

# 3 Eisenkolb Term 2 Newsletter 2015

## *We're back*

The school holidays seem so far away now as we have hit the ground running this past week. However, I trust you enjoyed the break with your children if you were fortunate to. What glorious autumnal days the Weather Gods had offered us. I must admit I felt a little spoilt. I was able to indulge myself in some bush walking. I even managed to convince some staff to stretch their legs with me too. The offer of spotting a koala or two was a great incentive! Then after I completed all my chores, I relished the opportunity for some uninterrupted reading time, a scarcity once school resumes. Well, I do read, but not the fantasy stuff my imagination craves.

## *You did your homework, what excellent role models you are.*

Thank you so much for taking the time to write explicit **feedback** to your child in their **record books**. (Please remember to write to your child, rather than addressing comments to me.) Your comments together with peer feedback and the points from our three-way conversations in our interviews last term, will help your child to plan some **significant goals for learning this term**. The kids liked the idea of you guys getting to do some homework for a change.

## *Mum and Dad this is Ellen, my teacher...*

I was humbled to meet many of you during interviews last term. It was clear that you feel so proud of your child's efforts and their progress. I must say how impressed I was watching the confident manner in which the children informed you of their learning, during the three way interviews last term. It was an interesting challenge for some who eventually got over their initial jitters. Isn't it wonderful to see them grow so much. The articulation of their learning

was delightful, and matched what we both believed. By the end of this term you will receive a copy of their **mid year report** and of course their updated record books to monitor further progress.

## *It's all in the mind*

On the Monday training day we listened to an enthusiastic and motivational speaker Margret Bishop. She took us through the different mindsets we may possess, either fixed or growth mindsets and how this influences our actions in different circumstances. For both there are challenges which bring obstacles and these require effort to overcome. Then we receive criticism on our efforts and we often see the success of others. How we deal with all of this determines which mindset we are operating at the time.

As an educator this highlights the importance of providing activities which are rigorous, challenging and relevant. It also justifies the importance I give to reflecting on our learning and setting future goals for success. I noted that using the Habits of Mind was part of her practice. It reinforced for me that we are travelling well on our learning pathways.

## *Bouncing back.*

Grange has a non tolerance approach to Bullying in its many forms. This is a serious issue which has implications for all. I will be exploring Bullying - identifying and dealing with it throughout this term and beyond during health lessons, while Mike Scott focuses on Child Protection. How children respond to challenging situations during their day is crucial in building resiliency.

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Attending a conference on resiliency quite a few years ago, I remember an interesting study which the presenter shared with us. She said that when parents were asked “What they wanted their child to be?” say forty years ago, the answers were something like this - **optimistic, honest, responsible, hard working, reliable, trustworthy, good members of society etc.** When the same question is asked of parents today, the unanimous response is - **“I want my child to be happy.”** Now the danger with this, as you know, is that happiness is not something that you can be, it is a feeling you get when you successfully deal with what life throws at you.

The study found that when parents prevented their children from knowing and realising disappointment because they didn't want their child to be upset, or feel bad about something they have done, meant there was a growing number of children who have missed out in learning crucial life lessons. These children become less resilient and had difficulties coping in situations when they don't get things their way or when things go wrong.

Making mistakes in our school work, my kids should know, as I nag them about it daily, is all part of learning, in fact you can't learn without it. ( I'm going to get kids to bury those erasers!) The same is true when we interact socially we are always going to make mistakes.

Once again our learning teams are places where children can safely apply their positive social skills. They can trial the use of the socially acceptable language of suggestion while attempting to negotiate their ideas as opposed to bossy or bullying type discourse. This isn't an easy skill to

master as your own experience in managing groups at work or with friends will attest. Knowing and understanding possible reactions to your comments takes time and together with this is the reading and anticipation of body language, which brings it's own considerations and complications. That we'll get too as well. There is much to learn indeed.

In our class one of our signs is **“How you think, affects how you feel. How you feel, affects how you act. So if you want to act better, think better.”** This has huge implications for learning and our self esteem. I know I often have to go over the meaning myself and reflect on how I am thinking about different situations. It's a powerful statement that has helped many of my past students examine their current behaviours and turn them around by thinking differently and in turn acting differently. I am planning to use strategies from a program **Bounce Back** which will help children to build greater resiliency .

## **NAPLaN testing**

In week three we begin the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy tests. NAPLaN. You would have received a letter from Grant Small outlining the process.

