5th March 2013

PRINCIPAL’S MESSAGE

RECENT SCHOOL FUNCTIONS
My thanks to the staff, P&C and parents for the wonderful support we enjoyed over the past couple of weeks at our “start of year” school functions. The “meet the teachers” evenings were well patronised and I’m sure parents gained a great deal from the opportunity to meet, first hand, their child’s class teacher and find out about the structures and programs planned for 2013. I noticed a number of people here on both evenings! Things go well with dedicated staff and parents working together.

My thanks also to the members of the P&C and their supporters for the wonderful “welcome breakfast” held on Friday the 22nd February. Not only was it a huge turnout but there was a great atmosphere of parents, children and staff socialising together at school. Our thanks to Mr & Mrs Canning, Mrs Campbell, Mr and Mrs Lester, Mr Francis, Mrs Holland, Mrs Wiffen, Mrs Lane, Mrs Critchley, Mrs Tester, Mr and Mrs Thyrd, Ms Hook and Ms Hazell for their early start and all the preparation to ensure we would all enjoy a delicious breakfast. Just marvellous!

CAMPS
Over the next few weeks, our Yr 4 and Yr 5 students accompanied by their teachers will be enjoying the activities and experiences at their camps at Yarramundi in the Hawkesbury and Lake Burrendong in western NSW.

As I have indicated before, camps provide wonderful experiences and opportunities for children to develop social, leadership and life skills, but they are not possible without the support and commitment of staff.

On behalf of the children and parents, thanks to Mr Rutherford and Mrs Thompson, Mrs Delbridge and Mrs Ryan for donating significant amounts of personal time.
to ensure the students will have those wonderful experiences. In Term 4 the Year 3 students will have their first overnight camp and in Term 3 Year Six students and teachers will go to Canberra and the snowy.

It is heartening for teachers to know that their efforts & commitment is appreciated by parents.

**STUDENT WELFARE**

**Road / parking safety**

Further on in this newsletter is a brochure from Penrith Council regarding safe driver behaviour around schools. The slogan is “Zero Tolerance” and as a school and community we thoroughly endorse their efforts to ensure that all drivers conduct themselves safely around schools for the safety of our children.

As well as police Highway Patrol vehicles monitoring driver behaviour, Penrith Council has parking rangers who regularly visit in the mornings and afternoons. They are not shy about applying fines for drivers risking the welfare of students.

**CYBER WORLD**

It seems that almost weekly there is a story or article about the issues of the “cyber world” that children are involved in to various degrees. At school we are part of a secure (but not perfect) system that has levels of protection when accessing the internet. I am reminded however of information from the DEC legal branch that indicates a huge percentage of issues stem from children being **careless with their passwords**.

We read in the press about cyber bullying and the like, but as has been pointed out many times, most of the issues would not occur if children ensured their passwords were secure and they did not share personal information.

I know many parents have concerns regarding the use of social media but it is a part of our modern world, it can be very useful, but it needs to be managed carefully and sensibly.

Some things parents can do to minimise the possible negatives are:

- **ensure children are old enough to manage the process.** Children need to be 13yrs old to be on Facebook. Just as it is for viewing movies….there is an age limit, **and it is there for a reason.**
- **ensure children are not alone when on the computer.** TVs and computers in bedrooms are not recommended for children under 15. It is better if they are in a shared space where there can be some monitoring of the interactions.
- **Ensure passwords are secure…. Do not share.**
  
  With any sensitive information, security is of the utmost importance.
**TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PROJECT (Starting School Group)**

I am pleased to inform parents that we have again been selected to host the very successful Starting School Group or SSG at our school.

This free, supported playgroup is an initiative of Connect – Child and Family Services. It provides an ideal opportunity for children of preschool age to develop skills and experiences for a successful start to their schooling in Kindergarten in 2014.

The program will run on Tuesday mornings here at EPPS in Terms 3 and 4 and all local children who are intending to start school next year and meet criteria are welcome to attend.

More information will follow later in the year.

**STUDENT ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

A reminder that schools have at their disposal, a special and designated but limited fund to support students and families. The money in this fund is to assist with educational activities and materials throughout the school year. Parents are welcome to speak to the principal, in confidence, regarding this support so that all children are able to enjoy all aspects of the educational programs offered at Emu Plains Public School.

**VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, our Voluntary School Contribution for 2013 will be $40 per family, the same as last year. These contributions are an important source of funds that assist the school to provide many of the resources required in teaching learning programs.

Many thanks to those families that have already made their contributions for this year. To date we have 42 families (14% of EPPS families) that have forwarded their contributions. We do appreciate your ongoing and timely support.

