



Principal News – December 2020

2021 Tutoring program

The DET has provided funding for all schools to provide support for students who have fallen behind throughout 2020 due to the remote learning program. Unlike many schools, we already provide literacy support to a number of the students in the junior school so we are fortunate to be able to focus and extend our support for 2021 to the students in the middle and upper classes. We are currently in the process of identifying students in need of this additional assistance, and we will tailor our support once we have a clearer indication of what our students' needs are. This will be data driven, but will include small group literacy and numeracy sessions for some students and/or reteaching and extension differentiated lessons in the classroom program. Parents will be notified in early term one if their child has been selected to participate in any small group withdrawal groups. The length of any intervention will depend on the student's learning needs/gaps in their learning. We will also be developing individual learning plans and extension programs to target the differentiated needs of students. We will be using our experienced current staff in this program, Chris Sarandis, Kat Hansen, Ellie Jarrett (Term 1) and Ben Cunningham.

NB. This program is only funded for the 2021 school year as a response to the impacts of Covid 19 on school students.

Roof works on Brooke St & the Redevelopment working party

You may have seen that the roof works on the Brooke St site are underway. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Redevelopment Working Party of School Council who helped us secure the \$150,000 funding through the Victorian Schools Building Authority (VSBA) for these roof works through their regular contact with member for Northcote, Kat Theophanous. I would also like to thank Kat herself, who meet with the Minister's office in support of our needs.

Whole School Transition

Next week students will meet their 2021 class and teacher. Classes have been finalised after considerable work in ensuring the best possible groupings of students. Knowledge of your child, friendships, gender balances in each class were amongst the many factors determining the class placements. We request that parents extend some understanding and that there is a measured acceptance of the decisions made. We are very grateful for your cooperation in role modelling resilience and grace in regards to this matter. From our extensive experience students take their lead from the adults in their lives.

Staffing 2021 & Class Structure

Staff leaving Westgarth PS this year or taking leave in 2021 include Hannah Black, Lorena Dall, Tahlia de van der Schueren, Josie Felton, Esmi Marketou, Melanie Matthews, Amy Natale, Olga Pettinella and Lucy Volard. Dianne Begg will finish in her role of library aid and integration support but will continue to work as a casual in the OSHC program. We thank them all for their contribution to the school over the time they have worked here and wish them the very best for the future. Ellie Jarrett will be commencing family leave towards the end of term one so will support the junior classes within the tutoring program prior to commencing leave. We welcome experienced teachers Cassandra Dennis to our prep team, Livia Stahlavsky to the year 3 and Zoe Billings in year 5 teams.

Composite or straight-year level grades?

There can be concerns among parents about the perceived advantages and disadvantages of their child

being placed in a composite grade as opposed to being placed in a 'straight' grade. These concerns are often unfounded and are typically based on an incorrect notion that the work is set for the whole class and consequently will be too easy or too hard in a composite grade depending on whether the child is one of the older or younger students in the grade. The simple fact of the matter is that there is negligible difference in the way teachers prepare the curriculum for composite and straight grades.

In today's classrooms, teachers differentiate the curriculum in the key areas of literacy and numeracy so that the learning is within the students' zone of proximal development. Zones of proximal development are determined by pre-assessment tasks to ensure that the learning is 'pitched at just the right level' – regardless of class structure. Furthermore, teachers regularly plan activities to be open-ended to enable students to perform at their level and to be extended.

In an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald, it reported that:

Research, which has been predominantly conducted in primary schools, suggests there is no discernible difference between composite and straight grade classrooms in terms of academic performance.

However, benefits relating to student independence, responsibility and study habits have been highlighted. For example, younger children within a composite grade generally aspire to emulate older children in their work, and older children enjoy leadership and mentoring opportunities that lift their self-esteem.

At Westgarth, we provide a differentiated curriculum, so that the students' needs can be met – regardless of the actual structure or formation of a grade. Please feel rest assured that teachers spend a great deal of time when deciding where to place students for the following year so that each student can continue to work at their optimal level. This year we ran with composite classes across the full year 5/6 cohort and one of each 1/2 and 3/4. This is predominately to balance numbers across the year levels. The Department of Education base the staff numbers on an overall class size of 1 teacher for every 25 students, while recommending that classes in Prep – 2 have 21 students. This effectively means that classes in the upper year levels have potentially 4 or 5 more students than when they are in the younger classes. We endeavour to keep the numbers in the years 2 – 6 as even as possible. In 2021 the numbers of students at year's 5 and 6 are almost the same and therefore no need to have composite classes. Therefore we have decided to only run two composite classes in 2021 at the 1/2 and 3/4 levels.

