August 2013

Strategies for raising boys
Reflecting on World Youth Day
Success in senior secondary
Drama Festival photo highlights
From the Executive Director

At the end of July, I had the opportunity to accompany 51 students from secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne to World Youth Day 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Despite it being the second time I have gone to the event since becoming Executive Director, nothing could have prepared me for the magnitude of witnessing Pope Francis celebrating Mass on Copacabana beach with more than 3 million in attendance.

His Holiness’ message to us followed on from his recent encyclical Lumen Fidei, on the light of faith. He asked us all to take God’s power as laid out in the Gospel to ‘pluck up and break down evil and violence, to destroy and overthrow the barriers of selfishness, intolerance and hatred, so as to build a new world’.

The young men and women who travelled to Rio de Janeiro will have no difficulty in pressing forward with this mission, with the support of their families and their schools.

You can find more about the experiences of our students who attended World Youth Day on pages 6 and 7.

It is also important to note that after three years since the Gonski Review commenced, Catholic education and the Australian Government have reached an agreement on the new Better Schools Plan. The agreement outlines funding and regulatory arrangements for Catholic schools for the next six years.

The new Commonwealth arrangements for Catholic schools will mean that we will have the flexibility to direct funding to meet local needs. This funding should increase, with significant gains for our schools in 2018 and 2019, providing government priorities do not change over time.

This could not have been achieved without the support and influence of Catholic school parents and communities.

The Victorian Government has also entered into an agreement with the Australian Government over the Better Schools Plan. We are still working through the funding implications of the state’s agreement for Victorian Catholic schools.

Importantly, as the federal election is now under way, the Coalition has promised to match the Australian Government’s funding commitment and ensure that states and non-government systems maintain control over their schools. In advance of the election the CEOM will be seeking clarity from both major parties about their broader education policies, and how they will play a role in supporting our students.

As well as the article about World Youth Day, this Catholic Education Today follows on from last edition’s focus on girls’ education, with an article by Rosie Hoban exploring the joys and challenges of raising boys.

We also take a look at the Student Wellbeing Drama Festival, and top Catholic VCE and VCAL performers share their tips for success.

It is a very exciting time for Catholic schools across the country. In our own Archdiocese, I hope that we can use all of our gifts within this vibrant Catholic learning community to take up Pope Francis’ mission and to support our students to become successful, engaged learners, inspired to shape a better world.
Boys want to take risks and that could be physical, verbal or social risks. That’s one of the reasons they can try and ‘flex their intellectual and physical muscle’. It’s also why they need boundaries.

Bill Jennings, with many years experience as a leader in schools and ‘people programs’, said many parents feel disheartened once their sons reach the mid-teenage years. The boys begin to retreat from the family and parents fear they have lost control and their boys are moving beyond their reach.

‘I believe that half the battle of parenting boys is to keep turning up and hanging in there through the tough times that adolescence will throw up at you.’ Bill said. ‘Sometimes that’s all a parent can do during some dark days of teenage years.’

Of course there’s more to it than just turning up, but Bill believes boys will remember the faith and persistence shown them by their parents. More importantly, they will know that love underpinned their parents’ actions.

‘By turning up I mean that parents who give it their best, who always have the best intentions, despite the many mistakes made along the way, are doing it right,’ he said.

‘And of course, setting boundaries for boys is a really vital part of parenting. Even if your boundaries are unpopular, boys need to know where they stand.’

Michael Grose, author of eight parenting books, whose Parent Seminar looks at Raising Mighty Boys, agrees that parenting boys can be tough and it takes time and patience. Most boys, he said, are basic, straightforward and awkward and need more time to mature, a fact borne out by research. In many ways, the strategies needed to parent sons are different to those needed for daughters.

Social media may be threatening your family time, peers may have outflanked you and your teenage son may offer little more than monosyllabic responses to your questions. Don’t give up and never doubt that you are ‘still in the game’, is the advice from two leading parent experts, Bill Jennings and Michael Grose, who are part of the 2013 Parent Seminar Series.

He said boys are hard-wired to leave home at about 15, which can make that a tense period of time between fathers and sons as the son tries to exert his authority. Boys want to take risks and that could be physical, verbal or social risks. That’s one of the reasons they can try and ‘flex their intellectual and physical muscle’. It’s also why they need boundaries.
“Boundaries are essential for boys to learn and it makes them feel safe and secure. If you need any evidence of this, go and watch little boys playing freely. It doesn’t take long before they start making rules for their game, because it helps them know what to do and how to manage their play.”

