

Special Edition - Learning and Teaching @ Mercy September 2017

From the Acting Principal

Welcome to the second 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. The first edition included information on the value of different types of assessment, some wellbeing details on teenage drinking, an outline of reporting under the new Victorian Curriculum, a student feature on the Spirit of ANZAC Prize and photo collage of what learning at Mercy looks like.

It can be accessed via the Mercy website: <http://www.mercy.vic.edu.au/newsletters/>

This issue has some valuable information on the vital role parents play in partnership with the school and the impact of student attendance on outcomes. We have a special feature on literacy opportunities offered by our staff, and a careers update. Congratulations to all students who take the time to participate in extra activities, and to the dedicated staff who give up their time to organise or accompany students to these events.

If you have a son or daughter in Year 12, you may be aware that we have been trialling the Edrolo online resource. 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 many students and teachers in our school has been very good, with many videos and test questions completed during the trial period. Feedback from students has been very positive:

"It's another perspective on the content which allows more understanding to be developed. The videos are straight to the point and easy to follow, the exams give more practice applying the content which you are given feedback straight away"

The school is funding this trial to be continued for the remainder of 2017, to ensure access for those students and staff who have been using it. The Parents' Consultative Committee has supported the decision to retain this program being for 2018. The decision will be ratified by the College Board at its next meeting. Edrolo will be book-listed as a compulsory item (levy) on the booklist for the subjects available. At this stage, the cost per subject, per student will be \$27.50. I encourage you discuss with your Year 10 or 11 students the benefits that Edrolo has provided them within the trial period.

As we enter in to an important time for our Year 12 students in the lead up to the final day of classes and final exams, I invite you to read a Students Prayer:

*God of Light and Wisdom,
thank you for giving me a mind that can know and a heart that can love.
Help me to keep learning every day of my life - no matter what the subject may be.
Let me be convinced that all knowledge leads to you
and let me know how to find you and love you in all things.
Encourage me when my brain is slow and help me to grasp the truth held out to me.
Grant me the grace to put my knowledge to use in building the kingdom of God on earth.
Amen*



Mr. Chris Grant
Acting Principal

From the Director of Professional Practice

Mrs. Tania Bruckner

Parent Engagement

At Mercy, we value the special link between students, teachers, parents and carers. This relationship can change somewhat when young people move from primary school into a secondary setting. The teenage years present many challenges for parents and students.

Nevertheless, when families and school work together, education outcomes improve significantly.



The Federal Department of Education and Training recognises this, and has compiled some useful information for parents:

<https://www.education.gov.au/parent-engagement-children-s-learning>.

Evidence shows that positive and active involvement in your child's learning can influence their education outcomes in a range of indicators, including:

- enhanced engagement with school work
- more regular school attendance
- better behaviour
- and improved social skills.

With busy lives, it is not always possible to be involved in school activities. However, there are a few things you can do at home that have a positive impact:

- Have high yet achievable expectations of your child.
- Talk regularly about school and the value of learning.
- Encourage positive attitudes and respect for school and teachers.
- Model the behaviours you would like to see in your child.
- Stay informed - read newsletters, check in on the website and PAM.

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. Missing 10 minutes per day equals 50 minutes per week and nearly 1.5 weeks per year. Over 13 years of schooling, that's nearly half a year. Missing one day per fortnight equates to 20 days (4 weeks) per year, and nearly 1.5 years over 13 years of schooling.

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:

- [How can I help my teenager do well at school?](#)
- [Every Day Counts - Secondary](#)
- [Factors affecting attendance](#)- top tips for parents

- * www.youthbeyondblue.com.au
- * www.headspace.org.au

In Years 7-10, students miss on average almost a week every term - that's four weeks of school per year.

Going to school every day is the single most important part of a child's education. Students learn new things at school every day – missing school puts them behind.

Why it's important

We all want our students to get a great education, and the building blocks for a great education begin with students coming to school each and every day.

Students develop good habits by going to school every day – habits that are necessary to succeed after school, whether in the workplace or in further study.