We have 640 students enrolled for 2021. These are organised in 26 classes:

4 x Prep classes	Specialist classes:
4 x year 1	Music
1 x 1/2 composite	PE/Sport
3 x year 2	Spanish Art
4 x year 3	Spanish
1 x 3/4 composite	Literacy support
3 x year 4	Tutoring program
3 x year 5	Library
3 x year 6	

Prep Transition

Like most things this year, our prep transition has been very difficult. The new families transitioning to the school were not permitted to tour the school under the restrictions. We held a virtual information session for families last week and we have modified the start of year process to help the students' transition to school. We will all need to pull together to welcome our new families at the start of next year. Prep orientation sessions commenced this week in reduced group sizes. The lifting of restrictions came too late for us to modify the arrangements. We will hold a **prep 2021 'play date'** on the rear playground on Brooke

So the families can meet each other and familiarise themselves with the Brooke St site on **Thursday 17 December from 4 – 5pm.**

Fundraising

I cannot believe the extent to which we have been able to fundraise this year considering we had not had any fundraising events until this term. Overall our hardworking P&F have raised \$45921 from our generous community, plus a further \$5470 donation from CovidOL. Thanks to everyone who has organised and/or supported the fundraising efforts this year. I would like to acknowledge Kellie Burns who runs our plant stall at the fete. Not having a fiesta didn't stop Kellie from running the plant stall from her home. She raised just on \$4000 on plant sales. Thanks Kellie and those who purchased the plants. School Council will decide which project these funds will go towards.

On Monday 16 November parent, Sam Rigopoulos from Jellis Craig Northcote, ran the Auction for an Auction, which raised an additional \$50000 which will be donated once the winning bidder sells their house in 2021. This is the biggest amount raised from the auction for an auction and brings the total of donations from Sam Rigopoulos and Jellis Craig to \$220000 over the past 7 years. Huge thanks to Sam and his team and to Julia Kelly, who put lots of energy into recruiting the bidders.

Prize winning author

Congratulations to one of our year two students who won a writing competition while on remote learning. She won a prize for herself (\$100 gift voucher) as well as 100 books worth over \$1500 for our school library. Thanks to Andy Griffiths & Terry Denton from the Treehouse series for this very generous donation and of course to our very creative and talented writer.

(This is only one of three boxes full of excellent books).



Lunchtime activities for year 3/4 students

Our year six sports captains ran a house team competition over the past few weeks to provide some structured activities for the year 5/6 students. For the next two weeks they will run sessions for the year 3/4 students on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Students are welcome to wear their house colours on the day their team plays. We hope they make the most of this opportunity and enjoy the time playing together in a structured way.

Year 6 Graduation

On the evening of Thursday 10 December here at school, we will celebrate the end of primary schooling for our 85 graduating year six students. They will enjoy dinner with the staff, followed by speeches, presentations and performances. In a last minute change due to the 'roadmap for reopening' parents of year 6 students will be able to attend the ceremony that we will now make an outdoor event. The class of 2020 has experienced a year 6 like no other having to spend almost two terms learning from home. They have proven to be a resilient and hard working group.

I would like to acknowledge the student leaders for their work this year in their roles of **School Captain:** Isla W, Jonah F, Herbie G, Aryn I; **House Captain:** *Gerrard* – Milo, Cassius A, Lucas W, Teo A; *Rucker* – Amelia R, Miranda F, Peleus, Loretta; *Walker* Ryan S, Amelia C, Mikayla, Harvey M; *Urquhart* – Charlie S, Stevie M, Will M, India; **Arts Captain:** Jess S, Ruby W, Uros M, Xanthe M, Maddy R and Xiomara A; **Library Captain:** Elliot H, Tom L, Alice H, Beatrix M and from years 3 – 6 our **Junior School Councillor:** **Year 5/6:** Riley P, Ruby M, Elliott J, Samantha G **Year 4:** Elroy M, Lola S **Year 3:** Adele L, Ollie C.

I would like to congratulate all the graduating year six students on their hard work, wonderful outcomes and for trying their best. High marks and awards do not always acknowledge the personal effort

individuals make to their learning. Likewise, leadership is not a title, it is the things you do every day to help, guide and encourage others. It is important that we do not lose sight of the achievements of all of our students and I hope they are as proud of their outcomes as we are. We wish them the very best for their transition to secondary school and for the future.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful contributions made to the school over many years by the families whose youngest child is leaving year 6 this year. This year we have 51 families leaving and amongst those we have former school councillors, fete co-ordinator, many long serving fete stallholders, kitchen garden volunteers, Westgarth Idol performers, class helpers, presenters and fundraisers. Thanks and farewell to the following families:

Akkerman, Albiston/Robson, Aucar/Miller, Baker/Elmaloglou, Bano/Brogan, Blake Charikar, Caithness-Christoffelsz, Chiappini/Canzano, Clarke/O'Connell, Cooper/Bruce, Dennehy/Barnett, Elzer/Windiate, Fezollari, Fisher-Rogers, Gerassimou, Giannopoulos, Gibson/Michaelides, Hammond, Harrison, Harsley/Jeffrey, Hider/Appleyard, Horacek/Weller, Hutchins, Ibrahim, James/Maplesden, Jones/Quinn, Le Packham, Lee/Butler, Leihy/Cameron, Lockwood, Lubbock, Maguire/Esler, Maksimovic, Malpeli/Dawson, Martorell/Kemp, Maxwell/Leuschner, Menhinnitt/Taylor, Mudge, Petterson, Rodd, Thistlewhite/Roubos, Tully/Willcox, Vercoe/Edwards, Walsh, Windiate/Domeney and Zhang/Su.

