Dear Parents, Friends, Staff and Students,

“I would like to tell you all the little cheering things that God permits to fall in our way.” CATHERINE MCAULEY

Welcome back to the 2015 school year at Catherine McAuley, Westmead. A warm welcome to our new students and their families who have joined our community this year and to the following new staff:

Ms Lisa Allen and Mrs Taryn Grima who will job share in HSIE/Business Services
Mrs Anne Bashall - English
Mrs Evelyn Casey - HSIE and will job share with Mrs Natasha Squillacioti
Mrs Gai Mellier - Assistant English Coordinator
Mrs Jessica Muggleton - PD/H/PE
Ms Julia Plummer - Music
Ms Rachel Rees - Science and will job share with Mrs Grace Todesco

Congratulations to:
Mrs Suzanne Bain who has been appointed full time to our Science Faculty
Mrs Lorena Thill who has been appointed Assistant Mathematics Co-ordinator
Mrs Lisa Kemmis who has been appointed as House Patron of Caritas.

We are also pleased to welcome back Mrs Nadia Matteucci, Mrs Kelly Senel, Mrs Natasha Squillacioti and Mrs Grace Todesco to our staff.

Year 7 have had a great start to their high school careers! On Wednesday, 28th January, 195 Year 7 students began at Catherine McAuley. I would like to congratulate them on their quick adaption to life in high school! I would also like to thank Ms Joanne Dae, the Year 7 Homeroom teachers and our Year 11 and 12 student leaders who made such a smooth transition possible.

Hockey Australia has selected 25 players into the 2015 Junior National Squad. The squad will attend camps throughout the year and from this squad the Junior Australian Team will be selected. We congratulate Kate Hanna (Year 12 2014) who has been selected into this squad.

During the holiday period our school library has been painted and new furniture has started to arrive for student use. Students in Years 8-12 will have their technology devices enrolled onto our school network over weeks two and three ready for full use. All students have also been issued with a school diary, school tote bag and pen with the student leadership motto ‘Tick it Off’. So we are ready to start!

As staff we look forward to an exciting year focussed on learning and involvement in the wider life of the school with your daughters.

Regards

Ms Laetitia Richmond
Principal
Welcome back to the 2015 academic year at Catherine McAuley. We warmly welcome our new students and staff who have joined the Catherine McAuley community. We are delighted that Ms Leonie King and Miss Michelle Ribeiro have joined the Religious Education teaching staff and especially welcome Mrs Kelly Senel who has returned from maternity leave. The Religious Education staff are very much looking forward to another exciting year at Catherine McAuley. The Graduating Class of 2014 are to be congratulated on their outstanding Higher School Certificate results in Studies of Religion.

We are most blessed that Father Paul Cahill O. Carm will continue in his role of school chaplain. We are very appreciative of Father Paul’s generosity and look forward to working together with him in 2015. Last week, Father Paul celebrated our first Friday Morning Mass and we hope that throughout the year that many of our students will be able to join us on Friday mornings in the Mercy Chapel at 8:10am.

Our Year 12 students have already completed one term of their Higher School Certificate studies. We wish them and all students a successful year. The Catholic Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) and Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards (BOSTES) courses provide students with a diverse range of units. The units which your daughter/s will be studying in Term 1 is provided in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Unit/s of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Religious Education</td>
<td>Initiation and Belonging &amp; Easter Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Religious Education</td>
<td>Religion in the World &amp; Bible Depth Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Religious Education</td>
<td>Christianity in the Middle Ages &amp; Mary and the Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Religious Education</td>
<td>A Call to Unity &amp; Eucharist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Catholic Studies</td>
<td>Search for Meaning &amp; Spiritual Pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 SOR 1 Unit</td>
<td>Nature of Religion and Beliefs &amp; Religious Tradition Study 1: Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 SOR 2 Unit</td>
<td>Nature of Religion and Beliefs, Religion of Ancient Origins &amp; Religious Tradition Study 1: Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Catholic Studies</td>
<td>Jesus of History, Christ of Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 SOR 1 Unit</td>
<td>Religious Tradition Depth Study 1: Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 SOR 2 Unit</td>
<td>Religious Tradition Depth Study 2: Christianity &amp; Religious Tradition Depth Study 3: Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 8th February this year, the feast day of St Josephine Bakhita, has been designated as a world day of prayer, reflection and action for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

