



# What did she say after “Hi my name is Ellen...”

or

## What I missed at Acquaintance Night in Rm 14, 2015.

It was an honor to meet the parents who were able to attend acquaintance night last Wednesday. I do realise however life doesn't always fit into the school's schedule and some were unable to attend. It's important that everyone knows and understands the same information. Besides, if like me you may have listened intently, and then when someone asks what did she say, you find it hard to recall specific bits. So I've prepared a little light reading for you. I'll include the elements I shared, plus the bits that I forgot to share because I get stage fright, to be honest you guys can be scary. Now some of you are familiar with my writings as we've had partnerships in previous years, I'll try not to bore you with the same musings. Hard that, anyway I bet you forgot all my amazing words of wisdom. ... And would you believe several parents this year are ex students of Grange that had a young Ms Eisenkolb as their year 3 or 4 teacher. See I told the kids I was 120 years old. I reckon it's nearly time for me to hang up my chalk! I always knew I'd make a nice grandmother!

We have a lovely balanced group this year. You are to be congratulated on your polite well mannered little folk, I have enjoyed them thus far. We have a small class this year with twenty five students twelve boys and thirteen girls. That makes for gender balance, yay! We welcome three students new to Grange this year Emilia Vuckovic, Lily Tucker and Ricardo Amaro DaSilva. Please make them and their families feel welcome to our community.

### *The Middle Years*

We began by talking about the emotional changes for children in the primary years of 3, 4 and 5. I love working with this age group. At this age they are showing more independence, they feel the need to belong to a social group and identify more with their gender. Intellectually they are hardwiring values, attitudes and opinions. Daily the brain is forging links with billions of receptive nerve cells. Interestingly they are also beginning to prune pathways or synapses that are rarely used at an alarming rate, this usually happens at eight. It becomes crucial then that they learn skills and form behaviours

that foster success in learning for themselves. They also need to develop strategies for establishing positive and healthy relationships with others.

### *There's no “I” in team.*

I use collaborative methodology in my teaching. This is more than just putting children in groups and expecting them to work well together. Kids don't do that automatically, trust me! As the year progresses I provide a variety of structured learning opportunities where your child will learn a variety of strategies and build specific social skills as they work in learning teams. By now they know and say our mantra:-

***“We work together, we think together, we act together. We collaborate.”***

Some of the benefits of working collaboratively are

- ***Higher achievement*** studies show that when we work co-operatively it promotes higher achievement than individual or competitive classrooms
- ***Deeper understanding*** as they listen to other points of view they develop their thinking skills and understandings
- ***Enjoying learning*** it's more fun to learn and do something together - our personal experiences certainly back this up
- ***Development of leadership skills*** there is plenty of opportunity in these situations for children to interact and understand another's perspective
- ***Promotion of positive attitudes*** children are encouraged to take part in positively resolving differences, this promotes positive expectations about working together
- ***A sense of belonging and positive self esteem*** We are all recognised as worthwhile contributors to the group which promotes a healthy understanding of one's self worth.

If you reflect on your own experiences in working with others, you will know the importance in being able to be resourceful, flexible and get along with a variety of

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personalities. Developing positives strategies takes time so we're always learning.

### **Learning Teams**

To build these positive skills and attitudes we work in learning teams. Children remain with a team for 5 weeks and then we change teams. I manage the combination of teams for the first half of the year and then as we learn more about our learning styles children will learn ways to negotiate teams. Each week in a team, students rotate their seat to the left so as to change team roles and have a new place to sit.

### **Five teams to begin with**

As we have twenty five students we'll have five teams of four and one of five. Should we inherit any more students the team ratios will change. Our round tables easily accommodate five.

There are specific leadership roles for each team member.

**Chair person, Recorder, Time keeper/ Encourager and Gofor.** (Although we expect everyone to be encouragers.) Ask your child to explain what each one does. We use these roles for various learning activities and morning meetings. To begin with we get used to working co-operatively in pairs, then we gradually work collaboratively in teams. Occasionally we join teams up.

### **Morning Team Meetings**

Each morning after they call the roll with our multicultural greetings, the children have opportunities to practice their collaborative skills in their team roles as they check to see how successfully organised for the day they all are.

**Students need to pass tool check** by having their possessions ready each morning. The team recorder records information on a team log and then transfers this to a data page on the interactive white board (IWB) so we can visually acknowledge those successes.

Each day they need..

