



Achievement, Confidence & Pride

Thursday 5 December

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Online Blogs – Italian and gardening

Nick Boffa teaches Italian to all students in their grade for one hour each week. He also runs the gardening club spending lunch time every Tuesday with groups of interested students, planting, watering, weeding and eventually harvesting fruits and vegetables.

You can read about both these curriculum areas in Mr Boffa's blogs:

<http://lastampa.global2.vic.edu.au/2019/12/03/roman-mythology/>

<http://lastampa.global2.vic.edu.au/2019/12/01/noi-aumentiamo-il-nostro-vocabolario/> .

Good hygiene important at home and school

Students and staff have been absent due to an infectious strain of gastroenteritis recently. Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines, typically resulting from bacterial or viral infection, causing vomiting and diarrhoea.

I ask parents to stress the need for children to use soap every time they wash their hands and to wash and rinse thoroughly, especially before eating snacks and meals. Changing hand towels regularly and having hand disinfectant dispensers in the bathroom helps reduce the spreading of infection.

The impact of trauma to children's learning experiences

The following article was written for teachers, however its message applies to parents and others involved in the social development of children through sports, clubs and community groups.

Regardless of whether you a parent or teacher in remote, rural, regional, or metropolitan area, you can expect to come across a child who has experienced trauma. Understanding the impact of trauma on learning capability may assist you to create trauma-sensitive learning environments.

What is trauma?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are stressful or traumatic events, including physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing domestic violence, severe poverty, experiencing stigma and discrimination based on their race, religion or sexual identity, etc. For children who live in consistently dysfunctional environments the cumulative effect of traumatic experiences that are repeated or prolonged over time is referred to as complex trauma. In Australia one in four adults – approximately 5 million people – are estimated to have experienced significant childhood trauma



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(Blue Knot Foundation, 2019). Such trauma usually occurs during developmentally vulnerable periods (such as toddlerhood or early adolescence) and usually within the child's social or family network (Cook et al., 2005). Trauma is thought to have significant implications for the development of children's cognition, language and self-identity, individual responses to traumatic experiences vary widely (Walls, Higgins & Hunter, 2016).

How may it affect learning?

Students need healthy cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development to learn successfully. Neuroscientists are discovering the impact of toxic stress from trauma affects both the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain responsible for self-regulation and working memory. As a result of neglect and a lack of cognitive stimulation, increased cortical thinning occurs, resulting in reduced capacities to think and learn. In contrast, abuse (including experiences of being harmed or the threat of harm) predisposes the brain to developing further systems to early detection of threat and can create hypervigilance (Walls, Higgins & Hunter, 2016). Symptoms resulting from trauma can directly impact a student's ability to learn, for example jumpiness, intrusive thoughts, interrupted sleep and nightmares, anger and moodiness, and/or social withdrawal — any of which can interfere with concentration and memory.

Toxic stress during a child's early years can reduce a child's ability to focus, organize, and process information, and interfere with effective problem solving and/or planning. Psychologically, they are vulnerable to anxiety and depression; behaviourally, they are prone to the extremes of withdrawal or serious acting-out behaviours. None of these outcomes bodes well for school success.

Navigating new situations and processing new information – which is what we ask children to do at school every day – becomes a daily exercise in frustration. Physical and emotional distress may present as symptoms like headaches and stomachaches, poor control of emotions, inconsistent academic performance, impulsive and/or unpredictable behaviour, over or under-reacting to loud or sudden stimulus, intense reactions to reminders of their traumatic event, thinking others are violating their personal space i.e. "What are you looking at?", blowing up when being corrected or told what to do by an authority figure, fighting when criticized or teased by others, or being resistant to change.

Certain forms of childhood trauma can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, separation anxiety, social anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and oppositional defiance, and children with multiple exposures to trauma are far more likely to be labelled with a learning disability or behaviour problem (McClean, 2018).

What can we do to help children with adversity, thrive?

> Create positive experiences through meaningful connection and care.

Compassion can triumph over trauma. A child's school journey is a time in which their experiences shape their futures; our schools are often the place in which children's worlds are expanded beyond family to community, it is often our first independent exploration of friendships, and engagement in structured activity as preparation for work.



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Most adults can recall a time at school that was significant to them, but how often are those memories to do with the learning or academic successes? More often it is recalling the ways in which teachers responded with compassion and care, when their passion was contagious, or they shared their wisdom beyond any curriculum detailing. For children who have or may be experiencing adversity at home, school may be the only place where they feel safe, valued and heard. Experiences of connection and care is an intrinsic human need and paramount to a child's healing and wellbeing. Classrooms should be a place of safety and calm for children. Encourage your professional learning community to get involved in creating classroom environments that are sensitive to the needs of children impacted by trauma. One way to accomplish this is to identify and implement trauma-informed best practices and accommodations in classrooms.

