

# WHAT DID SHE SAY AFTER "HI MY NAME IS ELLEN?"

or

What I missed at Acquaintance Night in room 14, 2016

## Ah, so that's what she looks like?

It was an honour to meet the many parents who were able to attend last our meeting Wednesday night. I do realise life doesn't always fit neatly into other folks agendas and it's important that we all get the same information. So I have included most of our discussion as well as some bits I forgot, because I may have been a tad nervous. You'd think I'd be used to it..Nah!

## The Middle Years

We began by talking about the emotional changes for children in the primary years of 3, 4 and 5. 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.



## We are ready for a great year of new learning

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



## Think about it

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

## 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.

- *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.

### 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.

There are specific leadership roles for each team member.

*Chair person, Recorder, Time keeper* 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 reader or box levelled 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 students are rostered on to 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 Gardiner's Multiple Intelligences**. We have been exploring some activities to become more familiar with them we've called them smarts for easier recognition.

- **Verbal Linguistic** -Word Smart
- **Logical Mathematical** -Maths Smart
- **Visual Spatial** -Art / Space Smart
- **Musical Rhythmic** - Music Smart
- **Bodily Kinaesthetic** -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 are 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.

### *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 be informed in 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. All this feedback 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 you may have with your child should they arise.



### *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 class 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 this 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 their finished work in team meetings and there will be logical consequences. You shouldn't be getting into homework battles.

A word on helping though, we know children learn to read by reading, having a go at making mistakes and self correcting and this 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 ask "How do you think it is spelt?" I would much rather mark their work than yours, puts me in a dilemma.

### *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 neurone, 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 running avoidance. There is a strong link to positive academic performance and a fit and healthy body. Learning challenges everywhere.

### 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.

### Reading

We spent a little bit of time discussing reading. I know you'll notice I have allocated 30 Minutes of reading each night. Now you may think this a lot, and it can be for some of our students, however, studies have shown that students of this year level should be reading a minimum of an hour a day. I'd like more. I do not see reading as homework rather a healthy habit to establish for a lifelong skill. Readers develop reading skills by reading regularly, where they have opportunities to build vocabulary, develop greater fluency and understand the text. The more they practice the greater their accuracy becomes. I posted this article in my Blog last year and I reckon it is appropriate for us to establish positive routines for this year.

Given we have at least two-thirds of our students below where I would expect them to be entering year three, we will have a **huge** focus on reading strategies for success this term. There was some confusion as to expected reading levels for year three, my understanding is that the literacy committee will work on coming to a clearer understanding later this year. However, trust me when I say I am concerned and we need to build their strength and confidence with reading.

## Why Can't I Skip My Twenty Minutes of Reading Tonight?

(Source Unknown)

Let's figure it out -- mathematically!

Student A reads 20 minutes five nights of every week;  
Student B reads only 4 minutes a night...or not at all!

Step 1: Multiply minutes a night x 5 times each week.  
Student A reads 20 min. x 5 times a week = 100 mins./week  
Student B reads 4 minutes x 5 times a week = 20 minutes



Step 2: Multiply minutes a week  $\times$  4 weeks each month.  
Student A reads 400 minutes a month.  
Student B reads 80 minutes a month.

Step 3: Multiply minutes a month  $\times$  9 months/school year  
Student A reads 3600 min. in a school year.  
Student B reads 720 min. in a school year.

Student A practices reading the equivalent of ten whole school days a year. Student B gets the equivalent of only two school days of reading practice.

By the end of 6th grade if Student A and Student B maintain these same reading habits, Student A will have read the equivalent of 60 whole school days. Student B will have read the equivalent of only 12 school days.

One would expect the gap of information retained will have widened considerably and so, undoubtedly, will school performance. How do you think Student B will feel about him/herself as a student?

Some questions to ponder:

Which student would you expect to read better?  
Which student would you expect to know more?  
Which student would you expect to write better?  
Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary?  
Which student would you expect to be more successful in school....and in life?

The majority of students are required to borrow levelled readers from the boxes this term. When they achieve level 24, I will place them on Accelerated Reading. When we have checked their starting levels with the Star Reader Test, they may begin to set themselves targets. 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 will have bookmarked the site, so all should be in control.

