Dear School Community and Other Parishioners,

Would you like your child to be an academically successful student at school? Would you like to know how to make sure that he/she succeeds at primary school, secondary school and at a tertiary educational facility of their choice? I bet many of you are saying ‘Yes’ in answer to those questions. Did you know that the best predictor of success academically is not in reading and writing tests but in the ability to talk confidently? Research has shown without any doubt that the ability to talk well at a young age is a very sound predictor of academic success.

We use a test called the Record of Oral Language with all our Level 1 and 2 children at the beginning of every year. The ROL helps us to identify the children who need lots of encouragement with their ‘talking’ skills. We need to help those children by making sure that they are listening as we talk to them and around them. We give them opportunities to answer questions even though we know it will take a little while for them to think through their ideas.

How hard is it to teach a child to talk? What language should they be using? What kind of things should they be able to talk about? Because the critical nature of building oral language skills begins in the first years of life, before a child even enters a formal education setting, it is really important that parents be educated on the importance of talk in the home. Parents and care-givers can build a child's vocabulary by talking to and around children. Talking around children might sound a bit silly, but it really does mean that parents need to talk to themselves as they are doing things so that children learn the pattern of the sentences, the rhythm of the sentences and the sounds of the words. Parents who are helping their children to talk will get the vacuum out and describe what they are doing to their babies and toddlers. They will search through the pantry and say what it is that they are looking for and what they have found. It doesn’t matter if you think you are talking to yourselves, it does matter that children hear language going on all around them. Silly as it might sound, that is...
what little children need. They need to hear you model the use of language. It doesn’t matter if you are not speaking English, as children will still benefit from being fluent in their first language too.

There are also some really fun ways for parents to teach their children to talk. Asking and answering questions and modeling appropriate conversational skills are tremendous oral language building activities. When you have been to the supermarket, ask the children what they saw, and tell them what you noticed. When you have been to visit the relatives, ask questions about the journey to and from their house. Use words like turn left and turn right, go around this corner, go past the Tattslootto place. Keep engaging them. Ask them what they imagine is going on here and going on there. Is the crane building a skyscraper or demolishing a factory? Ask them to show you why they think this or that. Ask them what evidence they have for their thinking. It’s a bit like teasing hair, you push for an answer, then you push a bit more and a bit more until the child can give you many layers of conversation by themselves.

Fun activities are not difficult to do nor do they have to be expensive! Borrow books of riddles, nursery rhymes and finger-plays from the library and read with children. Let children put on little plays at home using homemade puppets, or simply listen to a child relate what they have done or seen that day and give them feedback to build oral language skills.

Maybe, I should take that back, maybe teaching your child to talk is expensive … it costs you your energy and it costs you your time! However, you are willing to pay school fees, and this is the best way of getting value back from the investment you are going to make spending thousands of dollars over 13 years on school fees.

Talking is just so critical in all parts of life never mind schooling! Talk serves many purposes. From an educator’s perspective, talking enables children to make meaning about the world around them. Asking questions and listening to the answers are very important ways to satisfy curiosity and I firmly believe curiosity can be a major sign of intelligence.

Talking is an essential part of literacy. Generally speaking, children who have never made sounds have enormous difficulty blending letters and letter groups together to make words. If you can’t make words well, you can’t read well and chances are that you won’t be able to write well either! Here are a few other skills that you need to be able to do in order to be a good reader. They all depend on being able to talk and listen well!

- Develop listening comprehension - understanding what is being asked of you.
- Have expressive language - being able to tell someone what you are thinking.
- Use vocabulary - words to use to express ideas, feelings, events etc.
- Phonological knowledge - sounds that make words.
- Use grammatical knowledge - the way in which we put words together.
- Develop social language skills - using words and sentences to connect to other people.
- Using language to learn and to communicate effectively.
- Storage and retrieval of information in and from long-term memory - expressing things you learned earlier.
- Perception and attention to spoken language - understanding how others are thinking and feeling by listening to what is and what isn’t being said.

So! Talk, talk, talk to your child or children. That is the key message. If you are one of those people who are always in a hurry, slow down and talk to your children. They are only willing to talk to you if you have the time to listen. If you are one of those people who believes children should be seen and not heard, ask yourself if you want your children to survive in the society they will move into as adults and encourage them to talk. If they are not confident that they can hold a conversation, they will not be able to meet the needs of the future workforce. Talking to your child or talking around your child is definitely going to help them learn, no doubt about it! This is something almost every parent can do, it’s up to you.