St Josephine Bakhita knew slavery. She was a Sudanese woman who was sold and resold five times in the markets of El Obeid and of Khartoum. Her experience of slavery was both physical and moral. As slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before her birth, an Italian court claimed that she could never have been sold as a slave originally. This left her free to become a Daughter of Charity at the Canossian Convent in Rome. Her name Bakhita, which means “fortunate”, was the name given to her by her kidnappers. For this reason St. Bakhita has been named the patron saint of all those who have been trafficked and are held in captivity or slavery.

Combating human trafficking is a priority issue for Mercy International Association (MIA). One of Catherine McAuley’s earliest outreach programs was to provide shelter, safety and hope to vulnerable women and girls in Dublin. Pope Francis has also highlighted the issue of human trafficking. On St Josephine’s feast day we pray for those who have been enslaved and those in danger of becoming victims of slavery. We also pray for those who are working to rescue, protect, raise awareness about the evil of human trafficking; and those pledged to eradicating the crime of human trafficking. We pray that the innocent victims of human trafficking may experience the freedoms and rights which we so often take for granted.

Ms Genevieve Banks
Religious Education Coordinator
Welcome to the new school year. I would like to take this opportunity to formally introduce myself to our new parents and welcome them to the school community. My role as Assistant Principal (Learning and Teaching) is primarily to oversee curriculum, assessment and reporting within the school. I take great pleasure in seeing our young women progress in their learning and I am constantly impressed by the fine attitude that McAuley students have to school. I welcome the opportunity to meet with parents, as I believe that the establishment and maintenance of genuine, collaborative partnerships between schools and parents is key to supporting students to achieve their best. So please feel free to contact me either by phone or email.

2014 Higher School Certificate
The Higher School Certificate results in 2014 were impressive with many Catherine McAuley students achieving outstanding results and many others achieving well above expectation. For the second year in a row Catherine McAuley, Westmead were named in the Sydney Morning Herald Honours Roll as one of the top 150 schools in the State, with 33% of courses above state average by more than 5% and 40 students named on the Merit list.

At this stage the school is still contacting students but we have been informed that over 17 students have achieved ATARs exceeding 90 and that our school dux is Aishwarya Venkatesan - who achieved an ATAR of 99.65. Aishwarya was also named as a “Premier’s All Rounder” meaning that she attained marks of 90 or more in at least 10 units. Aishwarya and the other high achieving students will be acknowledged in a special academic next week. The vast majorities of the 2014 cohort have gained entry into university courses or are furthering their studies at TAFE or colleges. We wish them all the best.

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)
The majority of Year 8 - 10 students have accepted the invitation to “Bring Their Own Device” to school to support their learning. This now means that students from Years 8 – 12 are involved in this initiative. There are many advantages to BYOD including an improved opportunity for students to communicate, collaborate and create using technology.

To ensure that the implementation of the BYOD program is successful, a number of clear expectations have been outlined in a document entitled “BYOD Student Rules and Responsibilities” which is available on the school website. Years 8, 9 and 10 students were asked to take this document home to share with their parents or carers. The document supports students to use their devices in an ethical, safe and productive way.

Students in Year 7 will not need to bring a device into school until Term 2. If you have any queries or concerns regarding BYOD please don’t hesitate to contact me by phone or email.

Homework
Parents are often concerned about the issue of homework and in particular whether a student is spending too much or too little time on homework. This often depends on the year level, a student’s ability to plan and organise their time and how easy or challenging a student is finding the particular work. A general guide over five nights per week would be:

- Students in Years 7 to 8 approximately one hour a night on homework.
- Students in Years 9 and 10 approximately one and a half hours per night on homework.
- Senior students a minimum of two and a half hours.

This time includes homework and assignments. The times are based on the fact that the students have to prepare for 5 lessons for the following school day, except for Thursday. So for Year 7 and 8 students they would be looking at 10 to 15 minutes for each subject they have the next school day and Year 9 and 10 students 15 to 20 minutes for each subject. With assignments the key is to plan out the time and not leave everything to the last minute. If not all of the time is required for completing set tasks then students should take the opportunity to revise and study their subjects.