**ROLES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT PERSONNEL**

The nature of education and schools is quite different today to what it was when many parents went to school. From pre-school to university, the complexity and the nature of teaching and learning has changed. In order to provide the best service possible for our students, there are a number of support personnel located in Public Schools to assist this process of learning and development. Support personnel at Emu Plains Public School are as follows: -

School Counsellor – Mr Ian Birrell

School Counsellors are trained psychologists with teaching
experience who assess students’ learning potential via specially developed tests and procedures. The counsellor also provides support and advice to teachers, parents and students. The school counsellor is able to help guide parents to appropriate agencies outside the school for specialist support when and if necessary. At Emu Plains Public School the counsellor is an integral part of our Learning and Welfare Team. He is located at the school 1.5 days per week.

**Support Teacher Learning -Ms L. Butler & Ms S. Parkin**
The Learning Support Teacher works with students to support the class teaching / learning program. She provides special extra activities and instruction in a smaller group environment to reinforce skills and concepts in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy. She is at our school three days per week.

**Reading Recovery Teacher – Ms V. Serebriakov**
The Reading Recovery Teacher provides a specialist, individual, reading program for identified students in Year 1. Ms Serebriakov works with up to five students individually, for half hour sessions in the morning, reinforcing and developing concepts of print. Reading Recovery is an accelerative program for students who have been experiencing difficulties in their early reading development. It has an enviable success rate and has become a key feature of Emu Plains School.

**Teachers' Aides - Mrs Clear, Mrs Finemore, Mrs James & Mrs McLeod**
Teachers’ Aides are employed by the Department of Education and Communities to assist individual students with particular learning, behavioural or physical difficulties. Experience and training ensure these essential staff members fulfil roles vital to the growth and development of students.

**ROLE OF SCHOOL LEARNING AND WELFARE COMMITTEE**
Schools in today's society play a far more significant role than just Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. To the best of our abilities, and within the limits of our finite resources, schools are about the development of the whole child; intellectual, physical, social and emotional. At Emu Plains Public School we have a special committee to support and manage the programs closely associated with student development.

The Learning and Welfare (LAW) Committee is chaired by Mrs Borgen and supported by the school counsellor (Mr Birrell), executive staff (Mrs Curran & Mrs Frith), the Support Teacher Learning (Ms Butler) our Reading Recovery
teacher (Ms Serebriakov) and members of staff.

One role of this committee is to assess the special learning needs of students and request support funding where necessary. Where support funding is granted by the Department of Education and Communities, extra staff including Teacher's Aides are employed to assist students with aspects of their learning or behaviour. The committee also discusses and prioritises the referrals for counsellor intervention and/or assessment.

Another role of this committee is to oversee the implementation of the Student Welfare and Discipline Policy, particularly in relation to students requiring intervention and support to achieve their potential. The committee meets weekly to discuss all issues of student progress and make recommendations regarding appropriate actions. Any decision affecting a student's status is discussed at length and agreed on by the committee.

**Process of Referral**

Students requiring additional support at school may be identified by teachers and/or parents. Through teacher and parent consultation these students may be referred to the school’s LAW Committee. The committee then discusses the most appropriate form of support and intervention for the student and communicates this outcome to parents/carers.

In some cases a referral to the LAW Committee may result in a referral to the school counsellor. In these cases, written permission will be sought from parents/carers. All referrals to the school counsellor are prioritised by the committee according to level of need at school. Following intervention by the school counsellor parents will be invited to discuss the outcome of this intervention with the counsellor and be provided, in many cases, with a written report.

Should there be a counsellor recommendation for further intervention through a non-DEC service provider (e.g. paediatrician) then this report may be used to provide information to inform additional assessment. The school counsellor, with parent/carer permission, will liaise with outside service providers, as required/requested.

As the school counsellor is employed by The Department of Education and Communities they work in response to referrals from the LAW Committee, and are not in a position to respond to requests for assessment from
outside service providers. Parents/carers however, may feel free to discuss any issue affecting their child with the classroom teacher in order to determine whether a referral to the Learning and Support Team may be appropriate. The LAW Committee will then discuss what intervention is appropriate.

**Requests for Information from non-DEC Service Providers**

Parents may choose to independently seek intervention through a non-DEC service provider independent of a school referral to the LAW Committee. In some cases, outside professionals will then provide parents with questionnaires to hand to the class teacher, or may request other forms of information from the school. All such requests MUST be made through the principal.

Due to issues of privacy and confidentiality surrounding the release of information, in addition to considerations of teacher workload, parents/carers are kindly requested to ensure that the following protocols are observed:

- The service provider is requested to forward a letter addressed to the principal outlining what information and who is required to complete the information. When particular forms are required to be completed these need to be included in the letter of request and not handed to the classroom teacher
- The parent/legal carer must provide written permission for the release of information
- A return name and address of the service provider is required for confidential return of information through the principal
- All information exchanged will be in writing
- Please allow at least 2 to 4 weeks prior to a further appointment for information to be collected and sent

**Note:** Letters to service providers outlining the above protocols, together with permission to release information proformas are available from Mrs Borgen, Assistant Principal. You are welcome to collect this package prior to your child’s first appointment with an outside service provider

A.W. Best
Principal
2013 Premier’s Reading Challenge

The 2013 Premier’s Reading Challenge has commenced. The challenge aims to encourage in students a love of reading for leisure and pleasure, and to enable students to experience quality literature. It is not a competition but a challenge to each student to read, to read more and to read more widely.