Eltham parents Jane and Wally O’Carroll firmly believe that making rules is important, but can be meaningless unless there’s a consequence to breaking the rules. Parents, they said, have to follow through on threats of punishment. Their sons, Brendan 17 and Aidan 14, are students at Marcellin College in Bulleen, and like most parents they find the encroachment of social media a challenge to their family life. But Wally recognises that social media, including Facebook, are here to stay – at least while his sons are moving through their teens.

“You have to create an environment of trust from the time they are very young. At the same time you set boundaries around the use of Facebook. But it is the same with other aspects of behaviour such as alcohol and going out at night – you have boundaries,’ Wally said.

Bill and Michael believe it is important to reward sons who adhere to the rules, by pushing the boundaries out a little when the time is right.

“There are lots of ways of doing this. If a boy is regularly told to be home from parties at 11pm and follows that rule, think about pushing that back to midnight. But when you need to hold your ground – do it and be comfortable knowing that the word ‘no’ is a complete sentence. Sometimes the best way is to say ‘no’ and walk away.’

The O’Carrolls believe that involving boys in a sport, or team activity, can help reinforce your position on discipline issues. In fact, the expectations of sporting teams their two sons are involved in have some direct parallels with their family life.

‘Being accountable for your actions, being reliable, e.g. turning up for training even if at times you would rather stay at home on Facebook; and knowing there are consequences if you don’t show up,’ Wally said. ‘Life is a bit like that and sometimes you don’t want to be part of it, but you have to work as a team.’

Bill Jennings advises parents to avoid getting drawn into long debates with sons over rules and boundaries.

‘Teenage boys are bush lawyers and they can wear you down. But that’s okay because you are not your son’s mate, you are his parent, and he needs you to hold your ground even though he doesn’t know it. During these teenage years he needs you to be his parents, not his friends – he finds those elsewhere,’ Bill said.

‘As well as rules and boundaries I advise parents to have non-negotiables in their family: rituals or family events that your son has to be a part of, even if he would rather retreat to his room. But in reality they become points of safety that your son can hold onto when things get rocky.’

Michael Grose goes a step further on the issue of being your son’s friend and believes a vital part of parenting boys is sometimes being able to live with your son’s contempt. But he said it is important to understand that your son might hate what you have done, but doesn’t hate you.

He believes parents can hold onto control, while offering their sons the ‘illusion of choice’. This gives them space and avoids the fight-or-flight response, which is what they will do when under stress.
Jane O’Carroll said she doesn’t hesitate postponing a discussion with one of her sons if she needs to give the issue more thought, or talk it over with Wally to ensure they have a ‘united position’.

Enjoying the good times and having fun in family life is something Michael and Bill stress, particularly given the highly scheduled and busy lives most family members are living.

The O’Carrolls consider themselves blessed. They are loving the teenage years, despite the ups and downs. It helps that they enjoy each other’s company.

“We have a loving relationship and speak to each other in a certain way and we expect the boys to relate to people with respect. I think you have to model behaviours to them,” Wally said.

“We are very proud of the young men our sons have become. They are loving and thoughtful boys,” Jane said. ‘It is a joy watching them grow up.’

**Parent Seminar Series**

**Raising Mighty Boys Seminar**

Michael Grose

Primary and Secondary

10 September, 7pm – 9pm
St Joseph’s School, Mills Road, Yarra Junction

12 September, 7pm – 9pm
St Cecilia’s School, 4 Van Ness Avenue, Glen Iris

**How to Stay in Touch on the Adolescent Roller Coaster**

Bill Jennings

Secondary

3 September, 7pm – 9pm
Thomas Carr College, 35 Thomas Carr Drive, Tarneit

**Daughters and Dads**

Bill Jennings

Secondary

5 September, 7pm – 9pm
Ave Maria College, 14–22 Vida Street, Aberfeldie

To register and for further details contact the Parent Seminar Series Coordinator, Doug Sandiford, at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne on 9267 0228 or <dsandiford@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>. All seminars cost $10 per person, payable in advance.

10 Tips for Raising Boys

1. If you are a couple parenting boys, present a united front.

2. If you are a single parent, seek support from a friend, someone you respect as a parent, and discuss issues with them.

