Diary

Monday, 12 March
10.00 a.m Volunteers morning tea and training

Wednesday, 14 March
Enviromentors visiting the school to teach our children about the environment, recycling and setting up a worm farm

Thursday, 22 March
SCHOOL BANKING DAY

Head of Campus Message

It has been a great pleasure getting to know parents and children much better through the IP (Individual Planning) Process that has been ongoing in these last 2 weeks. In many ways we are fortunate to be able to work so closely together with you to develop the relationships with your children across the home and school environment.

Some children are just beginning to learn to read and others are using their experience with print and books to develop a greater understanding of their world, to go places they wouldn’t ordinarily be able to go – some are indeed beginning to ‘read to learn’ as opposed to ‘learn to read’.

As you know, reading opens up many worlds and allows us to understand how others think, how we have arrived where we are today culturally, what it’s like to be in space or in another country. Reading helps us explore other people’s thoughts and feelings, and helps us learn to use language in more subtle and adept ways.

Reading also opens up choices in our world which otherwise might not exist. And it’s this path towards thought, life and choice we must always keep in mind as the ultimate purpose of reading.

Reading must be enjoyable in order to push through what can be tough work learning what those squiggles on the page may mean. Children play at being readers before they can actually decode the print on the page – and that’s ok! We want them to have the pleasure of perusing pictures, turning pages and sharing special time with people they love – it’s an emotional process – and the more safe and enjoyable that time is with you, the more children are going to be drawn to books throughout their lives. They will have a leisure activity to while away hours and be able to learn so much more about the world through books.

We bring a lot of experience to the reading process and it’s important to engage that at whatever levels we can with our children and if it’s not at a verbal level, we can still share reading time and a book together.

Many of our children will learn to decode print easily and quickly and it’s our job as parents and educators to ensure that meaning is not compromised. Asking questions (not interrogating!) and using the pictures as cues to understand what meaning your child is getting from a book is crucial. Again, it’s about sharing and enjoyment.

Sometimes it may be a good idea to cover the print so children can get meaning from the pictures, if your child is one to whom print is easily decoded, but not necessarily understood – share picture books together and you will get a wonderful glimpse into their thinking processes as well.

Children are learning to map sounds onto abstract symbols (letters) in the beginning stage of reading. They learn to blend those sounds to make words, real and nonsense – called ‘sounding out’ or ‘word attack’ skills. At some point the teacher will introduce sight words to the children as well. They are words that occur frequently in most of our reading – words like ‘the’, ‘of’, ‘he’ and ‘she’.

In the early stages of reading, children spend a lot of time and energy just learning to decode the words and associate those words to the picture cues. We can praise them for their efforts, knowing it’s tough work and they might not get it right every time. Persist and enjoy the process with them. Some may take longer to understand the reading code, but so long as you enjoy books with your children, you will have shared worlds and experiences to draw on as they grow and mature.

Happy reading!
Dianne

THE GOOD GUYS, CASTLE HILL

Don’t forget to ask for your School Reward Vouchers when you next shop at The Good Guys

Happy Birthday to Giuseppe who will be 6 on 19th March

St Gabriel’s News
Children's Awards

The following Awards were presented at our School Assemblies

Week 5 Term 1 2012 (Monday, 27 February to Friday, 2 March)
Student of the Week: Blake for always trying to do his best work in all lessons

Class Awards
Junior N - Chloe for doing her best at phonics
Junior L - Loki for doing his best at tracing his letters
Middle S - Ryan for always contributing to class discussions
Middle W - Corey P for being a fantastic friend
Upper R - Callum for working hard in art

Do Your Best Award: Samrath
Be Safe Award: Jack
Care and Share Award: Logan
Uniform Award: Jayden
Music Awards: Thomas B for having nice manners in Music
Charlotte for reading music notes ta and titi

Week 6 Term 1 2012 (Monday, 5 March to Friday, 9 March)
Student of the Week: Scott for fantastic talking in class—he is doing an excellent job in Show and Tell each week