All children in the school can participate in the challenge. The challenge involves children in kindergarten to year two reading thirty books and those in years three to six reading twenty books. Most of the books must be from the Premier’s Reading Challenge booklist. The challenge finishes in September and certificates are presented in December. Students who complete the challenge for four years receive a gold certificate. Completing the challenge for seven years earn the participant a Platinum Award. Further updates and information will be provided during the year.

Full details of the challenge can be found online at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/premiersreadingchallenge.

Challenge books are available from our school library and Mr Botham can assist children to find books from the list. Books that are read in class can also count towards the challenge. Younger grades will display a list of books from the Premier’s Reading Challenge that have been read in class.

Last year two hundred and eight children from Emu Plains completed the challenge and received certificates. This year we are aiming to exceed this number. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to encourage good reading habits at home.

For any further information or questions regarding the Premier’s Reading Challenge please contact Mrs Thompson, Mrs Chan or Mrs Richardson.

LIBRARY NEWS

Books are many things: lullabies for the weary, ointment for the wounded, armour for the fearful and nests for those in need of a home.

Glenda Millard
This powerful quote from Glenda Millard’s *The Tender Moments of Saffron Silk* is a reminder that stories are not just for entertainment, but can play an important role in helping the reader make sense of their world and deal with the various curved balls that life can throw.

The use of books as a legitimate therapeutic tool, or *bibliotherapy*, has been around for a long time. Interestingly, the books of ancient Alexandria were known as “medicine for the mind” and the once great library of ancient Thebes was viewed as a “healing place for the soul”.

Many Australian award-winning children’s authors and illustrators have created beautiful books that harness the healing power of story. Recent examples include: Susanne Gervay’s *I Am Jack* (bullying) and *Ships in the Field* (refugees), Aaron Blabey’s *Sunday Chutney* (being the new kid on the block), Gus Gordon’s *Herman and Rosie* (loneliness) and Kate Constable’s *Crow Country* (prejudice).

The internet has many sites listing suitable books but often exclude Australian titles. Your friendly, local school and public librarians are able to assist in bringing “the right book to the right child at the right time for the right reason.” (Sisk, 1982)

Kindergarten and Year 1 have enjoyed the following PRC titles:

1. *The wrong book* / Nick Bland (PRC # 6269)
2. *Wolf’s Sunday dinner* / Tania Cox (PRC # 12298)

Happy reading!
Mike Botham
Teacher/Librarian

**SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS**

*(Reminder)*

School photographs will be taken on Friday 8th March. The packages will range in price from $15 to $35. Please keep an eye out for the notes and the envelopes. Money needs to come in on the day of the photos and it is essential that payments are accurate because change WILL NOT be offered on the day.

**SCHOOL OFFICE**

From time to time we run out of spare school uniforms for the children. At the present time we are running low on Boys grey shorts in large sizes. We would appreciate it greatly if when you are cleaning out your child’s uniforms that you could donate them back to the school for further use.

Our school also deals with a lot of payments at various times and we do not hold large amounts of change on the school premises. It would be a great help if you could have the exact amount when making these payments.
### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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<th>Term 1 - 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 8 Mar School Photos</td>
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<td>Mon 11 Mar P &amp; C Meeting</td>
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<td>Thurs 14 Mar Select High School Tests</td>
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<td>Sun 17 Mar P &amp; C Working Bee</td>
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<td>Mon-Fri 18-22 Mar Year 5 Camp</td>
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<td>Mon-Wed 25-27 Mar Year 4 Camp</td>
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<td>Fri 29 Mar Public Holiday – Good Friday</td>
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<td>Mon 1 Apr Public Holiday – Easter Monday</td>
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<td>Fri 5 Apr School Cross Country</td>
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<td>Fri 12 Apr End of Term 1</td>
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<th>Term 2 – 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 29 Apr Start Term 2 – <strong>Staff Only</strong></td>
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<td>Wed 1 May Students return</td>
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<td>Wed 12 Jun Opera Australia “The Magic Flute”</td>
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<td>Sat 22 Jun P &amp; C Trivia Night</td>
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<td>Fri 28 Jun End of Term 2</td>
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<th>Term 3 - 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 15 Jul Start Term 3 – <strong>Staff Only</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 16 Jul Students return</td>
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<td>Tue 30 Jul – Aug Yr 6 Camp</td>
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<td>Fri 20 Sept End of Term 3</td>
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<th>Term 4 - 2013</th>
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<td>Tue 8 Oct Start Term 4 - <strong>Staff &amp; Students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur-Fri 17-18 Oct Yr 3 Camp</td>
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<td>Wed 18 Dec Last day for students</td>
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<td>Fri 20 Dec School closes</td>
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