**CAR PARKING FOR TUESDAY’S MASS**

There will be an early Mass this coming Tuesday, March 26th. Children will be at risk if you bring them before 8:30am. There will be cars coming into the grounds due to Mass.

Christine Ash / Principal
This year, we hear Luke’s account of Jesus’ Passion beginning with the Last Supper which for Luke, shows signs of the heavenly banquet. During the meal, Jesus predicted but did not name his betrayer. Following the meal, all the disciples went with Jesus to the Mount of Olives to pray. There Jesus was, indeed, handed over by Judas to the Jewish leaders. In retaliation, a disciple cut off a servant’s ear, but Jesus touched the ear and healed him. Jesus went before the high priest in whose courtyard Peter denied Jesus the three times predicted at supper. At daybreak, Jesus went before the Sanhedrin and on to Pilate, to Herod, and back to Pilate who tried to release Jesus to the crowds. Pilate did not find Jesus guilty of anything, but the crowd pressed for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was led to the cross, helped by Simon, mourned by the women of Jerusalem, and taunted by the Roman soldiers. When at last Jesus died, a man named Joseph gave up his tomb so that Jesus would not be buried in a common grave of criminals.

Simon is not one of the most notable figures in the story of Jesus’ Passion, but perhaps he is the one with whom we can most identify. Whether we’d rather do something else, are too tired, or just want a break from time to time, we know how Simon felt being pressed into service at a time when he would rather not. But Simon was a responsible citizen, just as we are responsible people. And, whatever our mood or preferences, we do what we must do. In the end, our hearts are glad, just as Simon knew there was something special about his action. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to follow Jesus in service … even when it is difficult.

This week, I ask you, as a family to find some time during Holy Week to walk through the Stations of the Cross. Take a Bible or Stations of the Cross booklet along with you and recall the passion as you move from station to station. Allowing all members of your family to participate may require paraphrasing but let as many as possible be part of the event. It is truly a rewarding experience!

Keep smiling!

Elisabetta Salierno
Catholic Identity Coordinator (CIC)
saliel@sedandenongnth.catholic.edu.au
ST PATRICK’S DAY MASS

Last week, Mrs. Caia and myself had the absolute pleasure of taking our 4 school captains; Shannan, Bianca, Daniel and Kirsten to the St Patrick’s Day Mass. It was held at St Patrick’s Cathedral and the Principal Celebrant was Rev. Denis J Hart DD. The mass was followed by a wonderful concert at the Treasury Gardens. I speak on behalf of the captains that we had a terrific day celebrating St Patrick’s life of service. Thanks captains for an entertaining day and Mrs. Caia who was always ready to sing a song!

SACRAMENTAL NEWS:

Reconciliation:
Level 3A students will be celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation next week. We keep these children in our minds as they prepare to formally seek forgiveness and healing from a loving Father. They present themselves to be tenderly welcomed by the Father and welcomed back into the community who celebrates with them, their coming home.

There is a $25.00 Sacramental levy for this Sacrament. The levy covers the cost of their books and ALL resources needed to prepare your child. The levy must be paid through the office as soon as possible and I will then be able to send home the book for you to use at home with your child.
How well does your family communicate? Michael Grose

"The best communication happens in families when no one is working at it."

Studies have shown that members of strong families communicate differently than members of troubled families.

In strong families parents and children get comfortable with each other so that important issues are raised and help is asked for free from judgment. Members of troubled families are often critical in their communication and either speak to each other in accusatory ways or they avoid conflict altogether.

Members of strong families don’t always reach agreement but they speak directly and honestly with each other without blaming and they often end up agreeing to disagree. They also have processes in place such as regular shared meals that ensure people speak to each other on a regular basis.

Studies have also shown that members of strong families are generally good listeners. They use their ears more than their mouths and they ask questions rather than rely on reading other people’s minds. Parents also have a way of engaging children in discussions about interesting, challenging and personal subjects while maintaining privacy of thought.

Strong families also like to laugh. The stronger the family the more likely they are to use humour to maintain a healthy outlook on life. Humour is an important ingredient in communication. It is used to express warmth, reduce tension, get conversations going and help deal with anxiety and difficulties.