I would encourage parents to supervise their daughter’s homework. If your daughter has not completed her homework in a particular subject after these suggested times then parents should write a note in the school diary and she go onto the work in her next subject. Your daughter can show the diary note to her teacher the next day and it is important that she asks the teacher for help.

Some of the reasons homework is set is to consolidate the work done in class, to develop planning and individual thinking skills, to prepare for the next lesson and to allow students to take some responsibility for their learning. Parents should not be worried about helping their daughters with their homework but they should not do the work for them.

Peer tutoring and homework help is available in the library several afternoons each week. In addition, the school diary provides some great information about study and homework.

Project 21
Last Monday all students in Year 7 participated in a new initiative for our school called Project 21. Once per fortnight your daughter will have a two-hour P21 class, with the aim of quipping her with the skills necessary to be a successful learner in the twenty-first century. These skills include being able to solve problems, collaborate, communicate, present ideas, think creatively and use technology fluently.

I look forward to a productive 2015 with Catherine McAuley students becoming active participants in their own learning and striving to achieve their personal best.

Ms Janet Cairncross
Assistant Principal
(Learning & Teaching)
A special welcome to our Year 7 and all new students who have joined the Catherine McAuley community this year. In the Newsletter I will highlight aspects of school life or routine that we are concerned about and ask parents to work with us to achieve a positive outcome for all students. I will also provide information that may assist your daughter with her schooling in the form of a specific study skill, health information or organisation tip.

School Diary

As we begin a new school year I remind Parents and Students of the following procedures at Catherine McAuley. The information relating to these procedures can be found in the school diary.

- Study Skills Online Handbook – page 20 and 21
- Mobile Phone / Ipod Policy – page 144
- Dress Code and Grooming requirements - page 147
- Procedure for absence, late to school or leaving school early - page 151. The school discourages students leaving early and ask where possible for parents to make appointments for their daughter outside school hours.

The school diary also has information for parents on pages 6, 7 and 8. It is an expectation of the school for parents to sign their daughter’s diary once a week. The school diary is an organisational tool for school, it is not to be used as a social diary. Girls who deface their school diary will be asked to purchase a new school diary from the Uniform Shop.

School Swimming Carnival

The school swimming carnival is scheduled for Friday 27th February and will be held at the school pool. Students are encouraged to wear their house colours but must wear their school uniform or sports uniform to and from school changing into their house colours at school. Students will have the opportunity to register for competitive and non-competitive races to ensure all students swim in at least one event. As there is limited shade all students must wear a hat. I would encourage students to also wear sunscreen and bring plenty of water. The Mercy in Action Group will be selling snow cones and the canteen will operate from the pool area. As this is a compulsory school day I would ask students who are absent to provide a medical certificate on their return to school.

Road Safety

The Westmead area is a very busy area for both cars and pedestrians. The police have expressed their concern regarding pedestrian safety in the Westmead area and students may be fined for not crossing the road at pedestrian crossings or alighting from cars in no stopping areas. Please discuss this issue with your daughter and ensure she knows to cross the road using the appropriate pedestrian crossings. I have attached information provide by Parramatta Police outlining fines associated with school zone offences.

Study Skills Online Handbook

Catherine McAuley has a subscription to an online Study Skills Handbook. The school diary outlines on page 20 how parents and students can connect to this site. There are two articles attached to this newsletter providing information for parents on Games and Technology. What are electronic games doing to the adolescent brain? and How parents can help their secondary school student with their learning?

NSW School Vaccination Program

Each year NSW Health works in partnership with school to offer the vaccines recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council for adolescents as part of the school vaccination program. Year 7 will receive information regarding the upcoming vaccinations next week in Homeroom. Further information regarding the NSW School Vaccination Program is attached with this newsletter.

Ms Debbie Grigson
Assistant Principal
(Pastoral Care/Administration)
A new school initiative the 2014-2015 Student Leadership Team have decided to implement is a Leader’s Column in the newsletter. This column will be written by the Catherine McAuley school leaders and provides a unique insight into the school community from a student’s perspective.