3. Create moments to talk to boys. Side by side can be as good as, and sometimes better than, eye-to-eye contact. A drive can be a good opportunity for talk.

4. Don’t be pressured into quick decisions. Make it clear that you need time to think about the issue and set the time for a discussion.

5. Spend time with your sons when they are young and layer memories that will stay with them. Do the groundwork that you and your son can hold onto down the track.

6. If you are feeling shut out of your son’s world, look for a way in and do what works, even if you are out of your comfort zone. Send him a text, or the link to a funny YouTube clip you have seen or heard about.

7. You are not your son’s mate. He needs you to be his parent.

8. Don’t make empty threats. If you son breaks a rule, follow through on the threatened discipline.

9. If you get into an argument with your son, consider taking time out. Tell your son you will discuss it in 20 minutes. This gives you time to think and avoids the argument escalating.

10. Have some family fun. Boys are wonderful, so enjoy the time you have with them.
About World Youth Day

World Youth Day (WYD) is a worldwide encounter with the Pope which is typically celebrated every two or three years in a different country. It is considered the largest global event aimed at young people.

WYD is in fact a weeklong celebration, complete with cultural events and opportunities to learn more about the Catholic faith and share in meetings with the Pope. It is open to all young people and is an opportunity to experience the universality of the Church. Participants encounter other young people and share with the whole world a celebration of their Catholic faith. Centered on the sacraments, prayer and reflection, WYD offers a unique way for young people to deepen their faith and share common interests and experiences.

This year, WYD took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between 23 and 28 July. It is the 12th WYD since Pope John Paul II convened the first one in December 1985.

The theme for this WYD was ‘Go and make disciples of all nations’ (Matthew 28: 19).

On 20 July, 51 students representing 40 secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne departed for Rio de Janeiro to attend World Youth Day. They were accompanied by staff from those schools and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM), a chaplain and eight pilgrims from the Diocese of Sale. Executive Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Stephen Elder, accompanied the group.

‘Being immersed amongst millions of others, who are all gathered to rejoice with one another and celebrate their shared faith, whilst learning about fellow Catholics from around the globe of similar age and experience helped me gain a more insightful perspective on the true meaning of WYD.’

Emma from Genazzano FCJ College, Kew

‘The students were keen, enthusiastic, friendly and energetic. They threw themselves into the WYD program, soaking up the experience of being surrounded by millions of young Catholics from all over the world, gathered around Christ’s Vicar, Pope Francis.’

Fr Michael Gallacher, a priest of the Archdiocese who is currently studying in Rome

The week since I left has been the most amazing week of my life...You have no idea how much of a positive impact it is having on me.

Elaine from Catholic Regional College North, Keilor

Go and make disciples of all nations.

(Matthew 28: 19)
To build on the experience of WYD, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has established the first national gathering of Catholic young people. It will be held in Melbourne on 5–7 December 2013. The theme of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival is ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me’, taken from Luke’s Gospel. More details about the Youth Festival, including registration information, can be found at www.youthfestival.catholic.org.au.

‘World Youth Day was a unique opportunity for our students to experience the universal Church and grow in their faith with other young people from across the world. The opportunity to share the WYD experience with Pope Francis, had a powerful impact on the students. To be among so many faith-filled young people engenders great hope for the future of the Church.’

Stephen Elder, Executive Director of Catholic Education

The week of prayer, song and reflection culminated in a vigil with Pope Francis, which included a period of prayer and a concert, followed by a sleep-out overnight on Copacabana beach before the final Mass with the Pope the next morning.

During the WYD program, students kept in touch with the Catholic education community in Melbourne through a blog of their experiences, hosted on the CEOM website <www.ceom.catholic.edu.au/news-events/WYD-2013>. (The blog is now closed but remains available for viewing.) A strong theme throughout their reflections confirmed that the WYD experience strengthened their Catholic faith.

‘The students did their schools proud, their parents proud and themselves proud. They saw what the Catholic Church has to offer and what is truly possible if you are willing to become actively involved in your faith. It was a privilege to have been there with them and I hope the experience will continue to strengthen them in their faith journey for years to come.’

John McInerney, CEOM staff member

‘I feel really pumped to go back into my everyday life and be a witness to the faith!!!’