> Expand the focus from academic success to cultivating character strengths and a growth mindset
Beyond the cognitive skills our education system is designed to teach, being an Educator provides opportunity to cultivate character strengths associated with success, such as zest, social intelligence, persistence, creativity, conscientiousness, optimism, self-control, curiosity, gratitude and grit. For these positive characteristics to manifest, children need to spend time in environments where they feel a sense of belonging. In his book 'How Children Succeed' **Paul Tough** insists instead of thinking of these characteristics as skills that children can learn (whereby the pressure is on children to learn them), we need to see them as by-products of a child's environment, they are psychological conditions that result from personal and environmental factors. The responsibility is then on the adults surrounding that child to figure out how we need to change and adapt the child's environment to support them to succeed.

> Respond to each child's needs individually, including engaging with the other important people in their life.

Teachers have an immense responsibility in ensuring each child is supported with an education that is effective for them. A crucial step in fulfilling this is identifying when a student may be affected by trauma and ensuring that specific cognitive difficulties are addressed directly. Carers and children need an explanation for the difficulties they may be encountering. By identifying gaps in learning, appropriate support can be developed. Teaching new skills that address the trauma is a way to empower both children and caregivers which may lead to more realistic self-identity and a more optimistic outlook on school participation. Additionally, this may provide an opportunity to discuss other supports to the family, in turn, another way to support the child.

A few helpful hints to keep in mind:

- Recognize that behavioural problems may be transient and related to trauma. Understand that children cope by re-enacting trauma through play or through their interactions.
- Support the child to develop emotional regulation skills;
- Give children choices. Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos, so you can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate.
- Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behaviour and develop logical — rather than disciplinary — consequences.



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- Be sensitive to the cues in the environment that may cause a reaction in the traumatized child. If you can identify reminders, you can help by preparing the child for the situation.
- Be aware of other children's reactions to the traumatized child and to the information they share
- And most importantly - in order to provide appropriate support for traumatised children, practice self-care; access coordinated professional support for personal and professional stress.

For more information there are a plethora of training and resource materials through your state department or the broader welfare sector, such as The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and Blue Knot (formerly Adults Surviving Child Abuse) who have produced practice guidelines for addressing trauma.

Elise Dunn- Practice Specialist High Intervention & Mental Health Interrelate

Christmas Raffle drawn Monday 16th December at 9am

I wish to thank families who generously supported this year's Christmas raffle. There are seven fantastic prizes; the first prize is a wheelbarrow and laundry basket full of goodies. There are five additional laundry baskets full of Christmas presents for the next five winning tickets. Ticket sales close Friday 13th December.

Oil Tank removal update

The oil tanks have been removed and I'm pleased to report that the soil was tested and found **clear of contamination**. The areas are being rehabilitated and I expect the remaining equipment and temporary fences will be removed today.

Once again I thank students, staff and parents for your patience and understanding.

Canteen News

Canteen stock is being 'run down' over this month. When an item is no longer available, you will be unable to select it from the online menu.

Di and I would like to thank all volunteers who helped provide our children with good, healthy lunches throughout this year. **Di** runs a very good canteen, and while volunteers are busy, it is a lot of fun. Special thanks to **Andrew Lai** who ensured our transition to online ordering went smoothly.

Student absence and lunch orders: It is incumbent upon the parent to cancel the lunch order when a child is absent. Late cancellations will incur the cost if the item ordered has been defrosted or prepared.

You can use Compass to check your email address

Please take a moment to check that the school has your current email address by logging into compass. The Semester Two reports will be distributed to parents as PDF files via email. Written reports are available on request.



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Student Positions of Responsibility for 2020

The following student positions of responsibility will be filled next week. The successful students will be presented with their badges in February 2020. The positions are: School Captains, House Captains and Vice Captains, Flag Monitors

Students present their speeches in the 2nd week in December. To be eligible for selection, students must attend on this day. Accompanying the newsletter is a PDF that explains the selection process

I hope you have a great week.

Paul Mulroyan

December Diary

December

Thurs 5	Music Concerts: 3/4A & B and 4/5A
Fri 6 th	Junior Athletics Day
Tue 10	Transition Day for new students Yrs. 1-6 in 2020 and Year 6 Orientation Day
Wed 11	Parent Helpers Morning Tea
Thurs. 12	Music Concerts: 1/2A, 2A & 2B, 3/4C & 3/4D and 5/6s
Fri 13	Student End of Year reports emailed home
Wed 18	Year Six students Bowling Excursion Year Six students' graduation (St Bernard's College)
Thurs 19	Students' last day – Assembly 1pm Year 6 farewell 1:15pm

Library Stocktake Timeline

Dear Parents and Students,

As the Library is starting the annual stocktake, we would appreciate the return of the school library books in the following order:

- **Fiction Books** due back **Friday 6th Dec.**
- **Picture Books** due back **Friday 13th Dec.**





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Pupils of the Week – Awarded Friday 29 November

Prep A – Sevin R
Prep B – Quinn P
Prep C – Marcus N
Prep D – Harry H

One A – Alexandra M
One B – Alexandre M
One C – Affan A
Two A – Ollie S
Two B – Srisaurya V & Mina H
1/2 A – Lola D

3/4 A – Aysel R
3/4 B – Danny T
3/4 C – Ephrata B
3/4 D – Jessica N

4/5A – Dillan Z
5/6 C – Georgia W

5/6 A – Claire R
5/6D – Bronte D

5/6 B – Daniel T
LOTE – Katelyn