At the conclusion of 2014, the Student Leadership Team announced to the school community the new school campaign called ‘Tick it Off’. The ‘Tick it Off’ campaign has been established to encourage the school community to make goals, which can be ‘ticked off’ once accomplished. The goals can range from academic, sporting, creative and personal goals. Whatever goals the students wish to set for themselves. The leadership team have offered suggestions such as joining in extracurricular activities, eating healthy, trying your best in all that you do, thinking of others more and offering friendship to those in need.

On the first day back this year every student and teacher received a ‘Tick it Off’ pen. The pen, with the words ‘Tick it Off’ on the side has been designed to encourage students to make a list of goals to accomplish which they can then tick off with their very own ‘Tick it Off’ pen.

We hope that everybody has a great time formulating their goals and remember to accomplish them so you can ‘Tick it Off!’

**Around the Classrooms . . .**

Year 11 Chemistry students with Ms Carter were looking at the different methods which can be used to separate substances such as distillation, chromatography and filtration to name a few.

Year 11 Chemistry students using different methods to separate mixtures.
On Wednesday 28th January, one day earlier than the rest of the school and in driving rain, our 195 Year 7 students arrived at McAuley looking resplendent in their new uniforms. After mingling in the BM open area, the students made their way into the Forum where they were formally welcomed to the school and met their Homeroom Teachers and House Leaders.

Annalise Brydon read the acknowledgement of country before all of Year 7 read the prayer about ‘new beginnings’. We finished this prayer by asking God to help each one of us make our school a place of happiness, kindness and support for each other as we take risks and challenge ourselves to achieve ‘personal bests’ in our learning. Year 7 has been blessed with a wonderful homeroom team. They are:

7 Caritas – Mr Johnson
7 Clare – Ms Aashour
7 Coolock – Ms Ko
7 Dobson – Mrs Matteucci
7 Mercedes – Mrs Pietrantonio
7 Ryan – Mr Taniane
7 Veritas – Ms Plummer

The students have settled into life at high school very quickly and have managed to master the intricacies of their combination locks and a brand new timetable that has them moving classrooms and teachers five times a day. No easy task! Their maturity, the concern they have shown for each other and their wonderful good humour has made for an easy transition. Many staff have commented on the delightful manners of the students and their enthusiasm in lessons. I congratulate each and every one of the girls for their excellent start to what is a very important school year.

Photo’s have also been taken for ID cards, the optional tennis coaching program has commenced and trials for representative sporting teams and Dance Troupe are underway. This week, the Peer Support Program begins, and the pool is open at lunchtime Monday to Wednesday and Fridays for swimming for fun. If your daughter has been happy but exhausted you now know why.

I look forward to meeting you all at the welcome BBQ this Friday and at various events as the year progresses. I encourage you to call me if you would like to discuss anything related to your daughter’s education at McAuley. My number is in the student diary.

Ms Joanne Dae
Year 7 Coordinator

“The first few days have been fun and scary at the same time.”
Emma Dawkins

“The teachers are very nice and the homework so far is not too complicated”.
Cassandra Spear

“This is all such a new experience and I am loving every minute of it”.
Kristen Hadad

“It is interesting as it is very different to primary school”.
Sameerah Hassanein

“The fellow students are very caring and will help if needed”.
Sophia Fletcher

“It is very hard to get use to everything now but one day I will look back and think it was the journey of my life”.
Alexia Amer

“The school is massive. You can get lost easily although the teachers are directing us where to go”.
Alyssa Guerrero

“I’m loving how Catherine McAuley is very different to primary school. I like that we are not always in one classroom but rotate around”.
Monica Albayeh

“Everyone is very friendly”.
Michaella Ferrer

“The teachers are very caring and will help if needed”.
Cassandra Spear

“A Warm Welcome To Year 7 2015

Term 1 Issue 1, 5th February 2015
Page 6
Students in Years 7 – 10 participate every Thursday afternoon in a sports program which gives them the opportunity to engage in a variety of different sports and activities. The program is one the students enjoy and Thursday afternoons are probably a favourite for many students.

Our Year 7 students are currently participating in Peer Support on a Thursday afternoon but will join in on the sports program next term. Year 7 students will participate for one hour, as they have a Period 4 on a Thursday, whilst our Years 8-10 students participate for two hours, as they only have Periods 1 - 3.

