me!”

You say: “I can’t go on!”
God says: “You can do all things” (Philippians 4:13).

You say: “I’m not able!”
God says: “I am able” (2nd Corinthians 9:8).

You say: “It’s not worth it!”
God says: “It will be worth it” (Paul to the Romans 8:28).

You say: “I can’t forgive myself!”
God says: “I FORGIVE YOU” (1 John 1:9 & Romans 8:1).

You say: “I can’t manage!”
God says: “I will supply all your needs” (Philippians 4:19).

You say: “I’m afraid!”
God says: “I have not given you a spirit of fear” (Philippians 2:13).

You say: “I’m always worried and frustrated!”
God says: “Cast all your cares on ME” (2nd Timothy 1:7).

You say: “I don’t have enough faith!”
God says: “I’ve given everyone a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

You say: “I’m not smart enough!”
God says: “I give you wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

You say: “I feel all alone!”
God says: “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

You say: “I am not worthy!”
God says: “Approach my throne boldly and find grace in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The following prayer for peace points the way forward, if we have the courage to pray for what we need:

Lord make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;...

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At the end of this week, I will be taking some Long Service Leave for catching up with family and a bit of rest and recreation returning at the beginning of Week 3 in the new term. I will keep you all in my prayers.

God bless,
Judith
MUSIC NOTES

QUOTE OF THE WEEK
“Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy.”
~ Ludwig van Beethoven ~

TIP OF THE WEEK - Calm: Practising should be done when you are in a calm state. Rushing home from work or school to practise is not the best procedure.

CLASSROOM NEWS - Students will be bringing an invitation home this week for parents/caregivers to join us for our ‘Music Open House’ in each of the Prep – Year 5 classrooms during their regularly scheduled Music time in Week 10. Parents are asked to sign in upon arrival at the Music Room (rather than the front office), and are reminded that we will have to hold fast to the 40-minute time slot for each group who will be visiting the various Music classes.

MUSICAL NEWS – ‘THE WIZARD OF OZ’ -Our fourth afternoon rehearsal is Wednesday 3 September in the Hall for all cast. Backstage crew – Group C only will be required today and are reminded to bring a change of clothes for painting as well as a pair of thongs. It is important that we have as many cast members as possible to ensure a productive use of the time we have at these rehearsals.

Parental assistance would be greatly appreciated to paint various props and backdrops for the musical. If you can provide some time and wish to help, please let us know or join us this Wednesday between 3:15 – 5pm. You don’t have to have a child in the musical to join in and help. Anyone is welcome. We would, however, like to say thank you to those parents and staff who assist each Wednesday afternoon in so many different ways. Your help is invaluable!

Don’t forget to check your emails each Sunday afternoon for important updates as well as the rehearsal schedule for the week.

MUSICA VIVA – BEST OF BRASS - BoB - Students from Prep to Year 7 will have the opportunity to hear ‘Best of Brass’, a brass quintet that are sure to engage, entertain, and inform our students with a variety of musical selections on Wednesday 10 September.

BoB’s repertoire includes everything from the classical to the contemporary, the ancient to the modern, carefully selected or arranged by members of the group to reach the ultimate goal: delighting you! BoB was founded in early 2008 with the aim to bring the best of brass to audiences in Queensland, Australia, and around the world. Drawing on the experience of its members, who have performed on all continents, including many of the major concert stages, BoB is dedicated to presenting challenging works for brass quintet that will delight audiences with the required virtuosity, musicality, and last, but not least, entertainment value.

DATE CLAIMERS
The Wizard of Oz - Rehearsal Wednesday 3 September (3:15 – 5:00 in the HALL for all cast. Backstage crew Group C only this week.
Assembly – Thursday 11 September - Percussion Ensemble Musica Viva – Best of Brass – Prep to Year 7
The Wizard of Oz – Rehearsals Wednesday 1 October to Friday 3 October (more details to follow in an email to parents)
The Wizard of Oz – Wednesday 15 October to Saturday 18 October Music Count Us In – Thursday 30 October

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC NEWS - Lesson timetables for next term will be drafted over the next three weeks and notice to alter or cancel enrolment in the music program is required in writing over the next three weeks to avoid any additional charges. Please email twynyard@bne.catholic.edu.au if you have any further questions.

Recruitment, re-enrolment and enrolment for 2015 will commence early next term and parents are asked to watch this space for details about the process.

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.

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

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

Father’s Day Stall

A Father’s Day Stall will be held outside the Uniform Shop from 8.00a.m. Monday 1 September - 2 September. Prices range from $2.00 to $7.00

Principal’s Awards

September 4 2014

Tuckshop News...

THIS WEEKS SPECIAL
Fish & Wedges

Please refer to the new Tuckshop menu & remember the tuckshop in no longer open on Mondays.

Ingredients Roster

Muffin Mixes & Fruit Salad Items

School Fees are now over due.
Act-belong but don’t over commit!

These few weeks the Kidsmatter Action Team, with the help of our amazing Stella staff is promoting the health and well-being concept of being active, of belonging to community, and being committed to contributing to that community. This is all under the framework of Kidsmatter, a framework for developing and maintaining the mental health of our own school community.

When things start off there is a tendency to be enthusiastic, to be full on and engage rapidly at every opportunity. A word of caution, don’t over commit. It is a fallacy that if something is good for me than more of the same is even better. We know that involvement in activities is good for children but so is down time, and family time, and unstructured time and things that don’t require an exam at the end.

DON’T OVER COMMIT! Rushing here there and everywhere isn’t helpful, the frantic to-ing and fro-ing doesn’t make anyone happy. The constant state of tension required to keep going makes you and yours anxious. Participation at the expense of joy is folly. Start with family and work your way out. If family time is nil and competitive sport everything then the balance is all wrong. Bringing up resilient children with strong sense of values requires a strong family commitment. Be active within your family, maintain a secure sense of belonging with all your family members and commit to family time before all others. Children are a gift from God and they grow quickly, invest as much as you can in their growth by putting family life before individual achievements. Remember Kidsmatter!

www.kidsmatter.org

Christine Craig - Guidance Counselloer/ Psychologist
email: ccraig@bne.catholic.edu.au

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