The business of life can inhibit open family communication. Traditionally, strong families enjoyed spending time together and communication occurred in natural, unforced ways. Today families need to work hard at communicating and don’t leave it to chance.

Strong families find a way of carving out time to be with each other. They recognise those opportunities that afford effective communication and they guard these assiduously.

Strong families also use technology to aid communication rather than interfere with it. Mobile phones are used to stay in touch, television offers opportunities for discussion and emails help keep conversations going when people are separated by distance.

To promote open communication in your family:

1. Make mealtime more than a refueling pit stop. Sharing a meal provides an opportunity for parents and children to talk, exchange views, swap news and have a laugh or two.
2. Talk with children on their turf. Places such as bedrooms and cars can be safe havens for open communication. Identify where your children talk the most and make the most of those places.
3. Talk about the stuff that children and young people want to talk about. Find out what interests your children and use that as an entry point to conversations.
4. Write it down. Sometimes conversational clams respond best to notes or letters. So if you have something important to say or an issue you want to discuss put pen to paper (or start up the computer) and get it down in writing.

‘Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.’

Brian Tracy

parentingideas.com.au

Nan Perazzo
Wellbeing Coordinator
Last week we completed our final round of the Summer Sports series. Congratulations to our boy's softball team who finished top of their pool and will play in a district final next Thursday. Winter sports training will begin this week as the first game will be played on the first Thursday back in term 2.

Yours in Sport
Dean Andrew
Sports Teacher

Holy Week Timetable

Parish Reconciliation 7pm - 8pm
Tuesday 19th March, Wednesday 20th March and Thursday 21st March.

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday: 24th March
Saturday 6:30pm, Sunday 8:30am, 10:30am and 5:30pm.

Holy Thursday: 28th March
No morning Mass. Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper 7:30pm.

Good Friday: 29th March
Stations of the Cross 10am (St. Mary’s Seminary in Jacksons Road Mulgrave).
Following the Stations of the Cross; Reconciliation will be available.
The Celebration of the Lord’s Passion and Death 3:00pm (St. Elizabeth’s Church).

The Easter Vigil: 30th March
8:00pm.

Easter Sunday: 31st March
8:30am and 10:30am.

Please note there will be no Evening Mass on Easter Sunday.
Raymond N is 3BL’s ‘You Can Do It’ Star!

Raymond is new to St Elizabeth’s this year and has adapted well into our community.

His outgoing personality has enabled him to build many friendships.

Raymond has shown the You Can Do It qualities of getting along and confidence. He works really hard at all his tasks and always tries his best. He is an excellent role model in our community.
School News...

It is very easy to help raise funds for our school:

Reminder:
When shopping at Bakers Delight in Waverley mention our school name, and they will donate a percentage of your purchase back to the school through their Dough Raiser Program.

Woolworths Earn & Learn 2013
Yes we are registered!
Beginning on Monday 8th April.

It's simple to take part, when you shop at Woolworths collect points from the checkout operator and place them on point sheets. There'll be one point for every $10 spent (excluding liquor, tobacco, and gift cards)

Once completed, send the points sheets into school.
We will do the rest.

Last year we received a lot of new furniture and games which are being used in the Prep rooms.

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

Married couples, we encourage you to prioritise your relationship. It underpins your family life. Please join us for a Marriage Encounter weekend. Our weekend helps you to remember why you married and gives you skills to maintain your love for each other.

Couples and a priest present the weekend. It is based around catholic values but you don’t need to be catholic to attend. There is no group sharing.

Our next weekends in 2013 are on: **19-21 April**, 14-16 June and 9-11 August in Melbourne. For further information and bookings contact Marianne & Marcel Van den Bronk (03) 9733 0997 or Email vicbookings@wwme.org.au.

St. Elizabeth’s Netball Team

If you are interested in joining the St. Elizabeth’s Netball Club or if you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact: Melinda Ware-Drakeford on 0459 444 463 or Jackie McCarthy on 0419 867 296.

Netball training is held every Wednesday after school at the St Elizabeth’s courts (PAC if raining).

The new season commences on Saturday 23rd March at Greaves Reserve, Bennett St, Dandenong. (There are no games or training over the school holidays).

The netball uniform consists of a maroon netball skirt, navy blue polo shirt or t-shirt and runners.