Students from Years 8 and 9 rotate amongst the many sports/activities on offer for their year group. Students from Year 10 are able to nominate three preferences. Activities are extremely varied and across all year groups include:

- Swimming
- Tai Chi
- Martial Arts
- Yoga
- AFL
- Self Defence
- Frisbee
- Zumba
- Flagball
- Power Walking
- Golf
- Fencing
- Environment Group
- Dance Troupe

In addition to these activities a number of students participate in the MCCS sporting competition which takes place on a Thursday afternoon. Students are able to try out for a team and if chosen will then represent Catherine McAuley in their chosen sport. The MCCS competition takes place around Sydney with students travelling to different venues to compete. This term there are three MCCS sports the school is participating in. These are water polo, volleyball and touch football.
Congratulations to the following students who have been announced as the cast and crew for the upcoming McAuley Drama Club production of 'Selfie'.

**Cast**
- Nicole played by JoBeth Elias
- Zack played by Heather Tleige
- Laura played by Chaya OCampo
- Kaitlin played by Meg Dawkins
- Tyler played by Rachel Prain
- Jessie played by Mia O'Reilly
- Morgan played by Daniella Franklin
- Sam played by Naomi Borg

**Understudies:** Toni Clenton & Serena Caro

**Crew**
- Sivani Yaddanapudi & Amy Romanous: Director
- Elyssa Vickers: Stage Manager
- Alannah Ayres: Designer & Operator
- Pragaa Ganesh: T Visuals Operator & Lighting Operator
- Avni Pawer: Marketing
- Georgia Toevai: Head of Poster & Set Design
- Ysabel Hollero: Poster & Set design
- Patricia Teano: Properties
- Emma Romanous: Properties
- Kayla Hine: Head of Costume
- Inpana Jerome: Costume

School Open Morning

Catherine McAuley
Tuesday 10th February 2015
9.15 – 11am
All Welcome!

To book a place on this tour please contact School Reception on 9849 9100.

Catherine McAuley Facebook Page

Have you checked out the school Facebook Page yet?

We already have over 800 followers. The page is filled with lots of photos and news items to keep you informed of what is happening here at McAuley.

You can find our page by searching within Facebook for 'Catherine McAuley Westmead' or via the web address:

www.facebook.com/catherinemcauleywestmead

Catherine McAuley Westmead takes many photographs of students throughout the year. These photographs and student names are used in school and diocesan publications, newsletters, media releases, social media and school and Catholic Education Office internet pages. If, for any reason, parents do not want a photo of their daughter included, they should let the school know in writing. Please contact Ms Jacqui Hamilton on 9849 9129 if you have any concerns.
The School Community of Catherine McAuley, Westmead has much pleasure in inviting you to our

2015 Opening School Mass and Blessing & Presentation of Student Leadership Badges

Celebrated by Fr Paul Cahill O.Carm
on Friday 20th February 2015
in the Morley Centre
commencing at 9:30 am.

Guests need to be seated by 9:15 am.

Parking will be available via Gate 3 which is located opposite Westmead Private Hospital or UWS car park, enter from Hawkesbury Road - Cost $12

Please RSVP before Friday 13th February 2015 to School Reception on 9849 9100 or Email: mcauleywestmead@parra.catholic.edu.au
Catherine McAuley Westmead

Enrolments for Year 7 2016

Closing Date for Year 7 2016 Applications 1st Round Offers is
Friday 27th March 2015.

There will be two Open Mornings specifically for Year 7 2016 enrolments on:

Tuesday 10th February and Wednesday 5th March 2015
9.15 – 11am

These mornings will give interested parents and students the opportunity to tour our school on a normal school day. You will be able to view our school grounds and facilities, go into classrooms and meet our students and teachers. Enrolment packs will be available on the day.

To book places for a school tour on one of these tour mornings please contact our School Reception on 9849 9100.

The school will also be holding an Open Afternoon/Evening on Tuesday, 17th March from 4.00 – 6.30pm. This will provide another opportunity to tour the school with classrooms open and school tours running throughout this time. Following the Open event from 7.00 – 8.00pm there will be a Year 7 2016 Enrolment Information Evening presented by the Leadership Team. This will provide further information on the school and the enrolment process. Completed enrolment forms may be lodged at this meeting.

