

This edition focuses on transitions into primary school, and senior students moving towards work and further training. The benefit of working with the individual child, family and student, to enable them to succeed in the best way possible for them, shines out of all these articles.

A further article describes an innovation in Wellington, where senior primary students were brought together to strengthen their leadership skills, a day which must have provided much growth for those taking part.

Thank you to all our writers for their willingness, in the midst of their busy term time, to provide these articles for us to emulate. In sharing our good news we become more skilled at working with the students entrusted to us.

Susan Apáthy

## *Inaugural Young Leaders Day for the Wellington Archdiocese.*

**Rosemarie Ellis, Principal, St Benedict's School, Khandallah, Wellington**

The Catholic schools of Wellington organised a Young Leaders Day for our Year 6, 7 and 8 students. On 21st June 400 students in Years 6-8 came from all over the Wellington Archdiocese, from Blenheim, to the Wairarapa, to a Young Leaders Day. Thirty three schools filled the Deloitte's Gallery at the Westpac Stadium for a day of inspirational speakers, entertainment, competitions and prizes.

The focus was Young People Doing Great Things. We invited successful, inspiring young people to speak to our students about their successes, coping with difficult times, their life journey so far and their dreams for the future. Our aim was to inspire, stimulate and motivate our young people to make wise choices.

The day started with a Mihi Whakatau led by Maia Williams and Henare Walmsley. The MC for the day was Tim Gordon.

Our speakers were: Daniel Faitaua from TVNZ; Rowan Barbalich from the Christchurch Student Army; Taase Pusa, Head Girl at Sacred Heart College Lower Hutt; Therese Walsh from Rugby NZ, and the mystery guest was Conrad Smith - All Black.

Our colleges sent their top performers to entertain the students, including the Barbershop Quartets from Bishop Viard College, St Catherine's College and St Pat's College (town) and the Polynesian Group from Bishop Viard College, which performed the opening item.

The messages for the day were:

- Aim high, have high self expectations.
- Try hard, effort will be rewarded.
- Setbacks will happen, learn from them, they are a part of the journey.
- Help each other, together we are all stronger.
- Enjoy your life, make the most of every opportunity.
- Share your talents and gifts for the benefit of others.

The principals' organising team was Bernadette Murfitt (St Francis Xavier, Tawa), Linda Birch (St Michael's, Taita), Michele Lafferty (Catholic Schools Education Services), and Rosemarie Ellis (St Benedict's, Khandallah)

It was a wonderful success, with many schools asking for another Young Leaders Day next year.



▲ Wellington Young Leaders Day

## Transition to School – Bright Buttons

Mike Dowd, Principal, St Joseph's Catholic School, New Plymouth

Many families enrol their children at St Joseph's well before the child's 5th birthday. Transition begins from the moment of enrolment. Families receive an enrolment pack containing the necessary official documentation and school specific information, a booklet informing parents how to help their child to be ready for success at school and a parents' handbook which includes all that a new parent needs to know. The school website contains all of the information from the enrolment pack and details of recent and upcoming school events. New Plymouth attracts many expat families and the website is well used by international families, especially the photo gallery. From enrolment new families receive the school newsletter via the post or email.

Six years ago the daughter of Margaret Chylek-Peters, our former AP, was due to start school, and Margaret saw the need for a transition programme - Bright Buttons was born!

Bright Buttons runs every Wednesday afternoon. Children attend with a parent or care-giver. The session mimics a school day, beginning with prayer and a song from the class prayer collection. Margaret then shares a big book or story with the group. Children complete activities in groups with their parents. The focus is on emergent numeracy and literacy tasks. PE, RE and integrated curriculum activities are also included.

As principal, I attend most sessions, finding it a valuable time to be with the children and their parents.

The children also visit key areas around the school and get used to the happenings, sights and sounds around the school, and by the time they start school they can confidently find their way around and are aware of many of the school routines. The group is involved in many of the school activities. Whole School mix up days are often programmed for Wednesdays so that the Bright Buttons can be included. They also get invited to special events such as the Life Ed Bus and the recent school production.

Children also have two or three visits to their new entrant classroom so when they start school they enter a classroom where they already know their peers, and are already aware of many of the school routines and expectations. Most importantly the children's parents have made connections with other parents and have been part of their child's transition and integration into the welcoming St Joseph's community. On enrolment day new children receive home baking for their family from a family at the school. Twice a year new parents join with the new Bright Buttons families for afternoon tea. New and existing families join together as a school community and friendships begin to be established.

The Bright Buttons programme has certainly been a popular option for families. Over the last five years the roll has grown from 135 students to a 2011 total of 225 children. Parents appreciate the free programme and it has become a dynamic initiative which gets the St Joseph's, New Plymouth children off to a flying and settled start at school.



▲ *Preschool children enjoy St Joseph's Bright Buttons programme*

## Transition at Holy Cross Catholic School Papatoetoe

Donna Leaupepe, Assistant Principal, Mahi Tahī Co-ordinator

Holy Cross is a large multicultural decile 2 school located in South Auckland.

In 2009 we reviewed our transition to school process and the Mahi Tahī programme was born. We saw a need to further develop and establish sound relationships with all whānau as early as possible, embedding in parents a strong connection to the school that allows both parties to feel comfortable tackling the hard questions and issues as well as celebrating success. The programme focuses on empowering parents by giving them the information they need to help support their child at school.

In order to make parents feel comfortable and connected to the school all parents are contacted personally prior to their child starting school and are invited to school visits and a one on one meeting with the

Mahi Tahī co-ordinator (held at school or in the home at a time that best suits the family). There is no set time limit as meetings simply take as long as needed, until families feel informed and comfortable about their child transitioning to school.