Missing school can have a big impact on students academically and socially. It can affect their test results, including VCE, and, just as importantly, it can affect their relationships with other students, and lead to social isolation.

There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes.

Each missed day is associated with progressively lower achievement in numeracy, writing and reading.

Getting in early

It's never too late to improve attendance – going to school more often can lead to better outcomes. Even at Year 9, when



attendance rates are lowest, going to school more often can make a big difference. Every day counts. Schools are there to help – if you're having attendance issues with your child, speak to your school about ways to address those issues.

What we can do

The main reasons for absence are:

Sickness – There are always times when students need to miss school, such as when they're ill. It's vital that they're only away on the days they are genuinely sick, and setting good sleep patterns, eating well and exercising regularly can make a big difference.

"Day off" – Think twice before letting your child have a "day off" as they could fall behind their classmates – every day counts.

Truancy – When students choose not to go to school without their parent's permission. There can be many reasons for truancy, the best way to address this is for schools and parents to work together.

While all absences are bad for academic performance, unexcused absences are a much stronger indicator of lower reading and maths achievement.

If for any reason your child must miss school, there are things you can do with your school to ensure they don't fall behind:

- Speak with your classroom teacher and find out what work your child needs to do to keep up.

EVERY DAY COUNTS

Secondary school attendance

- Develop an absence learning plan with your teacher and ensure your child completes the plan.

Remember, every day counts. If your child must miss school, speak with your classroom teacher as early as possible.

Openly communicating with your child's school about all absences is a good way to prevent attendance issues being escalated to a School Attendance Officer. A School Attendance Officer is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regional Director who has authority to follow up attendance issues. Attendance issues that are escalated can lead to an Infringement Notice.

If you're having attendance issues with your child, please let your year level coordinator, principal or other relevant staff member know so you can work together to get your child to school every day.

For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx



Literacy 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, Language and other classes, there are many extra-curricular opportunities at Mercy to develop literacy skills. It has been terrific to see the participation of so many students.



Library Programs:



Under the guidance of Library Manager, Mrs. Maureen O'Laughlan and assistant Beth Marburg, new initiatives from the library this term have included the introduction of 'I ♥ I LITERACY' fortnight. Activities based around creative writing, spelling and reading, mixed in with fun competitions, were a focus for Year 7 and 8 students and staff and assisted in warding off the winter chills. The activities were bookended by visits from authors Archie Fusillo and Matt Porter.

Archie spent the day with Year 8 students, crafting their writing skills, and highlighting the importance of reading, imagination and editing. Matt Porter, an author from Port Fairy, honed the creative writing skills of our Year 7 students.

Other activities included a Spelling Bee, 55 Word Story and a competition to 'Guess Which Book' each O'Keeffe Campus staff member had been reading. This was a major topic of discussion in the multi-purpose area where the book titles were on display.

Melbourne Writers Festival:

For the first time, 14 students from Years 9 and 10 attended the Melbourne Writers Festival Schools Program at Federation Square. They participated in several sessions with authors and illustrators. Students enjoyed listening to and engaging with notable writers, including one-on-one conversations in the book signing area. Several students also workshopped with author Alice Pung, who proved to be an enlightening and vibrant speaker on a range of topics.

The Melbourne Writers Festival was a great experience. It was awesome to meet the authors and ask them questions. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in writing or just likes reading. Thanks to Maureen and Ms. O'Connor for taking us.



Erin McLean, Year 10



The Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge has also finished this term, with 44 students completing the challenge of reading 15 books in two terms - an excellent achievement!

[Victorian Premiers Reading Challenge](#)

From the students:



"Archie Fusillo gave us a great insight into his books and why he wrote them and I loved hearing about his childhood. Inspirational!" Ava Nolan, 8C

"I liked how he made writing fun - his stories were hilarious but also highly emotional!" Matilda Cain, 8C

Archie Fusillo with Geordie Parsons and Tom Wright.

"It was great to hear Matt Porter's story about how he became an author. His workshop will really help our writing and give us positive tips to inspire us in the future." Ruby Conheady, 7A

"I like his passion for writing and his talent in creative writing was obvious. The way Matt Porter presented to us, especially with the game-show role-play was exceptional." Jacob Canning, 7A

Rosie Pickles wearing gold jacket with Matt Porter.