- ◇ **diary filled out and signed each day** (please sign this at home only if your child has completed it . A note is needed if work

*wasn't able to be completed I know how busy families can be.)*

◇ **reading log filled out** (students need to do this, please resist the temptation to fill it out for them and they also need to keep a running total of days read)

◇ **drink bottle with water** (please no cordial or flavoured water)

◇ **sharp lead pencil or pen if on pen trial/ licence** (students should get into the habit of sharpening pencils at home)

◇ **any home work completed** (which may have been set)

◇ **an accelerated reading book/ novel**

### **Are we there yet?**

It's probably a good time to remind people about punctuality as children **must** be in the room ready to start the day at **8.45 am**. That's when we call the roll. My classroom is open from **8.30** perfect for students to get themselves organised for team meetings, catch up on any work, take a quiz or borrow a book. Anyone arriving any later than **8.50 am**. will be officially recorded as late (with time noted). It makes it hard for the team to meet successfully and no-one likes that “what have I missed feeling” when they arrive late. We will contact you as part of our attendance policy, should a pattern of continual tardiness emerge. Don't forget to sign your child out if you need to leave early.

### **What language is that?**

In my pedagogy I use a variety of teaching strategies that encompass behavioural and intellectual theories, each with their own unique vocab. So it's important that you know what we are talking about.

Knowledge is power and that comes from using language. So for you to have meaningful conversations with your child about their learning, knowing the right questions to ask will help.

Before we can begin to build onto our skills we need to know where our strengths lie and which areas need to be stretched with experiences. I have introduced the children to **Howard**

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*Gardiner's Multiple Intelligences.* We have been exploring some activities to become more familiar with them

- **Verbal Linguistic** -Word Smart
- **Logical Mathematical** -Maths Smart
- **Visual Spatial** -Art / Space Smart
- **Musical Rhythmic** - Music Smart
- **Bodily Kinesthetic** -Body Smart
- **Naturalist** - Nature Smart
- **Interpersonal** - People Smart
- **Intrapersonal** - Self Smart

We all have these intelligences yet some of us have had more experience than others in them and so their skills are stronger. We have been looking at ways we could plan to stretch the ones we are not strong in.

### *Habits of Mind*

In conjunction with this, I will also be referring to *The Habits of Mind (HoM)*. These are 16 dispositions (behaviours) displayed by intelligent people in response to a problem, dilemma etc. As we incorporate these into our understandings and work ethos, children will begin to use the language of HoM. You'll find them in detail attached to this hand out. I reckon these lifelong behaviours that should become autonomous.

I was part of a *National Schools Network* research team for HoM a few years back. I guess what stands out for me is that having an ability or potential in an intellectual area alone is not enough. What is critical is also knowing how to act or use it. Our behaviours are strongly linked to how we think. That's where HoM's play an important role.

Together with this, we'll also be developing our thinking skills using a multitude of higher order thinking strategies *HOTS* to support our learning. Woven through all of this will be the language of values the virtues our culture holds dear.

### *How successful are we!*

As a class we talked about our core business. Our classroom relies on the co-operation of everyone and a commitment from all to **Being the best learners we can be.**

**If everyone collaborates we make learning enjoyable for everyone.**

We have come up with a set of rules or criteria for success which we have all signed and agreed to.

We will

- ***Be on time, be on task and be organised.***
- ***Demonstrate respect for ourselves, other people and property.***
- ***Behave appropriately at all times.***
- ***Always be our best and do our best.***

***So that our classroom should be happy, safe, clean and shared.***

As a group we will follow the strategies for inappropriate behaviour as outlined in the school's policy. Check out our happy face. I reminded them that it was my job to help them become the best learners they can be and that no one had the right to stop anyone in this room from learning.

I have high standards of learning and behavioural expectations and I set the individual bars high because I know these kids can reach it.

I use restorative justice practices for conflicts / problems often sharing actions plans with the class so we can support all students making positive changes. If your child comes home with a plan for action to change some part of their behaviour, please discuss that with them, sign and return the next day. We will work together to help them stick to their action plan. At times we require the intervention of leadership to further support the change.

### *Little steps*

***KAIZEN small seemingly insignificant on going and never ending improvements.***

We use this as our way of knowing that we are getting better every day, ask your child to sing you the Kaizen song. It works, I have already seen a commitment from kids in their work, just wonderful!

Now when you want to ask you child about their day you have some idea of the language to use in order to get specific information.

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### *Homework for you too, so you don't feel left out.*

Children have a record book which will have samples of their work and reflections on their learning and goals for future learning. It is a way for you to keep informed as to their progress across all areas. I don't believe reports are times for surprises. This book as well as their Maths and science journals will come home each term to enable you to give them specific feedback and suggest areas to focus on. I give extensive critical and constructive feedback and expect them to use this information to make modifications to their learning. Together with their own reflections, students can set meaningful, achievable goals for their learning.

### *Assessments*

This year will follow similar years in that we will have three-way interviews at the end of term one and reports mid and end of year. Of course you may contact me to arrange a time to discuss any issues with your child should they arise.

