Dear Parents and Friends of the College,

Last week the college community celebrated the Opening School Mass. This was a time to mark the beginning of the year and to focus on how each member of the community can bring the theme “Be the Change You Desire” to life. Father Peter Smith spoke to the congregation about how each of us could bring about change. He explained that changes begin with students in their world. I hope that all students listened to Fr Peter’s message and are prepared to accept the challenge to bring about the changes that they desire. I thank everyone involved for a memorable ceremony and I especially acknowledge and thank the parents who were able to join us to begin our year with the celebration of the Eucharist.

During the Opening Mass we acknowledged the College Dux for 2007, Dino Romeo, and the leaders for 2008. The community is very proud of Dino’s achievements as was stated at the end of Mass. The occasion also allowed us to present the 2008 leaders to the community. The leadership structure involves 68 students who have agreed to be representatives of and lead the student body. Twenty of these students make up the Student Representative Council. I congratulate all students who have been elected as leaders. A full list of leaders is included later in this newsletter, however, I take this opportunity to acknowledge our senior leaders for 2008. Congratulations to: College Captains Tiana Romeo and Andrew El Zakhem, and to Senior Leaders Maryann Wright, Reiko Aguilar, Elisa Gatto, Alexander De Falco, Phillip Do and Matthew Alverne.

Last Monday the parents of Year 7 2008 came to the college to meet their child’s Pastoral Care teachers. The teachers explained the college procedures and processes so that parents have an understanding of what is required from their child during high school. It also provided an opportunity for parents to become familiar with the pastoral care teacher. This familiarity will facilitate effective communication which is essential if the college and parents are to provide the best possible education for all students.

I remind parents that the first point of communication is either the subject or pastoral care teacher depending on the nature of the issue. Often an issue can be resolved quickly and effectively at this level if contact is made early. I encourage parents to contact the college with any concerns so that these concerns can be resolved.

Over the last week it has been pleasing to see the attendance level of parents at the Year 11 Assessment Evening and at the Year 7 Information Evening. I remind all parents that it is an expectation of the college that parents attend information evenings. These evenings provide an opportunity for parents to be updated on facts, procedures and processes that will impact on the education of their sons and daughters.

Over the last year a group of parents were involved in the Parent Consultation Committee. This group has been a point of reference and provided valuable input into college directions. If any parents would like to be involved in the group in 2008 I ask you to submit your name to the office by Wednesday February 20. Numbers are limited and if parents are not able to be part of the committee in 2008 there will be opportunities in future years.

God Bless,

Mr John Lo Cascio
Principal

JOURNEYING WITH COMPASSION
Reconciliation – Commitment and Renewal
On Wednesday, 13th February students and staff attended a formal assembly to reflect on the significant event that took place in the National Parliament when a formal apology to members of the Stolen Generations was made by the Prime Minister.

As a Catholic community we gathered in prayer to ask our loving God to lead us to seek compassion, reconciliation and healing with those who suffer pain and anguish from the dispossession of land, language, culture and family kinship. We renewed the commitment to Reconciliation given at the Jubilee 2000 celebrations by recalling the pledge offered by those gathered to make sure that we learn the truth of our shared history, respect the indigenous culture and heritage and do all that we can to ensure that everyone in our country is treated fairly.

Prayer Reflection
Almighty and loving God, you who created ALL people in your image,
Lead us to seek your compassion as we listen to the stories of our past.
You gave your only Son, Jesus, who died and rose again so that sins will be forgiven.
We place before you the pain and anguish of dispossession of land, language, lore...culture and family kinship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced.
We live in faith that all people will rise from the depths of despair and hopelessness. Amen.

Internet Safety Education NetAlert Presentation
Internet content filters are only one part of online safety. NetAlert is the Australian Government's internet safety initiative which consists of a wide range of activities. This organisation provides practical information and advice on how to keep children, and your family, safe whilst online. The NetAlert Outreach and Research program is managed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority and it provides information on current trends in internet safety and targeted awareness raising campaigns and activities including the Cybersafe and Cybersmart programs. Further information about all of these can be found at the following site: http://www.netalert.gov.au

In the context of Good Samaritan Catholic College a parent information session has been arranged with the focus on internet safety education for secondary school students and their parents. It will investigate the potential dangers of social networking sites and chat rooms as well as discussing the issue of cyber bullying. The College has arranged for a highly regarded and reputable representative from NetAlert to speak at this parent information session which will be held on Monday, 3rd March commencing at 7.00pm at the College. All families are urged to seriously consider the benefit of attending this information session.