Our Library change over day is Wednesday students should have enough reading material to keep them fully armed for the week supplementing narratives with information texts. 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.

## Maths

Knowing and understanding numbers and the number system is key to succeeding in maths so we will be investigating **place value** and refreshing our memories on the number operations and number strategies. Year three students need to be familiar with numbers in the tens of thousands. Which tables this year? Well, there are some required 1, 2 3,5 and 10 but eventually they need to know all of them, so keep practicing randomly. The ability to recall number facts quickly must not be overlooked too for mental computations These should be practiced randomly and frequently. It was



decided that the cost of *Mathletics* was not justified and will not be available for us this year, although should you wish to pursue it privately that is your choice. I am investigating a similar program called *Study Ladder* which will provide students with practice and activities to support their understandings of introduced concepts, stay tuned. Knowing and recalling number facts is a huge expectation in year three so as much practice as they can get will support them further.

### **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.

### **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 their room for a supply of tissues to wipe up the number elevens. We ask that throughout the year every family donate at least 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.



### **National 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 marvellous 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 I believe it may be this term. At the end of that time we may have a tournament amongst all year three classes to see our supreme champion. As in the past we are also hoping to run some chess clubs at lunch time too so our chess heroes will need to stay tuned for further information..

**Nuts 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.



### *Who was that masked man?*

There are a number of specialist staff that work with your children besides me throughout the week.

**Japanese - Cecily Wright** lesson 2 on Wednesday and lesson 3 Thursday

**Health - Nick** lesson 6 Friday

**P.E. - Trevor Potter** lesson 3 Wednesday

**Music - Diana Busolin** Lesson 3 Tuesday

We also have Ann-Marie Willoughby who works in our room for a lesson a day with one of our students.

### *To Blog or not to Blog?*

I did attempt to show our class Blog, but cyber glitches prevented me from doing that on the night. I would very much like you all to be active bloggers and keep in contact with us as we journey through new experiences. Your support is very much welcome. Last year we made the finals for an award can we repeat that..? Do check it out, go to

<http://elleneisenkolb15.edublogs.org/>

Leave us a comment and share your thoughts.



### *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. You might wonder why I use a microphone. Well, after teaching for a hundred years, my voice, which was quite soft to begin with, hasn't held up very well. So if you see me sipping on a tea whilst teaching, I'm not being indulgent, just lubricating the tired and scarred vocal cords.

I've been teaching at Grange for 24 years now, and I'm beginning to see my old students coming back as parents and teachers..argh, definitely time to think about hanging up my chalk. Now 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 young children have travelled in making sense of their learning as they begin the primary years.

I am a keen amateur astronomer, although lately I haven't been able to get to The 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 with more often, it helps me keep my stellar edification skills sharp. 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. I go to many of Adelaide's science community's free public lectures on Geology, Physics and Astronomy there's so much to learn.

I am also a keen bush walker and have completed many challenging walks around the world and need to get back out into the scrub every then and when. I did manage to complete the 1200 km of the Heyesen trail a couple of years back ( just thought I'd milk the glory one more time!)

Now I have also, this year, been determined to reclaim my first language, German, which was not valued when I was a child. Australia was a different place growing up in the sixties, immigrants were expected to abandon their culture and become “English”. So for my family, success in a new land meant forgoing, particularly for the children, speaking our native language, instead as children, we taught our parents how to communicate in English from our lessons at school. My family now realises that was a mistake, but choices were made. So I am trying to read and write and speak a language that is both familiar and at the same time confusing and strange. I am getting an interesting insight into how one makes sense of learning to be literate in another language and my empathy with my students is taking on a whole new perspective.

As it happens cultural identity and celebrations will be part of our first terms Humanities and Social Sciences lessons. (HaSS) We have a variety of cultural diversity in our class and it will be rewarding to explore this together. I’m looking forward to that.

### *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 27 of these manipulative creative small folk, (yes remember your child is one of twenty-seven) sometimes I may slip up. Oh, I won’t 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)