### *Reading*

I do not see reading as homework rather a healthy habit to establish for a lifelong skill. Readers develop reading skills by reading and building vocabulary, so 30 min. a day is the barest of minimum. Research suggests this level of students should be working towards an hour plus a day minimum to build their word knowledge. I know this is not always possible. Some students are still trying to figure out the written word and build basic comprehension skills. So it's quite okay to factor into the reading done in class.

The majority of students have been placed on accelerated readers. We have checked their starting levels with the Star Reader Test. I'll send home a copy of their diagnostic report in their record book. That means they must borrow books independently from the library and once a book is read and understood they can take a quiz. The children have bookmarked the site, so all should be in control. We have a small group of children on boxed levels and once they achieve level 24 they can begin accelerated reading.

*Library* borrowing is available every morning, lunchtime and after school and I encourage students to become independent in managing their reading rather than waiting for our weekly borrowing time which will be Tuesday. While some children are confident readers they are still developing their fluency and expression. Please listen regularly to your child to touch base with their development. Oh and the *Premier's Reading Challenge* has begun children should be recording their green coded books which may also be acc readers too two birds with one read. This closes in term three but getting it completed this term would be great.

### *Home Work*

I don't set large amounts of homework because children should be outside playing, climbing exercising or taking parents for a walk. Perhaps I should set that, make families go out for a regular exercise...mmm?!) I also acknowledge that many students have after school sporting or musical commitments. Mind you, should work not be completed in the allotted time, there could be a reason for some catch up. In most cases it will be their spelling contract which has a due date, I let students organise their own nights to complete as long as it is passed up on the due date. If you are noticing there seems to be too much, I guess you need to ask your child about their time management in class.

Having said that some kids will stretch a small ten minute task into hours. Organise a routine, have somewhere they can quietly complete their task. Set a time limit. They will have to show their team finished work in team meetings and there will be logical consequences for that. You shouldn't be getting into homework battles.

A word on helping though. We know children learn to read by reading, having a go making mistakes and self correcting and that is the same with the writing process. So can you please resist the urge to help construct sentences and spell out words to your children, rather *ask them to have a go* or *how do you think it is spelt?* I would much rather mark their work than yours, puts me in a dilemma.

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### *I've got a bone in my leg!*

On several mornings we'll go out for fitness activities, and it is an expectation that all children participate to their fullest. However if there is a genuine medical reason for not participating please let me know via a note from the Doctor in their diary. Students with asthma plans need to know how to handle that e.g. take puffer before or after exercise.

In all my years of teaching, no parent has ever asked me to excuse their child from Maths or English because they've pulled a neuron, yet I regularly get requests for fitness exclusions because of pulled muscles or twisted ankles. These same ankles and muscles make a miraculous recovery at recess and lunch. Resist the urge to support avoidance. There is a strong link to positive performance and a fit and healthy body. Learning challenges everywhere.

### *If it's Tuesday it must be Belgium...*

Most specialist programs are well and truly operating now.

**Japanese - Karyl Buggy** lesson 5 on Monday and lesson 1 Friday

**Health- Mike Scott** lesson 5 Tuesday

**P.E. - Mike Scott** lesson 3 Wednesday

**Music - Allan Uphill** Lesson 6 Tuesday

**Geography and History (RBL)- Janet Sweeney** term 1&3 lessons 3 and 4

Language students will be given their lesson time for Thursday. As our own timetable is quite tight, I can't always change the area of study that they are missing out on, where I can I will. However part of the commitment is that they catch up any missed work.

The timetable is quite busy and we haven't put in the all the learning areas yet. No wonder we hit the ground running!

### *Handwriting*

I am a stickler for neat organised creative and colourful presentation of book work. I believe the development of neat handwriting is essential for good spelling. The children will be able to write in pen if and when their hand writing is

neat, evenly sized with kicks and sloping to the right. I usually give them a pen trial when this happens. We will be having regular lessons to show the correct ways to start and kick and eventually link. I do not allow the erasing of mistakes in their work books. This is where students are developing skills for accuracy, we learn from our mistakes, we're allowed to make mistakes, these are reminders for change. Underline an error and move on. By constantly erasing, nothing changes, impulsivity takes over and all you learn is how to make a page messy. Of course there is always a time when published work may need some help, that is a different matter entirely.

### *Maths*

Knowing and understanding numbers is key to succeeding in maths so we will be investigating place value and refreshing our memories on the number operations. Year three students need to be familiar with numbers in the tens of thousands. Which tables this year? Well, there are some required but eventually they need to know all of them, so keep practicing randomly. The ability to recall number facts must not be overlooked too for thinking mentally. These should be practiced frequently. Athletics activities will be set regularly. While completing the activities once will allow live maths, I expect students to successfully complete each one three times, ie 10 out of 10 x 3. To build consolidation of skills. Please support them in this.

### *Is it alive or not?*

**Feather fur or leaves** is our science topic for this term and we have already begun to explore questions of living and non living objects. What fun. Children have begun to add interesting specimens to our natural science table. I'd be interested to see their science journal explorers entries.