Any questions concerning the Open Afternoon/Evening or the Year 7 Enrolment Information Evening can be answered by phoning School Reception. Car parking for any of these school events will be available via Gate 3 off Darcy Road, Westmead.
School Zone Offences
(As of February 2015)

Not stop at stop line red light .................................................. $519 ...... 4
Not stop before traffic lights at yellow light ................................ $519 ...... 4
Not give way at lights to pedestrian on road ................................ $415 ...... 4
Approach children’s crossing too quickly to stop ...................... $519 ...... 4
Not give way to pedestrian on crossing .................................... $519 ...... 4
Disobey hand-held stop sign at crossing ................................. $519 ...... 4
Make U-turn at intersection with traffic lights ......................... $311 ...... 3
Drive on path .......................................................................... $415 ...... 4
Drive on traffic island ................................................................. $415 ...... 4
Drive using mobile phone when not permitted ......................... $415 ...... 4
Disobey no stopping sign .......................................................... $311 ...... 2
Disobey no parking sign ............................................................... $311 ...... 2
Exceed speed 10 km/ph and under ........................................... $182 ...... 2
Exceed speed over 10 km/ph ...................................................... $327 ...... 4
Mobile and handheld technologies provide great opportunities for learning. However, with the vast number of electronic games also available, it is easy for students to become distracted by these games at any hour of the day or night and in any location. Globally, addiction to electronic games is becoming an increasing issue - with some players spending more than 12 hours a day playing games.

Here is some of the evidence about the negative impacts of too much gaming, including what is happening to the adolescent brain of students who spend too much time on these activities. DA Gentile, H Choo, A Liau, T Sim, D Li, D Fung, A Khoo “Pathological Video Game Use Among Youths: A Two Year Longitudinal Study” (2011) Pediatrics Vol 127 No. 2, ppe319 - e329

This two year longitudinal study conducted in Singapore followed over 3,000 children in middle and high school. It found that students who spent more time gaming had lower social confidence, greater impulsivity and were more likely to become pathological gamers. Further, the study found that those students who were pathological gamers were more likely to have lower school performance, along with disorders such as depression and anxiety.

http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/2/e319.short


This study examined the relationship between energy intake and gaming in 22 adolescent males. It compared their energy intake after a period of gaming and also a period of rest. Biological markers (appetite hormones and blood pressure) were used as measures, along with behavioural observations (spontaneous food intake). The study concluded that participants had a higher energy intake when engaging in gaming than during rest and that this was regardless of their appetite sensations. This means students were eating more than they needed.

http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/93/6/1196.short


In this study, the brains of 12 adolescents with a diagnosed internet addiction were examined in comparison with 11 “healthy” adolescents. The study found that there was reduced functionality in parts of the brains of those with the addiction.


This study commenced with a screening of over 500 middle and high school students to identify those with an internet addiction and compared 59 internet addicted students to 43 non-addicted students using an IQ test. Results showed that the students with an internet addiction had lower scores in relation to comprehension than the control group. Further research is required to determine whether this is cause or effect ie. Does the lower comprehension predispose the student to internet addiction, or does the internet addiction cause brain changes?


Learn more this year about how to work effectively at home and manage distractions by working through the units on www.studyskillshandbook.com.au. Our school’s access details are:

Username: mcauley
Password: 189results
HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT WITH THEIR LEARNING

Whilst parents are often involved in their teenager’s sporting, musical or dramatic activities, parental support on the sidelines of their adolescent child’s studies can be also be beneficial, particularly to academic performance. Research shows that children are more likely to succeed if parents are involved in their learning. Hendersen and Mapp (2002) found that ‘the more families support their children’s learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education’.

Strategies for Parents to help their secondary school aged students achieve their potential:

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The obvious logistical support is providing a quiet, open space with few distractions for working at home. Involve your student in creating this space. Workspace tools for effective learning include a desk, ergonomic chair, a noticeboard and good lighting, as well as a shelf or drawers for folders, reference books and non-essential work. Spending time to discuss options, alternatives and reasons for establishing a dedicated work area is valuable.