Andrew from Penola Catholic College, Broadmeadows

Scan here to view the World Youth Day Blog.

Coda

Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission! Today, in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve.

Pope Francis
Premier’s VCE Awards

Catholic schools were well represented in the 2013 Premier’s VCE Awards, announced in June. From 26 Catholic secondary schools across Victoria, 49 students won between them four Top All-Round High Achiever Awards and 53 Study Awards. Two of these students reflect on their experience and provide tips for success.

Mengtong Xia received two Premier’s VCE Awards for her studies in 2012: the prestigious Top All-Round High Achiever Award, and a Study Award for Specialist Mathematics. As part of her VCE studies at Loreto Mandeville Hall in Toorak, Mengtong completed eight subjects including two in Year 11 (Chinese Second Language and Mathematical Methods). In Year 12, on top of a demanding program of English, Literature, Specialist Maths, Chemistry and Physics, Mengtong also participated in the University of Melbourne Extension Maths program.

While most people would find the mix of sciences and high-level maths the most daunting aspect to Mengtong’s program, the 18-year-old insists that it was English and Literature that she found the most challenging, using ‘thousands of sheets of paper and countless pens throughout the year’. In contrast, she found doing her maths homework ‘calming’, and is glad of her decision to undertake the university program because of the sheer enjoyment it brought her.

During Year 12, Mengtong also took part in the school orchestra and choir, and was elected captain of the badminton team. Participating in works of social justice was strongly encouraged at Loreto and Mengtong attended Friday Night School, tutoring students from migrant backgrounds.

Success for Mengtong is the fact that she can look back on her year and be satisfied that she did her best and enjoyed herself.

Despite remaining unsure about her future directions, Mengtong has begun a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne, and is undertaking actuarial studies. She thinks she would be well suited to the career and is optimistic about a future in the field. That said, she thinks that food critics have the best job in the world.

MENGTONG’S TOP VCE TIP: Don’t let VCE completely overrun your life, and don’t compare yourself to others along the way. Concentrate on improving your own scores and make sure you have time to spend with family and friends.

Liam Brennan, of St Joseph’s College, Newtown, was honoured at the 2013 Premier’s VCE Awards for his excellence in Music (VCE VET).

His VCE course also included English, Further Mathematics, Music Performance, and Music Investigation. Liam also found time for the school Jazz Band, ‘just for a bit of fun’.

‘Aside from the compulsory English, which I still did enjoy, I found that immersing myself in music was a sure-fire way to not only enjoy my Year 12 experience, but to also do really well,’ he said.

When asked what motivated him to work hard in Year 12, Liam said, ‘From an early age I’ve had really good study habits and I figured it’d be a bit of a waste to go through all these years of school and not have something to be really proud of at the end of it.’

Liam is now working as a guitar teacher and studying an Advanced Diploma of Sound Production at Oxygen College in Geelong. The course involves recording and mixing bands in studio and live settings, which in turn has always been a ‘great hobby’ of Liam’s. Liam has his sights set on completing his diploma by the year’s end and continuing his work as a sound tech.

Liam aspires to a career in the music industry, though he admits that ‘it’s hard to find career prospects in an unstable industry’.

‘It took me a long time in Year 12 to commit the next few years of my life to music, yet with the encouragement of family and friends I think I made the right choice.’

LIAM’S TOP VCE TIP: Pursue something that you enjoy and find interesting. You won’t be able to work really hard at a subject you hate. Aim for a good work–life balance.

For a full list of recipients, please visit the DEECD website <www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/vceawardswinners.aspx>.

The Awards are presented annually to the top-performing students for their outstanding achievements in the VCE. This year awards were presented to 268 students in three categories: Top All-Round High Achiever Awards for those students who received a study score of 46 or above in at least five subjects; the Top Three International Student Awards; and the Study Awards for individual VCE studies.

For more Top Tips for VCE Success, visit the website of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) <www.education.vic.gov.au/school/students/Pages/toptips.asp>.
Victorian Catholic schools featured once again in the 2013 Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) Achievement Awards, announced at the end of May. The awards once again recognised the outstanding achievements of students, teachers and school–community partnerships in applied learning.

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Caitlin Wood, from Catholic Ladies’ College in Eltham, received a School-based Apprentice-Trainee Award for her achievements in 2012. See her story below.