### *CAT partners ... What goes around comes around*

This year we are buddying up with Kate Monaco's year one students. That means they will be the older mentors, a big responsibility. Quite some time ago when Kate was knee high to

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a grasshopper, I too was her yr 3 and 4 teacher here at Grange. She survived the Eisenkolb approach and now supports others in their learning. See how powerful collaborative learning methodology can be for success.

### *Number Elevens*

I wish I had a dollar for the many times I have seen two streams running down little noses. Unfortunately no where in my budget is there room for a supply of tissues to wipe up the number elevens. We ask that throughout the year every family donate at last one box to keep up with sniffles. Thank you to those who have already begun.

### *Naplan*

These national tests for numeracy and literacy will take place early in term two. By that time I will have provided students with opportunities to deal with the many styles of questions and the possible ways to answer under test conditions, so it feels familiar on the day. Please remember it is but a snap shot of their learning. Results will be available to us very late in the year.

### *Competitions*

In the next few weeks there'll be a note listing various academic competitions which I strongly encourage students to enter. This is a marvelous way for students to have a go at acknowledging and comparing their academic skills with their Australian peers not just here at Grange. It's a great opportunity.

### *Chess training*

Alan Goldsmith our resident Chess Guru will be training our class in the strategies of playing Chess for the next three weeks. At the end of that time we will have a tournament amongst all year three classes to see our supreme champion. However I believe we are also hoping to run some chess clubs at lunch time too so our chess heroes will need to stay tuned.

### *Nuts, tuna and tomato are off the menu lads.*

A reminder again that this year we have students who could be placed in possible life threatening conditions should they come into contact with

certain food stuffs. So following the procedures outlined on the health note sent home earlier this year will help all of us stay healthy ready to learn. If you require another note let me know.

### *A camping we will go.*

In week five of term two just after Naplan, we will be having to say bye bye to our homes for a couple of nights and head out to Illawonga Campsite. The site is within walking distance from the Murray River near Swan Reach. They run a fabulous camping program and one that I highly recommend. The children will have nonstop adventures and unforgettable learning experiences. I will send more information home closer to the time. But for budgeting purposes it will cost around \$180 to 190 dollars. I know the kids can't wait to go, neither can I and I've been lots of times! I already have enough adults for help thanks, they got in early!

### *Well, it's goodnight from me.*

I think that's about all I covered, except I shared a little about me, but here's more cos I forgot to elaborate. I've been teaching at Grange for 23 years now, that's why I'm beginning to see my old students coming back as parents, teachers..argh. Have I stayed too long, is it time to go? Nah this school is too great a place to leave. But before teaching grades 3/4 at Grange. I taught R-2 at Elizabeth South JPS, Elizabeth Grove and various other schools out North. So I have a deep understanding on the distance children have travelled in making sense of their learning.

I am a keen amateur astronomer, although lately I haven't been able to get to Astronomical Society of S.A. meetings.(school has a lot to answer for). I belong to a Planetarium Supernova group which I hope to meet more often, it helps me keep my stellar edification skills sharp. Better do that soon cos term three we get to do space, whoo hoo! Oh and I am also a Star Trek fan so it would be illogical to pretend I am not influenced by Mr Spock's great words of wisdom. Yeah, I like Star Wars too.

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I also love this Planet of ours and want to know and understand how it works, so I am also a member of the field Geology Society of S.A. I have a keen interest in physics and science and so attend the many public lectures offered by the Physic Society and Royal Society when I can. If time allows I also attend the Skeptics Society meetings which often provide a balanced view point to current thinking and attitudes.

I am also a keen bush walker and need to get back out into the scrub every then and when. I did manage to complete the Heysen trail a couple of years back ( just thought I'd milk the glory one more time!)

### *Almost finished*

One thing I can say about me is **I am Insistent, Consistent and Persistent**, a bit of nag you might say and the kids will soon learn I say what I mean and I mean what I say!

Having said all that, I like you am only human, I make mistakes. I'm sure you can recall a time when you said one thing and somehow the small creature in front of you made you do something else. Well with 25 of these manipulative creative small folk, sometimes I slip up. Oh, I wont believe half the stuff I hear about you, if you don't believe half the stuff you hear about me.

Should you need to meet with me a note in the diary is a good way to arrange a suitable time. One thing to keep in mind, as diaries are open books in our class, should you have some personal information for adults eyes only, that should be put in a letter and given to me. Alternatively email me. Just note, I don't always get to reading it each day. Thank you for your positive feed back and kind greetings. Already into week four, this term will fly. Here's to a productive and exciting year of new learning together.

*Cheers Ellen*

[Ellen.Eisenkolb484@schools.sa.edu.au](mailto:Ellen.Eisenkolb484@schools.sa.edu.au)