

Special Edition - Learning and Teaching @ Mercy

April 2018

Welcome to the third edition of Mercy Regional College's Learning and Teaching Newsletter. Through this publication, we aim to focus on issues related to the special partnership between students, parents and teachers. This supports our aim to provide great outcomes for our students.

Previous editions can be accessed via the Mercy website: <http://www.mercy.vic.edu.au/newsletters/> (2017)

From the Principal:

Student Engagement - An essential ingredient to quality learning and teaching

A particular challenge in contemporary education is to ensure that all students are engaged with their learning. In the 21st century, teachers and schools must develop and present lessons and tasks that are engaging, challenging and appropriate for all levels of learning.

A key means by which these principles can be achieved is through establishing, with students, the types of learning and tasks that are engaging and then incorporating this information as a priority when reviewing lessons and units for the future. Bring the opinions of students more proactively into the review of teaching programs is termed "Student Voice" and takes the traditional notion of considering the opinions of students much further.

Student Voice challenges teachers and school leaders to ask questions like:

- Is the voice of my students heard in the development of teaching units?
- Do I seek feedback from students on the effectiveness of a learning or assessment task?
- Are all the student voices in my classes being heard?
- Do the students in my class have the skills and opportunities to provide feedback on what is being taught?
- Do my students feel empowered to provide feedback on how material is being taught?
- If students are given the opportunity to provide feedback, do they feel this feedback will effect positive change?

Exploring and facilitating student voice across all aspects of Mercy Regional College is a key priority for 2018 and one that we believe will significantly impact on the level of student engagement in our classrooms.

Dr Darren Egberts
Principal

Prayer - A Promise To My Students

*I promise to care about you; I promise to be patient with you
I promise to help you when you are struggling; I promise to be fair and consistent
I promise to enjoy teaching you; I promise to be trustworthy
I promise to believe in you; I promise to make learning interesting and meaningful
I promise the I will challenge you to be your very best; I promise to do everything I can to help you succeed
I promise that no matter what I will never give up on you*



From the Director of Professional Practice

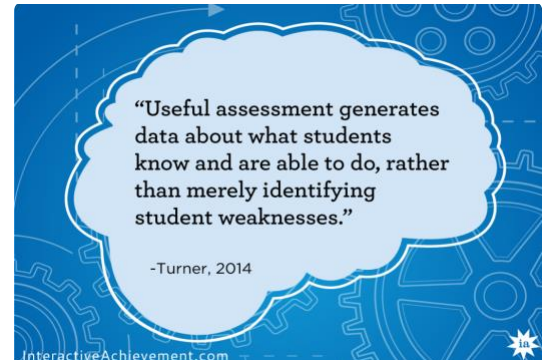
Mrs. Tania Bruckner

Learning: Assessment, Feedback and Reflection

One of our main aims at Mercy is to improve outcomes for all students, and for parents to see this growth.

A key focus is to provide a range of assessment that foster progress. In short, assessments should help inform our teaching to improve outcomes for students. There should be a mixture of formative and summative tasks, using a variety of methods of instruction and presentation. Learning should encourage critical thinking, not just memorising content for a test or exam.

Please refer to last year's Special Teaching & Learning Newsletter Edition #1, for more details regarding this.



Feedback: An essential part of the process involves feedback. Teachers give feedback to students in a variety of ways - a verbal comment, written remarks, a record sheet, asking key questions and so on. Increasingly our focus is on providing **feedback DURING learning**, rather than just at the end of a task. This provides opportunity for us to discover where a student might require extra assistance or extension, and to 'target teach' specific skills or knowledge.

Balancing negative and positive feedback is vital, providing assurance when students are on track, and advice on future learning. Feedback is most powerful when it reduces the gap between where the student is and where she/he is meant to be. We might ask questions like:



- "Do you know what to do next?"
- "Do you understand the task?"
- "Is that enough help?"
- "What will you do if you get stuck again?"
- "What will you change next time?"
- "Explain to me..."
- "Explain to a partner..."
- "What was tricky or easy about this task?"

Student Reflection: Student reflection is another key aspect of the learning process. We encourage peer and self marking and feedback. This is very powerful in teaching students to look at their work with a critical eye - to consider what they did well, what's missing and how to make improvements. Reflection should provide students with motivation to learn and enjoy the process of learning. Reflections can be done informally, through conversation or an activity, and can be recorded in student workbooks and on Simon (accessed via PAM).

You can access PAM via this link: <http://www.mercy.vic.edu.au/pam/>

EXIT SLIP

Hand out a short quiz or a few simple questions, and students give them to you as they leave your class.

3	Things I Learned Today...
2	Things I Found Interesting...
1	Question I Still Have...

Exams Update:

In line with a focus on formative assessment and feedback, our exams schedule has been modified over the last couple of years. Exams are important in teaching students how to build study skills, especially when working towards VCE, but they are limited in progressing learning. Further details on are in the first edition of our T&L Newsletter from last year - : <http://www.mercy.vic.edu.au/newsletters/> (2017).