St Joseph’s College, Ferntree Gully, won a Partner Achievement Award in Workplace Learning with Bunnings Scoresby. VCAL students participated in Bunnings’ community service projects, working with a skilled supervisor and received training in occupational health and safety, recruitment processes and customer service.

Caitlin Wood did VCAL because she ‘wanted something a bit hands-on’. She knew she wanted to do hairdressing and VCAL enabled her to combine studies in a way that gave her a ‘huge head start’ on her career.

The VCAL units developed a range of life and employability skills and included room for practical work-related experience. Her part-time job at Hair by Ciccone quickly became a School-based Apprenticeship, which included 23 hours at the salon per week and TAFE every Wednesday. VET Business Studies completed her Senior VCAL. She even managed to fit in dancing and basketball and some socialising.

Having shown early promise at the salon, Caitlin was given more complex and skilled tasks and readily mastered new skills, styles and techniques. She was able to finish her TAFE training in two years instead of three. ‘I was pretty switched on,’ she said.

Reflecting on her VCAL course Caitlin said, ‘It was really hard work but I loved it so much. Everyone was telling me it was too much work, but I just really wanted to do it.’

She said she had great support from her mother, and also her sister, who had followed the same pathway. Caitlin will complete her apprenticeship in October. She dreams of opening her own salon one day, in partnership with her sister.

Pathway Options for senior students

Every child is different and nowhere is this more evident than when it comes to choosing senior secondary pathways. Fortunately education in Victoria provides many options. Catholic schools provide a range of pathways to cater for their students’ needs and aspirations, encouraging them to pursue post-school education and vocational training.

Senior Secondary Certificates
In Victoria there are two accredited senior secondary certificates:

- Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

Students may undertake Vocational Education and Training (VET) as part of their VCE or VCAL.

VCE
For most students their course of study leads to the VCE. There are over 90 VCE studies, or subjects, and over 30 VCE VET programs to choose from. The VCE provides a range of pathways to further study or training at university or TAFE or to employment. Students can also do a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship as part of their VCE.

VCAL
VCAL offers a hands-on learning approach for students in Years 11 and 12 with practical work-related experience. It is ideal for students who prefer to go on to TAFE, an apprenticeship or the workplace. VCAL can be studied at Foundation, Intermediate and/or Senior levels. VET units are included in the VCAL course at Intermediate and Senior levels and students can also do a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship as part of their VCAL.

VET
VET provides students with the opportunity to undertake a nationally recognised industry qualification while completing their senior secondary certificate (VCE or VCAL). Students can choose from over 30 VCE VET programs as well as other vocational training certificates that contribute to their VCE or VCAL qualifications. Catholic schools continue to offer a broad range of certificates across many industry areas.

School-based Apprenticeships/Traineeships
A School-based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT) is a pathway to skilled employment and further training opportunities. It can contribute to the VCE or VCAL, and it leads to a nationally recognised qualification, as well as paid employment.

Other options
If your child is a high achiever and would like an extra challenge, he or she may opt to include a Higher Education study at a participating university as part of their VCE. An Extension Study or an Advanced Standing Study can contribute to the VCE score.

For more information on pathways options, see:

- VCAL4Life, a short video from VCAA introducing the VCAL <www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB8m7t4cJHQ>.
Nearly 1500 students from 40 Catholic schools across Melbourne have put wellbeing centre stage in the sixth annual Catholic Education Office Melbourne Student Wellbeing Drama Festival, held over seven nights in June.

The performances gave audiences an understanding of what Catholic schools stand for, and the important role that the school plays in looking after all aspects of a young person’s development.

The performances, created by the students, reflected the diversity of wellbeing in all subject areas. Many of the participating secondary schools used the festival as an assessment task in the Years 9 and 10 curriculum.

The performances gave audiences an understanding of what Catholic schools stand for, and the important role that the school plays in looking after all aspects of a young person’s development, not just their academic learning.

All participating schools used the drama festival to promote wellbeing in their school communities.

The special awards given at the end of the festival were:

**Primary**
- Special Award 1: Our Lady’s School, Craigieburn
- Special Award 2: St Dominic’s School, Camberwell East
- Special Award 3: Xavier College, Kostka Hall, Brighton

**Secondary**
- Special Award 1: Emmanuel College, Altona North
- Special Award 2: Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg
- Special Award 3: Sacred Heart Girls’ College, Hughesdale
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New early learning centre in the north

Parents and children were delighted with the official opening of the new home for Fawkner Kindergarten on Thursday 6 June at St Mark’s School in Fawkner. Years of planning and negotiations between the community of St Mark’s parish, St Mark’s school and the Victorian Government were realised with the launch of the centre.