- **Tuesday** 12th - *Language conventions and Writing.*
- **Wednesday** 13th - *Reading*
- **Thursday** 14th - *Numeracy.*

We have begun to go through some examples in each area to check procedures and get a taste of what to expect. At the moment for writing we have been examining the features of persuasive writing. Although we are not sure which genre will be given on Tuesday 12th. With the exploration of the narrative genre earlier

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this year, the students should know the expectations of each. Results often take a while to return to us so please be patient. Of course we should keep in mind it is but a snap shot of one part of your child's ability at this year level.

## *A camping we will go, a camping we will go...*

Of course the major event the kids are looking forward to (and me) is our upcoming camp to Illawonga in week 5. I do hope all our students will be able to participate, as some of our activities will be either directly related to, or based around the camp. I must say of all the camps I've attended over the years (and there's a lot), this one is one of the most exciting, safe, educational and fun camps. Our class will be teaming up with Georgie Medhurst and her year threes in room 12. Heath Autio, Finn's Dad, will be our parent support for camp.

Now for a lot of families this will be the first time their child will be away from home and parents often feel anxious. Believe me if children weren't ready for this experience, I would not entertain the thought of taking over fifty kids away with me, my fellow colleague and parent helpers. They don't pay us danger money for that! We do this because this camp offers rich learning experiences gained both socially and educationally.

I remember in my early days as a reception teacher in Elizabeth my young kids and I were setting up tents at the Kingston Caravan park in week five of term one. My five year old charges had only been at school for twenty days by then and they had an absolute ball coping quite well on their own.

The opportunities offered at Illawonga in most cases will be new experiences for the children and they will thoroughly enjoy them. The **level of safety** at this camp site is **very high**. In any activity involving the Murray River, students do not leave the camp site unless they are wearing a buoyancy vest, which are appropriately sized and fitted before leaving. The organisers ensure every minute of the day is planned and we manage to cram a lot of fantastic well supervised activities in. Trust me, free time is mostly limited to eating and sleeping.

## *Whose is this?*

To reduce the number of homeless items gathered at camp, could you find a way to label everything so that children know it is their's. A great strategy to support children knowing what they have, is to get them to pack their belongings themselves. That way they know what they've got, where it is and where it belongs for repacking. Oh and a run through of how to get a big sleeping bag into those tiny bags wouldn't go astray. After trying to fit the twentieth one in, my fingers begin to lose their feeling.

You need to resist the temptation of providing a plethora of you beaut travel gadgets, lotions, potions etc which can be used away from home. An example of this, *I once observed a child who had three toiletry bags each containing various bottles and tubes for hair, teeth, body etc., then bathing items, night time things and sleeping accessories all of which she juggled to the showers in preparation for cleaning and sleep.*

Given we have two classes of children camping, night cleaning time at camp doesn't allow for such personal

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indulgences, please leave these rituals for home. Unless a child has had an unfortunate accident during the day or night and requires showering, washing the body with a flannel and soap is quite effective. Kids can go two days without a shower. To that end, keep it simple - soap and flannel, toothbrush /paste, hair brush/comb and a towel. I will bring my hair dryer for those who do manage to get wet hair (don't want them sleeping with wet hair).

As we have a full agenda of activities children do not need to bring personal entertainment items other than one soft toy to cuddle at night if they wish. Do not pack munchies, lollies and snacks, these are not permitted in the rooms. The camp provides plenty of nourishment. However children with special dietary needs should make it known to me on the health forms.

I will personally administer medications which should be given to me individually labelled with clear directions from your physician. Please see me if you have any reservations or questions.

## ***Hats off***

As from the 1st of May children do not have to wear their hat to play. This is in accordance with the changes to our hat policy. The wearing of hats becomes a voluntary act. A great time to take them home and give them a good wash I reckon. It will become mandatory again on the 1st of September I believe.

## ***Fitness***

With the cooler months we begin ***corporate clump***. This is a great team running activity which builds collaborative skills as two teams need to work together to score well in a running race. Their teams need to

complete personal logs and team scores. As in the past, if your child has a genuine injury or illness please indicate via their diary the amount of time recommended by a health professional that they need to be excluded from PE and fitness. 12 min run, Team Run and Beat Up will continue.

## ***Maths***

We will be investigating the four number operations among other concepts this term and applying those strategies to solve problems. The learning of their tables is encouraged. I have always found that the teaching of time and money to be problematic as some students don't get to handle money or required to read time in households. You may consider letting them work out just how much their recess and lunches are costing you. Or if the opportunity arises, let your child use the clock to work out when their favourite show is on and how much time they have to complete their chores, homework or play.