Year levels without formal exams will undertake some assessment under test conditions. All other classes will include a range of formative and summative assessments, some of which will appear via PAM as Class Work or Assessment Tasks.

- Year 7: No exams. Some in class testing will occur, as well as other assessments.
- Year 8: No exams. Some in class testing will occur, as well as other assessments.
- Year 9: Semester 1 - no exams. Semester 2 - exams for core subjects (English, Maths, History & Science)
- Year 10: Semester 1 exams in class. Semester 2 - exams for core subjects (English, Maths, History & Science)
- Year 11: Semester 1 exams in class. Semester 2 - exams conducted using a formal exam timetable.
- Year 12: VCE, VET and VCAL subjects as per usual arrangements: Click on the link - [VCAA exam details](#)



Edrolo

If you have a son or daughter in Year 12, you may be aware of the Edrolo online resource, which was book-listed for most subjects. It is a supplementary tool that offers videos and other resources for most Year 12 and some Year 11 subjects. Evidence has shown the uptake of Edrolo by students and teachers in our school has been very good, with many videos and test questions completed so far. Feedback from students has been very positive.

How can my child use Edrolo?

- Catching up on topics missed when away
- Revising material learned in class
- Preparing for SACs - practice questions & exams on Edrolo
- Completing work set by the class teacher
- Exam revision

Parent Link: edrolo.com.au/parents/

Attendance:

One of the most effective ways parents and families can help children is to make sure they go to school every day. **Regular school attendance has a major positive influence on educational outcomes.** It is the single most important part of a child's education.

How many days has your child missed in a semester?

0-7days	This is within normal range. A student with this attendance rate is able to take full advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities available to them.
8-10days	This attendance rate is below average. A student with this attendance rate could miss over one year of School learning between years 7 to 12.
11-20	This is a poor attendance rate. A student with this attendance rate could miss one year and one term of learning between year levels 7 to 12.
20+	This is a very poor attendance rate. A student with this attendance rate could miss over two and half years of schooling from years 7 to 12 without realising.

For further information, click on these links:

- [Every day counts](#)
- [Factors affecting attendance](#)- top tips for parents

Literacy Focus at Mercy:

A strong foundation in literacy underpins all other learning. Literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to access, understand, analyse and evaluate information. It helps them make meaning, express their thoughts and emotions, present ideas and opinions, interact with others at school and in their lives beyond school. Whilst these areas are explicitly studied in English and Language, they are a key element of all classes. As a special focus this semester, all teaching areas have identified some particular activities to enhance literacy skills.

Reading:

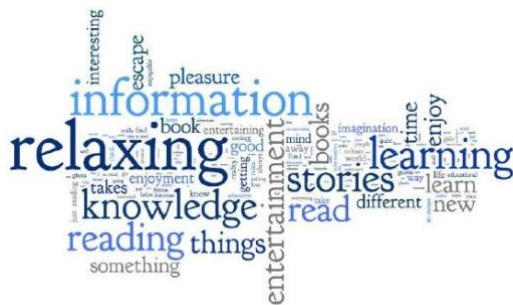
Mr. Luke Bouchier
Head of English

The English faculty has been actively focusing on promoting wider reading throughout Term 1 and will continue to build on this throughout Term 2. Backed by extensive research, regular reading helps to strengthen crucial reading skills, such as:

- decoding parts of words
- comprehension as a means of constructing meaning from a text
- developing a more sophisticated vocabulary

We encourage all students to read daily to develop critical literacy skills, and regularly make time in class to allow for sustained silent reading periods, as well as visits to the library. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of literacy, and in particular, reading, as a life skill.

We would also like to remind all parents of the expectations surrounding reading of class texts. These are book-listed in advance of each year, and the expectation (unless otherwise stated by the teacher) is that the student has read the book *before* the study of a class text. The text will be revisited throughout the course of study in order to deepen understanding. Most texts currently being studied at Mercy have an audiobook, which is available on Mercy Media (found via the Mercy website). Please speak with your child's teacher if you need further information.



Reading does not necessarily have to mean sitting in a quiet place to consume the latest Stephen King novel; it can mean a range of things, from skimming articles in the newspaper, to reading aloud something of interest on a website, to listening to a great audiobook while mowing the lawn. There is something quite profound in the quote, "the man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read". It is a cornerstone of education, and always will be.

Literacy Resources: [Melbourne Writers Festival Schools Program](#)
[Inside a Dog - all about books for young people](#)
[Scholastic Better Reading Report](#)
[SPELD Victoria - information on reading difficulties](#)
[Victorian Premiers Reading Challenge](#)

[State Library Victoria Centre for Youth Literature](#)
[ABC Splash - reading for fun](#)
[The importance of parents reading with children](#)
[Education Department - resources](#)
[Readings recommended young adult fiction](#)

Maths Resources: Please take some time to view these fantastic maths resources for parents. Encouraging a growth mindset is important for all learning, and particularly relevant in maths.

- [Youcubed maths parent resources](#)
- [Key messages in learning maths](#) - a must-see video for students, parents and teachers

What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?



What's been happening at Mercy?

