Dear Parents

It is always easy at the beginning of each term to talk about the many busy things we need to do in preparing programs, organising timetables and coordinating students and staff. I want to reflect a little more deeply in this Newsletter about who we are as a school community and to broaden our own perspectives about the learning journey we are all on. For some students and parents we have celebrated, in some cases just survived, the emotions and challenges of completing our first year of school. For others we are feeling daunted about entering the last semester of schooling and concerned about the many uncertainties that post-school life brings for our students and parents. I am stating the obvious that for many parents we are often overwhelmed by the sense of urgency we have to ensure we are doing the best we can for our child. We hold tight onto the hope that our children are receiving the education and support that they need. I heard on the radio this week an extension to the idea that it takes a village to raise a child. What a daunting thought. We are exposed to so much information and opinion about what special education could be or should be for our students. At times we are confused by the many competing priorities and methods about how we can best work with students with high support learning needs. For both parents and teachers it can be overwhelming and at times our confidence in doing what we know and believe is best can be questioned.

I want to take the opportunity in this Newsletter to reinforce our important focus on what it means for us to Live to Learn and Learn to Live. As a school community, and individually, we must reflect on what it means to both teach and learn. How do we help another person develop a knowledge, a skill, an attitude or a behaviour that we think is necessary? Our school community is working hard to understand our use of the Australian Curriculum and to identify what we value as relevant and reasonable for our students. We have been guided by developing clear units of works which have given a stronger connection to themes throughout the school and in many cases themes between schools. This has been helpful, but it is critically important for all of us to keep our focus on what is essential for our students to learn.

You have recently finished reading semester one reports, hopefully enjoyed looking at picture reports, and through your own observations and experiences have a strong sense of your child’s educational program. Through our Newsletters you develop a sense of programs that happen across our school and I hope you sense the amazing diversity of learners we support. I would like to take this brief opportunity to summarise for all of us the ongoing focus of our teaching and learning from our youngest preps to our senior pathways students.

As teachers and parents our continued commitment is to help our learners;
- identify objects, read signs, letters and words, etc
- Draw, write, tap and drag, type, etc
- Communicate needs, wants, feelings, ideas, confidence, self esteem, etc
- Work with others appropriately and purposefully (to cooperate, share, turn take, wait, assist, etc)
- Develop understanding of time, money, number, colour, shape, etc
- Develop the necessary skills, attitudes and behaviours that we have detailed in our Mitchelton Special School Adaptive Behaviours Policy.

As principal my role is to ensure we continue to be clear about our purpose and to maintain focus on what learning means for each of us. Providing professional development for staff is ongoing. A priority for us in this coming semester is to continue our work in coaching teachers with the Four Blocks Reading Framework and refining our skills around feedback. It is important we reflect on and understand the complex balance between what it means to teach and what it means to learn. Participation in our Parent Education Series provides parents with opportunities to not only spend time thinking about a specific topic but to also build on our understanding of the diverse needs and perspectives which make up our great school. It is a great privilege to be the principal of this school community. I look forward to working with our school community to ensure we continue to explore all aspects of our school motto for students, parents and staff.

Other Important Dates (more info to come)
- Advocacy skills training for parents/ carers @MSS – proposed date Thu Jul 30 (9am-2:30pm)
- Transition Preparation Workshop – Tue 4 Aug (6:30 – 8:30pm)

Enjoy your weekend—Wayne