On the grounds of St Mark’s, the $800,000 facility (with the parish contributing $500,000 and the government $300,000) features two play rooms and provides a 15-hour program for four-year olds in addition to its three-year old program.

The kindergarten was opened by the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Wendy Lovell, who congratulated the parish on their contribution. She said that the project was a great example of what can be achieved when government works hand-in-hand with the local community.

Principal Michael Bourne said, ‘The opening of the kindergarten is pioneering the work that will strengthen the local community and is a true partnership between the school, the parish, the government, the Moreland City Council and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne’.

45 years in Catholic education

After 45 years of service to Catholic education, has retired.

Most recently, Ms Hudson was principal of St Peter’s School in Epping. She also taught at St Therese’s School, Essendon; St Francis Xavier School, Montmorency; and St Raphael’s School, West Preston. Ms Hudson has been a principal in Catholic education for 34 years, the past 13 years at St Peter’s School.

Reflecting on her many experiences, Ms Hudson noted, ‘There have been many highlights for me but seeing learning in action and children’s eyes shining [as they learn] has been wonderful.’

There have been several major awards for Ms Hudson, including a Highly Commended National Award for Quality Schooling for Excellence in 2006 and in 2007 the prestigious Hedley Beare Educator of the Year Award bestowed by the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) (Victoria).

Ms Hudson said she had enjoyed a wonderful career but it was now time to move on. ‘I’m taking a break and heading to Europe. I’m looking forward to the holiday,’ she said.
Young ‘Parliamentarians’

A team of six students from St Bernard’s College, Essendon, introduced a Bill in the Victorian Youth Parliament, proposing an ‘opt-out organ and tissue donation system’ in Victoria. Team member Jarrod said, ‘Our peers in Parliament had to vote for our Bill and it ended up passing the Youth Parliament’. The Bill will now be reviewed by the Victorian Health Minister.

During Term 2 holidays, St Bernard’s Legal Studies students Luke, Jarrod, William, Michael, Hollan and Liam debated various mock Bills in the Legislative Assembly of the Victorian Parliament as part of the annual Youth Parliament.

The boys received several awards throughout the week of Youth Parliament, including the ‘best media release’ award, the most YouTube views for a commercial the team produced, and best debater (Jarrod) for his chamber for the second day of debates. Luke was also elected the chamber leader for the opposition side of the Legislative Assembly.

‘The program helped all of us open up and share our values and thoughts on issues that affect young people and Victoria in general,’ said Jarrod on behalf of his other team members.

It is the first time St Bernard’s has entered the Youth Parliament, but they are hoping to participate again next year.

Student Principal for a Day

On 6 June, Maya became Student Principal for a Day at St Peter’s School in Clayton. Maya visited classrooms, worked in the office, did yard duty, held a student meeting about student issues, wrote a message to parents for the school newsletter and even had lunch in the staff room.

St Peter’s Principal, Philip O’Gorman, was happy to hand over his role to Maya and hoped she would experience what being a leader in a school means.

‘I am very honoured to have this role at school and to have the opportunity to be the principal,’ said Year 6 student Maya, adding that the principal’s role had always intrigued her.

Maya is one of over 100 primary and secondary students across Australia participating in Student Principal for a Day, a new initiative of the Principals Australia Institute to promote the value of good school leadership.

‘I hope that Maya enjoyed the experience and gained a lot from the day,’ said Mr O’Gorman. ‘You never know, she may be a future school principal!’

The program helped all of us open up and share our values and thoughts on issues that affect young people and Victoria in general.

It is the first time St Bernard’s has entered the Youth Parliament, but they are hoping to participate again next year.
Two elite athletes at St Columba’s rewarded

St Columba’s College Year 12 students Stephanie Dore and Sophie Wathen have received Athlete Development Scholarships from training facility Earth Sky Sea in recognition of their sporting excellence.

Equestrian vaulter Stephanie dreams of competing for Australia in the World Equestrian Games in 2018. Her new training ‘focuses on mental toughness, strength and conditioning and lifestyle skills like nutrition’, said Stephanie.