At the one on one meeting the Mahi Tahī co-ordinator provides an environment where parents feel safe and comfortable to ask questions and clarify their understanding of the school. This is the most important stage of Mahi Tahī – the meeting connects the parents to the school and provides an opportunity for both parties to demonstrate commitment to the child. Information is gathered about each child, providing a starting point for classroom teachers. Parents are recognised as their child's first educator and are commended and affirmed on a job well done. The school values and commitment to

the Catholic faith are shared and parents are introduced to the Family Whānau book. A school starter pack provides ideas and resources for support at home. Parents are also introduced to the first three reading levels and the skills children need to master these are explained and modelled. Flash cards of the high frequency words for these levels are provided in the starter pack.

The school visits are fun and engaging for the children and their families. They begin with a 30 minute session with the Deputy Principal in our school library. Children have fun playing games that focus on literacy and numeracy skills, taking turns and sharing ideas. They use the Patch Play quilt to demonstrate their oral skills. The leader models effective strategies that parents can use at home with their children. Children then spend an hour in the classroom getting to know their teacher and peers while the Mahi Tahi co-ordinator again touches base with parents and provides any support they may need.

The programme continues to evolve as we discover further ways to enrich and empower our parents. We are committed to providing on-going information to parents about their child's progress socially

and academically and their spiritual growth and development. Junior teachers report to parents each term. Our parents now know more about their child and how they can work in partnership with the school to ensure their child experiences success. We celebrate success and tackle hard questions at the same time.

We have monitored the progress and effectiveness of the programme over the past 18 months, and seen the benefits of empowering parents. Recently, when the second child of a family started the mother commented on being better prepared and her child also being better prepared for school. She said she was now confident that she 'knew what to do' to help her child be successful. She used the resources in the school pack and her second child started school already knowing how to read some high frequency words and has made accelerated progress in reading during his first term at school.

Holy Cross School is committed to ensuring all children entering our care are given the best education we can provide. Mahi Tahi is just one of our tools.

## ***Education for Employment at De La Salle College, Mangere***

**Joe O'Malley, Gateway and EEP Co-ordinator**

The Education for Employment Programme (EEP) has been running successfully for over ten years at De La Salle College. Its primary goal is to ensure that the 25 students on the course each year leave school "work ready" with the skills required to function comfortably in the workplace.

This goal is achieved through two strands. Firstly, an academic goal, in that it is anticipated that all students will leave EEP with at least NCEA level 2 (as this is the minimum requirement sought by many employers, Services and Tertiary Providers for entry into their courses). Secondly, EEP sets standards and expectations in the classroom which reflect the expectations of employers.

Students that apply or have been recommended for EEP are often under achievers (due mainly to their poor attendance at school or their attitude in the classroom rather than a lack of ability). Some applicants are instead retained in mainstream classes, but they are monitored and given priority on Gateway programmes.

The caring structure in the EEP class develops self discipline and a camaraderie that makes students a close knit unit, proud of themselves, each other and their class. They fulfil their real potential. Attendance and punctuality each day is almost perfect with an average attendance throughout the year of over 95%.

The key component of EEP is the Friday Work Experience and the boys attend a workplace of their choice for most of the year. Many of the companies involved have been associated with the programme since the very beginning and it speaks highly of our boys that these companies continue to participate each year. A pleasing aspect of this work experience is when we are visiting our students we also meet up with our former students who are now working full time for the companies after being employed as soon as they had completed their EEP work experience in previous years.

The students of EEP leave each year as individual success stories. They have achieved their academic goals, First Aid Certificates, Driving Licences etc and even in these tough recession times, almost every student leaves for full time employment or a relevant tertiary course chosen for his future career path.

All are monitored for a year after leaving school, however this is made easy as they frequently call into school on their days off to reunite with the following year's EEP class and recount their achievements.

It is a rewarding experience to watch these students develop and grow into responsible, mature young men and also know that the EEP class has developed a tradition and standards in the school and local community that future classes can aspire to.



▲ *De La Salle College students on work experience.*

# The Career Pathways Programme at Francis Douglas Memorial College

Carol Land, Gateway Administrator, Francis Douglas Memorial College, New Plymouth

The aim of our CPP is to provide a supportive, meaningful, alternative learning environment for students. It gives students a chance to gain knowledge, skills and experiences for transition to tertiary learning or the workplace.

CPP provides courses and work experience that help students in their transition from school to employment or to further training opportunities. The students' timetable is separate from the rest of the college and generally students cannot undertake any conventional classes. Some flexibility is needed to fit in with courses and work exploration/Gateway, i.e. students may be required to work hours outside of the normal school hours.

There is a core programme with a compulsory in-school component mainly related to Communication English, Maths and Life Skills/Self Management. The rest of the weekly timetable is individualised according to students' needs, abilities and career goals. A range of training opportunities is available, eg. automotive, engineering,

hospitality, tourism, carpentry, electro-technology, first aid, health and safety. These courses are run outside of the college by NZQA accredited providers. All programmes are unit standards based so that students gain credits towards nationally recognised qualifications.

## The programme:

- Provides an opportunity to develop skills and achieve credits in vocational subjects and training with other providers.
- Enables students to achieve in areas outside the curriculum.
- Lifts foundation skills.

It is a win-win situation where students get the best of both worlds – the opportunity to continue to mature within the framework of the school setting while having the opportunity to try out a variety of career possibilities in the 'real world'.

We usually have around 18 Yr 13 students in the programme. Our selection process begins in conjunction with the whole school selection of subjects and we invite interested students and their parents/caregivers to a presentation. Students then apply in writing with a CV and we put the names out to staff for comments and select from there. We also take students in during the year where the conventional programme is not working for them. Our motto is "doing what is in the best interest of the individual student".



Francis Douglas Memorial College students on work experience.



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