



Our Lady of Lourdes School

Dardanup

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Annual School Community Meeting Tuesday 24 November 2020 Principal's Report

Good evening everyone and thank you for your attendance at our Annual School Community Meeting. Here we are again at the end of November and wrapping up yet another school year in just a few weeks. It has been a busy school year, and I am very happy to be able to report on school events and activities for the year once again. This year will go down in history as one we will never forget. I am extremely proud of our staff, students and families for the way we coped with and supported each other during the uncharted waters of the pandemic in March/April/May this year.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank our dedicated teaching and support staff for their exemplary care of our amazing students. Remote Learning was forced upon us without much warning earlier this year, and I am incredibly proud of the way we worked together as a team to ensure the continuation of the delivery of curriculum, in ways we had never imagined before this year. There was not a single day that we did not have staff and some students at school, with our doors always remaining open for those who needed us due to family members being essential workers. Learning looked very different, but throughout that time, we remained positive, learnt some new dance moves and acting/video skills, and maintained communication with families as best as we could. We never knew how sad a school would feel without many students, and we shed lots of tears due to the unknown nature of what we were experiencing. The strength of our community was evident, and we appreciate the contribution of each and every member.

This year we celebrated 100 years. How lucky we were to have made the decision to align our celebrations with the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes in February, so we were able to celebrate before things shut down. What a wonderful weekend it was, beginning with a classy Gala Night, followed by perfect weather to showcase our grounds and school, with classrooms open, video interviews playing in the classrooms, formalities, official blessing and opening of our newly created memorial garden with named paving bricks, school choir performances, lots of special guests, Mass under the trees, and hundreds of people, old and new, reminiscing and pouring over old photos and displays, and enjoying music well into the evening. It is the sum of the contribution every single person who has walked through the doors of OLOL that made the school the place that we enjoy today. We are very blessed.

Our School Board continued to meet this year, despite the pandemic, and tonight we farewell and thank Briony Page for her three years of service to the Board, as she leaves OLOL at the end of the year, with Evie finishing Year 6. Thank you, Briony, for your contribution, including helping with the uniforms for many years. We wish you, John, Miller and Evie all the best for the coming years. Our Board of 9 is fairly stable for next year, with most renominating or continuing in their roles. Thanks to Gemma Denton, Jenelle Commisso, Kairon Smith, Keith Higham, Lauren Moloney and Emma Tyrrell, who are all continuing or renominating, providing stability and continuity for our Board. Also, thanks to Fr Wayne, ex-officio, who is a 'constant' with us each year. Kairon has reported on the Board activities for the year. I thank her for her leadership this year.

I am extremely grateful to our hard-working, outgoing P&F Executive for their two years of dedicated work helping to raise funds and build community. After being new in their roles last year, I know they were looking forward to building on the experience they gained in their first year when they were planning to support repeat events this year, but unfortunately some of these events were cancelled. They still managed to host incredible raffles, sourcing fantastic prizes, and coordinating volunteers for many events, which Ali will highlight shortly. Thank you, Ali, Fi, Elise and Laura. Our school really appreciates the work of the P&F, and the wonderful resources that you help to provide for our students. I know you will support and encourage our new nominees who will take over the reigns for the next few years.

Thanks, also, to Candice Humble and Josie Higham for their work in the uniform shop. The support we receive from parents is a very special part of our OLOL family.

Our three-year-old Kindergarten program continued to thrive this year, filling to capacity with 20 little ones attending on Wednesdays by the end of Term 3. Our parents of our early years students continue to be our best marketing tool, with word of mouth and recommendations being a great way to fill our classes. Wednesdays are wonderful days, and a great way to build foundations and provide a nurturing start for students and families.

This year, as part of our professional learning and school goals, teachers continued their learning as part of 'The Literacy Collective', although it looked a little different this year. We are still working on Case Management meetings and the refining of our Data Wall, tracking and recording student data as part of our shared responsibility for all student learning. We are still exploring the use of Learning Intentions and co-constructed Success Criteria, however our learning shifted when we rapidly upskilled ourselves in Teams and Seesaw and other ways to connect with students and provide learning remotely. This year has seen the embedding of our Whole School Spelling Program, which individualises spelling for students and allows for checkpoints along the way. This year, we also spent time exploring the Mercy traditions of our school, and celebrated Mercy Day, as well as working on our integration of Aboriginal Perspectives into other areas of the curriculum.

With nearly a term when parents were not allowed into our school grounds, we had an event-free period, only to be caught up in a blur of events and learning activities once we were able to resume a degree of normality. In Terms 3 and 4 we celebrated Sacraments, Mercy Day, Father's Day and Grandparents Day. We held Assemblies, Disco, Sports Carnivals, and camps, participated in Choir performances, Optiminds online challenges, Have Sum Fun Maths, Lapping Legends and lots of learning. All of these activities are due to the dedication of our staff and community members, and we greatly appreciate the efforts of all involved to bring life to our school.

One of our teachers, Mona Dykstra, who is on long service leave this term, will be taking the year off next year as well. We wish Mona well for her year off, and look forward to her return in 2022. Jessie Pilpel has been our Year 2 teacher this term, and we thank her for the enthusiasm and sunshine that she brought to the role. Kate Western has helped us out again by covering long service leave replacement in Year 3. We thank Kate for her willingness to do whatever is needed for the school. Our staff group will remain very stable for next year, as you would have seen in the Newsletter today. We are in a great position to consolidate our learning from the last few years and to start with a few new projects for next year.

Looking to the future, we have many plans in place to further the education of our students. This year was a year for plans - we reviewed our Evangelisation Plan, our Strategic Plan and our Bushfire Plan, wrote our Response Plan, and our Six-Step Plan, wrote and re-wrote our Remote Learning Plan, and we are currently working on our School Improvement Plan and our Curriculum Plan.

After much research, several parent meetings and surveys, and due to the age of the IT devices that we currently have in our school, we have partnered with CEWA to embark on a leasing program to incorporate the use of 1:1 Ipads in Years 4-6 next year with a view to supporting creative and critical thinking skills as part of a digital learning program. Our school will be a 'lighthouse' school, as an example to other schools, as we work to upskill teachers in the pedagogy of integrating digital technology into our learning program.

Another focus for 2021 will be on Wellbeing, with a Wellbeing Team already working to streamline our education programs in this area, and educate staff, parents and students on the importance of Wellbeing, supported by the resources 'Be You'.

We will also be working on a school based Vision for Learning and a Teaching and Learning handbook. It's going to be a busy year!

2021 is a new year. We hope to build on what we learnt this year about how resilient and independent our students can be and what a great place to work and learn that our school is for staff and students and how adaptable we can be. We can also celebrate, as we showed in February when we celebrated 100 years. We will always be grateful for our history, because that lead us to where we are today. From the Mercy traditions of the Sisters who played an important role in the history of our school, we maintain the ethos they started with a focus on our school values of Respect, Justice, Integrity, Courage and Compassion. My prayer is that every student who comes to our school feels known and valued, and leaves here with an open mind and heart.

Special thanks to my dedicated office team, Assistant Principals, and all of our staff who are always willing to go the extra mile for our school and students.

We will meet again at the Awards Night and Graduation, so I will hold off Christmas greetings until then.

Thank you all for your attendance tonight and for your interest in and ongoing support of our school.