Sophie, a lightweight rower, came first at the Head of the School Girls regatta in March this year and also picked up two gold medals at the 2013 State Championships. She sees herself as a ‘dedicated, enthusiastic and determined athlete’.

The six-month $10,000 scholarships allow students access to:

- state-of-the-art facilities at AAMI Park
- assessment and consultation with high-performance trainers
- elite-level programs
- sports medicine, physiotherapy and sports massage.

Cherie Beckingham, St Columba’s Sports Coordinator, sees the scholarship as ‘a wonderful opportunity for the girls to develop further as elite athletes in their chosen sports’. The program will also supplement the girls’ studies in VCE Physical Education. Both girls train seven days a week on top of their VCE studies.

Plain speaking win for St Bede’s

Sean Hollis, a Year 11 student from St Bede’s College, Mentone, has won the 2013 Plain English Speaking Awards (PESA) State Final, which took place on Wednesday 24 July.

Sean’s prepared speech focused on racial discrimination in Australian society, arguing in particular that though racism is a feature of Australia’s past and present, it doesn’t have to determine its future.

‘Racism today often isn’t purposeful and intended to be hurtful, it’s more to do with ignorance. But even when joking, our words can be insensitive and harmful to others.’

Preparing a good speech, Sean believes, should always revolve around ‘choosing a topic you are passionate about and that you believe in’.

Sean’s impromptu speech explored the topic, ‘It’s never too late …’. He believes ‘reading newspapers and having examples in your head’ is key to thinking on your feet. ‘I think about what I can talk about with our immediate world and then link it back to the issue.’

The PESA awards are a national public speaking competition and are open to government, Catholic, and independent schools, for students aged 15 years and over.

Sean represented Victoria at the National Final in Alice Springs on Monday 19 August 2013.

Preparing a good speech should always revolve around ‘choosing a topic you are passionate about and that you believe in.’
St Bede’s College, Mentone, is celebrating 75 years of Lasallian education this year, since the De La Salle Brothers commenced classes on 8 February 1938.

College Principal, Brother Garry Coyte FSC, said, ‘One of the reasons for the De La Salle Brothers coming to Mentone was the growing number of boarders at De La Salle, Malvern, which meant that the Brothers were looking for a larger property to accommodate them.’

Although boarding concluded at the College in 1998, St Bede’s continues to grow. In 1938 there were 100 students from both rural and suburban areas. Now, St Bede’s educates 1388 students from the local area.

During an address to staff and students, Br Garry proposed that faith, community and valuing education were the qualities that had held the college together for 75 years. ‘It is about valuing our education and using our time at school to become the best persons we are capable of being. John Baptist De La Salle was very clear that education of a human and Christian nature is at the heart of becoming a good young man,’ Br Gary said.

St Bede’s College is not the first school on the present site. In 1896 Thomas McCristal started Mentone College. The gates of the McCristal school are still standing today on the front oval opposite the beach.

‘While the McCristal gates stand as a reminder of the past, they are importantly reminding us of the foundation stone or character on which the college is built,’ Br Gary said.

To mark the 75th anniversary of the college, there has been a program of events and celebrations. One of these events was the Annual Dinner of the Old Collegians, where new ‘Roll of Honour’ awards recognised the outstanding achievements of those who have made a significant contribution to the college. The recipients included a former tuck shop manager, a long-serving college secretary, teachers and former headmasters, including Br Bill Firman FSC.

Brother Bill, who was principal in the 1970s and 1980s, was the first of three generations in the Firman family who have been St Bede’s boys. He was principal when his nephews, Tony and Michael Firman, were also students at that time. Tony and Michael’s sons, Bailey (Year 7) and Tomoya (Year 9), are the third generation of Firmans to be associated with the college.

Brother Bill Firman said that there was a tradition of Old Collegians sending their sons to the college. ‘It’s a reflection of the very strong values system,’ he said. ‘There are more buildings here, and it can look different in places, but you can walk in the gates and still feel at home.’

There is a tradition of Old Collegians sending their sons to the college. It’s a reflection of the very strong values system.

Three generations of the Firman family at St Bede’s: (Left to right) Tony, Bailey, Michael, Tomoya and Br Bill Firman.

(Photographer: Martin Reddy)
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