BREAKFAST

Importantly students need to start the day with a nutritional breakfast, as this will increase energy, attention, concentration and memory, particularly if the breakfast includes grains, fibre, protein and is low in sugar. Parents can facilitate this good start to the day as part of the daily routine. Similarly, nutritious snacks and lunch will enable the student to remain more focused throughout the day.

ORGANISATION

A calendar for each term should be created and displayed near your student’s desk and in prominent thoroughfares in the home, such as the kitchen. The calendar or term planner should include: all co-curricular and social activities, as well as assignment, assessment or test dates. This helps the student see the big picture of commitments and not simply a weekly or daily vision as school diaries or digital devices usually allow. The student, and parent, can clearly see when heavy workload periods occur, and social activities can be tailored to ensure work has a priority. It’s a good idea to sit down with your student every couple of days to discuss the schedule ahead, when the work can be slotted in, and how a parent could help by reducing family commitments, or by setting boundaries with social engagements. Regularly sitting down to discuss workloads and tasks due, reviewing activities and schedules can help students learn to be more productive and organized.

FILING SYSTEMS

Master folders should be set up for each subject at home, so after each topic is completed the notes can be placed in appropriate categories. This also gives students somewhere to file completed tests and assignments. Most students carry their current notes to school each day, but naturally as the term and year progresses it’s impossible (and risky if misplaced) to have all worknotes in one folder. Students may also need help organising the files on their computers and devices (although it is likely that many students know more about this than their parents!).

ROUTINES

Helping your student to establish routines can add an element of calm to each day. Simple routines such as having the school bag packed and uniform ready before going to bed each night, can eliminate unnecessary angst in the morning. A useful addition to the evening schedule is to determine the next afternoon’s program: when homework and daily revision will be done around curricular activities, dinner etc. This can give a clear direction when your student comes home each day. Some students find that having regular times set aside for schoolwork each day helps them to develop a routine of working. Other students will need to make a plan each afternoon as their schedule changes each day.

TIMETABLE

Know your student’s timetable, so it’s easy and relevant to ask “What were you doing in Science today?” A specific question can often open a conversation where your student not only shares but, in doing so, reinforces what was learned which increases memory (and understanding) of the lesson.

SUBJECTS

Know your student’s subjects, and become aware of the topics covered each year in those subjects. ‘Improved educational outcomes result from a genuine interest and active engagement from parents’ (OECD 2011), so knowing the topics could allow parents to expose students to different dimensions of the subject through film, books, contemporary issues, the Internet, exhibitions, travel etc. Students appreciate, perhaps subconsciously, that the parent is truly interested in their learning and what they are learning. Some schools will give students a course outline and the state’s educational body will also have a website where parents should be able to access the syllabus (what will be taught) for each subject.

ASSIGNMENTS

A helpful strategy is to keep abreast of when assignments are given. Talking to your student about assignment expectations, drawing out their understanding of the topic, criteria and parts of the assignment can instill a deeper appreciation. It’s good to probe and ask more about the assignment topic with questions, as this could give your student other perspectives, and once more, help the student feel the parent has a real interest in learning. When planning the workload for an assignment, parents can help break the work into chunks or parts. This can reduce the sense of the overwhelming enormity of the task and the task can be broken into manageable parts, which are then scheduled to be done into the calendar or diary.

TESTS

Similarly, parents can help students prepare for tests by quizzing them, asking for concepts to be explained or helping write practice tests. Explain to your student that memory and understanding can increase if the brain is using multiple processes to use information, such as writing, reading, speaking, drawing or singing! When tests are returned, focus on what was achieved and note concepts to revise. If students know parents are not solely focused on the grade, but also on the process, and that tests (and assignments) are tools to learn, intrinsic motivation can develop.
CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
There comes a time in secondary school when some co-curricular activities need to be cut for a period of time, as academic demands increase or the student is juggling too much. It’s unlikely students will initiate severing an activity so it’s generally up to parents. Students, like adults, can give more to an activity when there is time, and academic work needs to be one of the main priorities during the school terms. Parents will often be the first to notice when their student is over-loaded (and it varies for each individual), when school work is rushed or dismissed, when their student is tired or out-of-sorts, when they have no “downtime” on weeknights. Everyone needs some downtime, even if it is only for an hour of escapist freedom.