Class Awards
Junior N - Joshua for trying hard to be the best friend he can, kind and gentle
Junior L - Logan for great participation and doing his best in dance and movement
Middle S - Ali for trying hard to practise a new sign in class
Middle W - Aaron C for great work in writing and handwriting lessons
Upper R -

Do Your Best Award: Olivia
Be Safe Award: Blake M
Care and Share Award: Ethan
Uniform Award: Tom J for always looking neat and tidy
Frances Rispoli, our class teacher in Upper R, joined St Gabriel's at the start of this year. Most recently, she has been working for several years at Macquarie University Special Education Center (MUSEC), a center focusing on researching the most effective strategies for teaching literacy.

Frances's qualifications include a Bachelor of Computer Science, a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) for which she received honors, and a Master of Special Education for which she received the Vice Chancellors award for academic excellence. Although Frances is qualified to teach both Primary students and Secondary maths to year 12 level, she has decided that her main interest is in working with Primary students with special needs.

She is passionate about supporting and motivating students to achieve their best in all spheres of their development, and loves seeing each child's personality sparkle and shine through. She looks for ways to use each child's interests to draw them into learning, and believes that no child should be limited by their label. She unashamedly admits to having a kooky sense of humor, and enjoys having the children laugh.

Frances is the proud mum of a teenage daughter who dances and plays the saxophone, and a teenage son who swims. She can often be seen cheering wildly at concerts and swimming carnivals, much to their embarrassment. But as she claims, embarrassing the kids is a mum's job!

Cleaning Up St Gabriel's!

On Friday, 2nd March the older students at St Gabriel's took part in Clean Up Australia by cleaning the school.

Usually this event involves the students collecting rubbish left lying around in the playground. But St Gabriel's students already know a great deal about their civic responsibilities – there was no rubbish to collect!

That didn't stop this determined group... classroom chairs were pushed in, books put away, desks wiped and shelves tidied. Then it was on with the gloves, and armed with brooms, damp cloths, and dustpans the students swept floors, wiped lockers, washed windows and doors, and tidied away equipment. So keen were the students that before long teachers were left trying to find something that still needed cleaning!

Students were allowed to take home their Clean Up Australia Day gloves, and some left for home still wearing them and looking for something to clean!
Hey Mums, tables are booking fast for Moving Women’s Lunch including a group of St Gabriel’s Mums! Friday 16th March 12-3pm.

Don’t miss out on this fabulous opportunity to connect with other mums, laugh with Wendy Harmer, taste the culinary fare, enjoy the wonderful Hilton venue. Bring your friends or get a table together. All information is on our website and hard copy invitations are available—See Jo at Reception.

Aaron T’s swimming team have applied for a community project grant to buy and print swimmers with the Sydney West and Special Olympics logos ($2,500) as they are finalists. The organisation who wins the grant will be the one which receives the most votes and voting can be done by firstly registering at projectlocal.com.au and you will then be allocated ten votes which you can use to support Sydney West Special Olympic Swim Team. Voting end on Friday, 16th March.

Parents are invited to start placing orders for winter uniform. Order forms may be downloaded from St Gabriel’s website at: www.stgabriels.nsw.edu.au

We would like all students to be in winter uniform by Monday, 7th May in Term 2.

If you have any uniform that your child has grown out of but is still in good condition, we would welcome receiving it to start to build up a “second hand uniform” supply.

We would remind everybody to please drive slowly in our school grounds (a speed of 10km/hour is recommended by the RTA for internal school grounds).

We would also encourage parents to either use our kiss and drop drive-through facility or park in our car parking area which has a much safer pedestrian access to our school building than for those parking on our grass. This will hopefully keep our children safe and won’t damage our grass! Thank you for your cooperation!

It is the policy of St Gabriel’s to distribute information when requested regarding activities and information concerning disability. This does not imply that St Gabriel’s endorses these activities or the information contained therein in any way.