This year I have been trialling the use of natural maths strategies which may appear to be quite different from familiar traditional methods. The basic premise is that we teach what they are ready for and use a common vocab in our discussions. There's a lot of sharing in these sessions as students show us what strategies they used for solving problems or answering questions, so we may not record as much as in previous years.

Of course there is still room for a blend of my older more familiar methods. I'm not ready to give that up yet

## ***Read, read, read.***

Towards the end of term one students on accelerated reading realised that there was

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lots of effort needed to complete their reading goals in accelerated reading. Some were a little disappointed that they hadn't quite achieved enough. Star reader tests have been taken and students have their starting levels for term two. Once again we will set a target for them to reach. We began charting their progress which supported them in seeing their progress grow. Student reading from reader boxes can see their levels change as I test them.

## ***Premiers Reading Challenge.***

Over two thirds of our class has completed their challenge in fact one of members has completed her second list well done Emilia. I know of at least three who need only a few more. I trust the ones who haven't yet begun to record will do so asap. Many of the books are also accelerated readers too, so there is plenty of opportunity for practice. This event finishes in September so there is plenty of time to read 12 books.

Speaking of reading we have begun our class novel the first in a 13 part series written by Lemony Snicketts. I don't expect that we will finish many, but the first one titled "The Bad Beginning" has them hooked. Now I have read these many a time and although nasty things happen to the heroes of the books, the author's use of rich language has them captivated. The plots and cliff hangers evoke much discussion providing opportunities for the students to build their inferential comprehension skills as they reason out their opinions. We have such fun.

***Space the final frontier, these are the voyages of the Starship Eisenkolb our one year mission to explore new learning and new ideas, to seek out challenges and opportunities, to boldly go where no***

***learning teams have gone before....oo oo (hum the rest of Star Trek to get the real effect)***

Oops got carried away there for a moment, actually we are doing a space topic this term for science. We will be learning the processes involved in how our planet experiences night and day. Well, that is fun, but as I can't stop myself, we'll be playing around with a little extra stuff up there in the cosmos, cos I want to and I can! Once that space genie is let out of the bottle well.... hey I can do some star gazing at camp show the budding astronomers some significant stuff. Hope those clouds stay away.

## ***Spelling Contracts***

The first term was our practice term where we got used to creating their individualised spelling word list and setting out their contract. Up till now we have worked together learning each step. This term there is a new menu of activities, the children have the opportunity to display their independence and take control of their own work. They will begin each week with a focus to work on. The activities allow them to build skills in their multiple intelligences. They will need to complete their contracts - word lists, 5 sentences and 3 spelling activities by Thursday. They have some class time to complete this. However they are able to use homework time if they run out of class time. This term I am grading their work

- ◇ **P** - Progressing (they are still developing sentence skills, presentation standards)
- ◇ **M** - Mastered ( they have completed all that is required in an acceptable standard of presentation)

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- ◇ **D** - Distinction ( They have produced outstanding work far above expectations)
- ◇ **N/C** - Not Complete (parts of work or contract not finished acceptably)
- ◇

I have used these grades in the past for other work and find children strive to achieve their best.

I'm already getting quite excited by the opportunities the children have to build their skills further and just love to see the growth in their presentations.

As we continue to learn how to work interdependently or collaboratively there are even more opportunities for them to take control of their learning.

## ***Decisions, Decisions***

In class meetings students have the opportunity to make changes to the way we do things or introduce new ideas if it can help our learning. Last term several groups put forward some suggestions. One was to acknowledge the students who worked hard at keeping our criteria for success. They had decided to reward these students with a certificate. That is if their name had never moved off the smiley face. They also considered the ones who had made only one transgression and decided they too should be acknowledged. I'll be interested to see what developments they make this term.

## ***Well it's good night from her.***

This term looks set to be extremely busy and there are many activities that lend themselves to be integrated across different curriculum areas. However, with some major events scheduled, time will fly as it always does and I wonder how we will

manage to fit everything in. Sometimes we just can't.

Indeed we are now used to working in teams and there is a growing sense of togetherness, built from their collaborative experiences, so I anticipate an enjoyable term. In fact it was so pleasing to see them just slot into new teams and get on with things on our first day back. How wonderful that they are comfortable in their routines and can build greater independence.

If you need to meet with me at any stage, a diary note is the best way to make a suitable time.

Here's to another exciting term of new learning.

*Cheers Ellen*