TECHNOLOGY
Parents need to be the “bad cop” when it comes to limiting computer games, or other digital device activity. It is advisable that devices are not in bedrooms when students go to bed. However, rather than dictating the rule, parents should talk about the need for solid, sufficient sleep for the brain to re-wire neural pathways to consolidate the day’s learning. Lack of sleep can lead to reduced concentration and attention span, delayed response time, and decreased short-term memory. Rules for technology (including TV viewing) should be developed together if possible so there is agreement about the approach.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL
It’s now fully acknowledged that together, parents and teachers play a dual role in educating students, so it’s vital to maintain open communication with the school. It’s important for parents to keep abreast of school information conveyed to through newsletters, school portals, emails and so on, as it’s not uncommon for a student to miss information at school. This allows parents to flag or discuss with their student what the school is offering, advising or sharing. For example: a newsletter may alert parents to additional “maths tutorials” offered before school, or “homework help sessions” after school. This reinforces again that the parent is interested in their student’s learning. It is equally important for parents to advise the school of extraneous issues happening at home, as this would give teachers an understanding of atypical behaviour, work ethic, concentration etc. An illness or death in the family (including a family pet), parent absence for more than a fortnight, or challenging issues on the home front, are examples of when parents should contact the school. Moderated assignments, extensions on homework, or relaxed detentions could result, and allow the student to resume their learning journey without additional stress. However secondary school students also need to gain skills and strategies to deal with life’s variables, and to become independent, confident problem solvers. So it’s also important for parents to give students opportunities to manage issues at school themselves. Parents should not approach the school to “fix” every minor problem, such as a student missing a page in an exam which lowered his grade, or a student feeling they had been maligned by a peer. Both these instances are life-lessons to learn from or solve, so parents should encourage students to ask for approach teachers themselves when needed.

The strategies above should be developed with the child, and hopefully will be independently adopted by the student when they reach their final years at school. It’s worthwhile noting that each point is related to the child’s learning, as this sends a very positive message that the parent is engaged and interested in the learning process.


Learn more this year about how students can improve their results and be more efficient and effective with their school-work by working through the units on www.studyskillshandbook.com.au. Our school’s access details are:

Username: mcauley
Password: 189results
NSW SCHOOL VACCINATION PROGRAM

Each year NSW Health works in partnership with schools to offer the vaccines recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for adolescents as part of the school vaccination program.

In 2015 the following vaccines will be offered:

**Year 7 students**
- dTpa vaccine (Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis (whooping cough)) as a single dose
- varicella vaccine (chickenpox) as a single dose; and
- human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in a 3-dose schedule at 0, 2 and 6 months
  (students who commence HPV vaccination in Year 7 but do not complete the course may be offered catch-up doses at school in Year 8)

**Year 11-12 students**
- measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine as a single dose as part of a catch-up vaccination program for students who are not fully protected.

*The Parent Information Kits contain a consent form, information sheet and privacy statement that details how personal information will be collected, stored and utilised.*

Parent Information Kits will be sent home to parents/guardians. To consent to the vaccination of their child, parents/guardians are advised to:
- read all the information provided
- complete the consent form, including signing their name next to the vaccine/s they would like their child to receive
- return the completed consent form to their child’s school
- ensure that their child eats breakfast on the day of the school vaccination clinic.

Parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their consent for any reason may do so by writing to the school Principal or phoning the school. The Procedure for Withdrawal of Consent is available on the NSW Health website at [www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation)

To improve vaccination completion, students will be opportunistically offered any missed doses throughout the year where possible.

Please note that for HPV vaccine only, parents/guardians must record their Medicare Number (all 10 digits and the 11th number beside the child’s name) on the consent form, as this is required to record the student’s information on the National HPV Vaccination Register and (for female students only) link to the National or State Cervical Screening Program.

A Record of Vaccination will be provided to each student vaccinated at each clinic. Parents/guardians should ensure that this record is kept for future reference and should not assume that their child has been vaccinated if they do not receive this Record of Vaccination.