Farewell and thanks to the families who are leaving from other year levels as well: Clyde/Lace, Jobling/Smith, MacVean/Carroll, Manwaring/Pitcher, Morgan and Siva

Ambulance charges

At the start of every year, we remind families of the need to have ambulance cover. We strongly recommend that all families take out ambulance cover. Though serious injuries are rare, we have a policy of calling for an ambulance when in doubt about a student's health. We ring an ambulance first and then attempt to contact a family member, and we have found that in many cases it is safer for both the parent and the child to be transported in an ambulance. It can be a distressing time for parents when their child is injured and is often not the best time to be worrying about how to get to the hospital or doctor. Families are liable for any ambulance costs. At the moment, family membership is \$96.70 per year. We have had to call the ambulance twice in the past three weeks and the minimum call out appears to be \$546 without them even being taken to hospital.

School Payments 2021

School Councils are responsible for developing and approving a school-level parent payment schedule compliant with the Department of Education (DET) Guidelines. The Westgarth School Charges and Voluntary Contribution has been reviewed by Westgarth Primary School Council who have passed a motion that the Parent Payments will be as outlined below. The information below is the same as was posted on Compass on November 12. This year the amounts are lower than past years due to excursions and swimming being paid as the events occur, rather than in a levy at the start of the year. If you have any queries about this information please do not hesitate to contact myself or Allison Cox, School Council President on 9481 5577.

Essential Student Learning Items – standard curriculum	Amount
\$170 - Student Book Pack, Classroom & Specialist Consumables i.e. exercise books, textas, pencils, textas, poster, coloured and white paper/cardboard, sticky tape, glue, markers, inquiry items, paint, clay, glitter, wool and craft supplies etc.	\$190.00 Prep/1/2 & 6
\$20 - ICT Applications (Mathletics \$12, SeeSaw \$8)	\$240.00
\$50 – Kitchen Garden Program Food (Year 3-5 only)	Year 3-5
<i>All curriculum based excursions/in-house activities/wellbeing & swimming payments, are charged as the activity occurs throughout the year thus enabling 2020 families to access any credit on their account.</i>	

Annual Optional Items – additional to the standard curriculum	Amount
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Photos • Interschool Sport – Bus Travel (Years 5 & 6 only) • Camps (Years 4 & 6 only) • Extra-Curricular Reaching for the Stars Program (Years 4-6 only) • Extra-Curricular Lunchtime Chess Program (Years 3-6 only) *Numbers Dependant • WPS Outside School Hours Care Program (OSHC) *Payments made by QKR! 	User pays
Voluntary Financial Contributions - enhancing educational opportunities for students and further enrich the teaching and learning programs	Amount
<p>\$60 - First Aid Officer: Employment of a qualified first aid officer to provide first aid to students.</p> <p>\$65 - Maintenance of Grounds and Buildings: this contribution is required to fund regular maintenance of the school grounds and buildings to meet appropriate standards. DET does not provide enough funds to address all of the urgent works and essential items needed for our school. These shortfalls are met from locally raised funds.</p> <p>\$50 - Kitchen Garden Program: contribution to support the longevity of this unfunded program. (Prep/1/2 & 6 only)</p> <p>\$120 - Kitchen Garden: Employment of qualified staff to provide this specialist program for students who have classes in the Kitchen Garden Program and to support the continuation of the program into the future. (Year 3-5 only)</p> <p><i>Parent contributions in all forms are highly valued by our school community as they ensure all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities and support their aspirations.</i></p>	<p>\$175.00</p> <p>Prep/1/2 & 6</p> <p>\$245.00</p> <p>Year 3-5</p>
Donation to the WPS Tax Deductible Building Fund	Amount
<p>The Building Fund will contribute to school building projects and is prioritised by School Council and the Environment Committee.</p> <p>We invite you to donate an amount into our Buildings Fund so that we can improve our facilities. This donation for each child would be tax deductible.</p> <p>Families are welcome to donate any amount to our Tax Deductible Building Fund. There is a sliding scale of suggested donation.</p> <p>\$100 per child for a combined income of \$50,000 and up to \$99,999 \$150 per child for a combined income of \$100,000 and up to \$149,999 \$200 per child for a combined income of \$150,000 and above</p>	<p>\$.....</p> <p>Nominated Amount</p>

Thanks for your support during this tricky year. I wish you and your family good health and happiness for the summer break and I look forward to seeing you, for what we hope is a great new year.

Jo Wheeler
Principal