Mr P Brooks, Assistant Principal

2008 College Leaders - Congratulations

Pastoral Care Representatives
Year 8
Isabella Saliba  Corey Darte
Mark Kalway  Marina Estephan
Charbel Abou-Fram  Renee Boreta
Monique Brown  Marcus Clinch
Isaac Finau  Natasha Pope

Year 9
Matthew McElhone  Lauren Smith
Daniel Cassone  Sam Rigitano
Jema Samonte  Joseph Inzitari
Samantha Angeloni  Mark Bawalan
Sarah Yazbeck  Andrew Wright

Year 10
Holly Chapple  Mark Haider
Damian Ferrer  Denise Hoang
Anthony Dalger  Natasha Ishac
Joseph Foti  Giulia Tolomeo
Christina Campbell  John Kennedy

Year 11
Natasha Perre  Diana Macri
Anthony Belardo  Shelby Lumme
Danielle McPherson  Adam Cosgrove
Haylee Ingle  Wesley Lizada
Jade O'Brien  Daniel Arcuri

SRC Representatives
Year 8
Melissa Arndell & Joseph Ragusa

Year 9
Natalie Perre & Gaby Macias

Year 10
Sarah Spadaro & Paolo Marcocci

Year 11
Ashleigh Pontifex & Anthony Thepsombandith

Senior Leaders

School Captains
Tiana Romeo & Andrew El Zakhem
The season of Lent commenced with Ash Wednesday last week. During Lent, we are challenged to renew our faith in Christ through penance, alms-giving and prayer. As customary at Good Samaritan, all of the students attended Ash Wednesday liturgies in their house groups where they were reminded of their responsibility to apologise for their wrong doings and find time to pray to our God for strength to become better people.

During the liturgies students were also reminded of the need to remember other people who are less fortunate than ourselves. Project Compassion was launched and all students were encouraged to reflect on real ways to help and bring hope to people who do not have the luxuries this country offers.

I hope and pray that as people joined in the one body of Christ, we spend quality time with our God; that by renewing our faith we can be the change we so desperately desire and that true compassion for each other is evident in all our relationships.

Mr K Griffiths
Religious Education Coordinator

ADOLESCENCE can be a WONDER–FUL time - a time of great IDEALISM, full of dreaming – the perfect job, the perfect partner, the perfect home, the perfect family, the perfect holiday etc etc. It is a time of "living in the clouds" as we say. However, a recent fall I had when looking at the clouds rather than the road ahead alerted me to a home truth. We must all keep ourselves GROUNDED and FOCUSED on what we need to do to achieve our GOALS of getting where we want to go.

I marvel at some adolescents who don’t have an easy road – complex home situations, health issues, limited learning abilities – but who struggle on despite all the obstacles to achieve what they want in life. We have some wonderful role models to help us – Louise Sauvage, the wheel chair Olympian and little Sophie, the victim of those two horrific accidents and the world famous skier who has only one leg. They show tremendous COURAGE to never give up.

Lent can be a time for us all to REFOCUS on what is really important. Certainly prayer, fasting and good deeds will help us on our life’s journey.

Wishing you and your families a BLESSED LENT.

Sr Marj Carroll

World Youth Day Homestay Program

This year will witness World Youth Day with thousands of Pilgrims from overseas coming to Australia.

Each pilgrim to our country will be seeking accommodation. Our church is calling on the generosity of families in the Parish and Schools to offer accommodation to pilgrims during July.

If any parents are able to offer accommodation to pilgrims please contact: Mrs Gail Gerrish the College Homestay Co-ordinator on Tele: 9607 8019.

Uniform Shop Hours
The Uniform Shop will be open on the following days and time:
Monday to Thursday 7.30 am to 8.20 am
Tuesday (26/2/08) 12 noon to 3.45 pm
Tuesday (11/3/08) 12 noon to 3.45 pm
Tuesday (25/3/08) 12 noon to 3.45 pm
Thank you to all parents and friends within our community who supported us during the deluge on Tuesday 5th February, 2008. As you can tell from these photographs it was a very challenging day.
Ability Grouping at Good Samaritan Catholic College

Students in Year 7 to 10 at Good Samaritan Catholic College have been placed in classes based on ability groups. This information has been compiled to assist parents and students in their understanding of how and why we have chosen to ability group students into classes for 2008.

