



## Principal News – September 2020

### Vale Damien Hudson

The school community is saddened by the passing of Westgarth parent, Damien Hudson, after a long and courageous battle with illness. The school is very appreciative of the additional support our community has provided the family, particularly over the past few months. Our thoughts are with Kate, Chris, Andrew and Izzy.

### Moving forward

In my last newsletter, I mentioned that some parents are feeling that 2020 is a lost year of learning for their children. In the paper last weekend, there was an article quoting a veteran principal who was encouraging prep students to repeat their year of schooling. I would like to caution parents about this way of thinking. This principal works in a school which has a very different demographic to ours. Ninety percent of his students come from non-English speaking backgrounds and as many do not speak English at home, their oral language development has been greatly impacted due to the lack of conversational English that occurs at school. This is not the case for our students. Their learning has been progressing well and in many cases, the students have been achieving at a rate higher than we would expect due to the amount of one-to-one time they have been receiving with their home learning. This combined with their growth in metacognition, we feel, that in general our students have not been significantly disadvantaged educationally this year. Social interactions is the area that we feel our students have missed the most during this period of learning from home. Unfortunately, this area is much harder for the school to facilitate remotely compared with their academic learning so we would like to encourage families to take the lead. An idea to consider is making connections with friends through applications such as Facetime or Zoom where they can have a virtual play date or do work together. Supporting each other's learning will not only enable them to have the social interactions they are all craving but will also assist their learning and potentially reduce the pressure on parents/carers with the learning tasks. Telephone conversations will also give them an opportunity to interact, but are hard for young children particularly in relation to keeping the flow of the conversation going. If you require school support to put you in touch with your child's friends please contact the office. We cannot give someone else's contact details to you, however we can pass your details to someone for them to contact you if that is what you would both like.

We hope your child/ren have taken advantage of the changes we made to the WebEx meetings which are now organised to incorporate social and wellbeing opportunities, as well as access to their teacher for assistance with understanding the learning tasks. While we know some students have not been enthusiastic about joining these sessions, we believe they are valuable on many levels, particularly staying connected with classmates and their teacher, so please reinforce the importance of your child attending these sessions. Feedback from parents who have insisted on their children attending them has been that they have come to really appreciate them and look forward to seeing their peers.

### La Gran Fiesta – cancelled for 2020

Due to the pandemic, we have lost many of our much-loved traditions in 2020. The latest, due to the uncertainty of the restriction is the La Gran Fiesta. After much consideration the fete committee and School Council have decided to cancel La Gran Fiesta for this year. We know this will be disappointing for our students and to the hard working teams who



have been preparing for the event. Depending on the situation towards the end of the year, we may hold something like a twilight market so that we can sell the produce already prepared for the Fiesta. As you can imagine the loss of this event puts a huge hole in our fundraising for 2020 and means that our 2021 budget will be significantly impacted. I would like to thank the fete committee and school council for making this courageous decision. Parents and Friends Association are exploring alternate ways to connect our community and fundraise.

### Optional homework extension activities

It is great to see that our families have been accessing the optional homework tasks on our school website. Additional tasks are added fortnightly for your child/ren to access. They can be found under the learning tab on our website <https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/page/254/Optional-homework-tasks>

### Parent/Teacher interviews survey

Thanks to the parents who completed the Parent/Teacher interviews survey. The results indicated that many parents appreciated the opportunity to access interviews in an online platform and some indicated they prefer the face-to-face option. We will endeavour to provide a combination of face-to-face and online interviews in the future.

### Professional Learning Communities



Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are an approach to school improvement in which groups of teachers work collaboratively at the school level to improve student outcomes. The school review, completed in 2019, recommended Westgarth PS use this approach to improve our student growth data. In our 2020 Annual Implementation Plan, we selected the PLC initiative as our focus area, however all professional learning lead by DET, was put on hold due to COVID 19, so we were unable to start our training earlier in the year as initially planned. A school team of eight including year level leaders, our learning specialists (maths and English), leading teacher and myself have had a couple of meetings with the PLC regional managers in the

last two weeks to start the process in term four. We will participate in eight training days next term and the school will start the 2021 year ready to mobilise the PLCs within the school and work through our inquiry cycles. This promises to be a powerful and collaborative way to boost student-learning outcomes across the whole school. We will keep you informed as our journey progresses.

### Storm damage

As you may be aware from my previous newsletter, we have had plans to remove some dead and damaged trees. Unfortunately, the storms last week have had to bring some of that work forward. We are pleased to say that there was no building damaged and our damaged trees have been removed or pruned as needed. The remediation of outstanding tree works will happen once stage four restrictions have lifted.

### WPS Spoonville

Feel free to add to our Spoon Village on the Brooke St site as you go past the school on your daily walk.

Keep well and keep positive,

Jo Wheeler  
Principal