What is ability grouping?
Ability grouping is one way schools can organise students into class groups. Being in a class that has been ability grouped means that students are being placed into a class with other students who have a similar level of ability.

Why are we ability grouping classes?
There are two main benefits of ability grouping classes. One benefit is the ability to modify the pace of a lesson and the other to offer a different level of complexity within the lesson.

In this explanation the word pace refers to the speed at which a student can complete work. In classes some students are able to work quickly and are able to complete more work than some others can achieve in a lesson. Other students are able to complete the work set for them in class but need additional time and teacher assistance during the lesson. When students feel that they are left waiting for others to catch up or that they just want a little more support they can get frustrated and lose interest in learning.

In this explanation the word complexity refers to the level of difficulty of tasks completed in lessons. In classes some students enjoy the challenge provided with questions and activities that are set with a high level of complexity. For other students they learn best when questions and activities are staged so that the level of difficulty increases more slowly. When students feel that class work is too easy or too hard they can get frustrated and lose interest in learning.

We want all students to enjoy learning. When classes are ability grouped it allows teachers to prepare lessons that will assist students who work at a similar pace as each other to meet the challenges of learning.

Does this mean that classes are streamed at GSCC?
Ability grouping is one method of streaming, however, it is not the more traditional method of placing students in order from top to bottom.

At Good Samaritan Catholic College we have grouped our students into three groups, one group that will work at a faster pace, a core group that will work at a more moderate pace, and one group that will work with additional support and teacher resources to ensure that all students find success in their learning.

Once students are placed within an ability group they are then placed randomly into one of the classes for that ability group. This means that the numbering used to identify classes is merely for organisational purposes; students in 10.1 are not the 'highest' and similarly students in 10.6 are not the 'lowest' class. In this system all classes are viewed as equally capable of achievement, however, that different approaches to teaching and learning are used to ensure that our learners have the opportunity to succeed.

Do students in different levels undertake different work?
Excluding the Mathematics programme, students in each year group will undertake the same program of work. This means that students will receive and be expected to undertake the same topics and complete the same assessment tasks in their classes.

What may be different, which would be the same with mixed ability classes, is that different teachers use different resources that suit their teaching style and/or the students as learners in their charge.

The pace may be different which means that students who learn at a faster pace may move through the introductory aspects of units rather quickly and have time to focus in greater depth on the more complex aspects of a unit of work. In the same way students who need to work at a slower pace will have time to ensure that the basics are understood, which means that the more complex understandings that follow in the unit can indeed be understood by the students.

The Learning Support Team at Good Samaritan will be supporting students and teachers working at each level this year. This means that students will have specialists in literacy and numeracy working with classroom teachers to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of them as learners.

It is important to add that any student who has been identified as a special needs student and thus requires modified work and assessment tasks will receive this support as they did in the primary school.

What about student movement between groups?
Ability grouping is undertaken with the utmost care. Our students were placed into groups based on information provided to us from teachers, past performance and from the testing that was undertaken in 2007. Student’s placement within a group will be periodically reviewed on the advice of teachers working with the students for that calendar year.

Miss C Molloy
Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator
Year 12 Textiles Excursion

On Thursday 7th February the Year 12 Textiles class with Ms Harper set off to Vaucluse House to view examples of top students textiles projects from 2007.

Students were inspired by what they saw and it gave them ideas as to how to present their work and how to incorporate techniques into their designs.

Students listened to a lecture by Lynda Peters who informed them about the requirements for both their practical and folio. She gave many insightful tips and ideas as to how to gain maximum marks.

A quote from one of the students “we not only were inspired for school purposes but also for our own personal knowledge from attending this excursion we have now become more confident and have gained more knowledge for our Major Textiles Project”.

We had a rewarding and valuable experience in a beautiful area and all had a great day.

Mrs C Harper
Textile Teacher

Presenting the Berne Education Centre’s newest resource for families

Parenting in Practice

Parenting in practice is a 72 page booking which aims to offer supportive advise to parents of children and adolescents. It demonstrates common sense strategies to parenting through detailed text, examples and scenarios.

It has a positive and affirming approach, building on the strengths inherent in its readers.

Parenting in Practice aims to facilitate simple solutions to the common and everyday challenges of parenting.

All proceeds go directly to supporting the work of the Berne Education.

Parenting in Practice is available from the Berne Education Centre for:

$10 each for orders of up to 200 booklets (not including GST).

Contact details:
Phone: 9569 9260 Fax: 9560 9290
Email: bernecen@tpg.com.au

CANTEEN ROSTER

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