Medals and a book voucher for the Junior Spelling Bee went to Sarah McSween (Year 8) and Jo Deane (Year 7).

Winners of the 55 Word Story competition were William Keally (Year 7) and Eliza Duynhoven (Year 8), with honourable mentions to:

Year 7 - Oceia Hahn, Katherine Marshall, Oscar Coolahan, Lily Wade

Year 8 - Harrison Hershell, Matilda Cain, Tom Wright, Sarah McSween

'Guess Which Book' competition - the student who guessed the most correct answers was Carol Arndell, 7C



Debating and Public Speaking:

Term 3 has been an incredibly busy one for those students and teachers involved in debating and public speaking.

The Frayne Debating and Public Speaking Team for participated at Our Lady of Mary Immaculate school in Melbourne, against other Mercy schools from across Australia. Tadgh Dwyer was nominated best speaker overall for his team's debate.



Debating Team 1: Alexis Thornton, Tadgh Dwyer and Tate Tregea-Copeland.
Debating Team 2: Tess Harris, Ella Gleeson and Tate Tregea-Copeland
Public Speakers: Jack Bell and Luke Bone with Mrs. Chamon Vogels

The Annual Mercy Oratory Competition:

All students participate in the annual Oratory Competition, as part of their studies in English. Not only does this give students public speaking practise, but hones their skills in the development and communication of ideas and language conventions. A big thank you to Mrs. Brisbane, Mrs. Darcy and all the English teachers for their hard work.

Junior School:

A wonderful effort by all 6 finalists at our Junior Oratory Competition at O'Keeffe Campus, with Yr.7's Oceia Hahn the overall winner, and Yr.8's Ed Guthrie being awarded the Encouragement prize.

Oceia's English teacher, Mrs. Backhous, said Oceia had to overcome her own fear to present at the Oratory Competition - fitting that her topic - 'A life lived in fear is a life half lived' - was something that inspired her to get up and deliver her speech.



Thank you to our judges, teachers and all students involved.

Middle School:

Seven students presented as class representatives, but it was Year 10 student Tadgh Dwyer's heartfelt and eloquently delivered speech on the topic "Social Media is destroying human relationships" that won. Tadgh's speech was a timely reminder of the importance of connecting with one another on a personal level.

Rebecca Uebergang, whose speech "If I could turn back time" was given the Endeavour Award. The other finalists were Year 9's Isabel Rowan, Jessica Wade, Luke Francis, Sheyna Robbins, and Year 10 Tess Harris.



Thank you to judges Ms. Sarah Baker, Mrs. Meagan Compton and Mrs. Beth Marburg

If I asked everyone in this room to raise their hand if they had ever been too engrossed in their phone to notice someone had said something to them I guarantee you everyone would raise their hand.

Isn't it ridiculous that we as people, would rather live in a virtual world reliving old moments and memories rather than embrace what's happening around us? In doing this we cheat ourselves from precious interactions and conversations and the chance to form new invaluable memories outside of our screens.

Short
extract
from
Tadgh's
speech.

Creative Writing Competition

All Year 7s entered a writing competition as part of the upcoming annual Mental Health Week. The only criteria was that their writing must relate to the topic of mental health.

Staff and students were delighted to receive notification this week that William Keally (Mrs. Brisbane's class) and Oceia Hahn (Mrs. Backhaus' class) were awarded first and third places respectively. They will be presented with certificates at the Deakin Edge Theatre at Federation Square, Melbourne in October. Well done William and Oceia.



Mental Health
Foundation Australia



A Chat with the Monsters in my Closet: A visual poem by William Keally

I feel safest in the darkest of places
I ran back home into the arms of the only
person I know
He demands, and I give, he is a wild fire.
He is hard to control, he doesn't understand
me.
The only person I know is myself.

I know – Oceia Hahn
You might be breaking
But you'll be fixed,
You are missing
And are dearly missed.

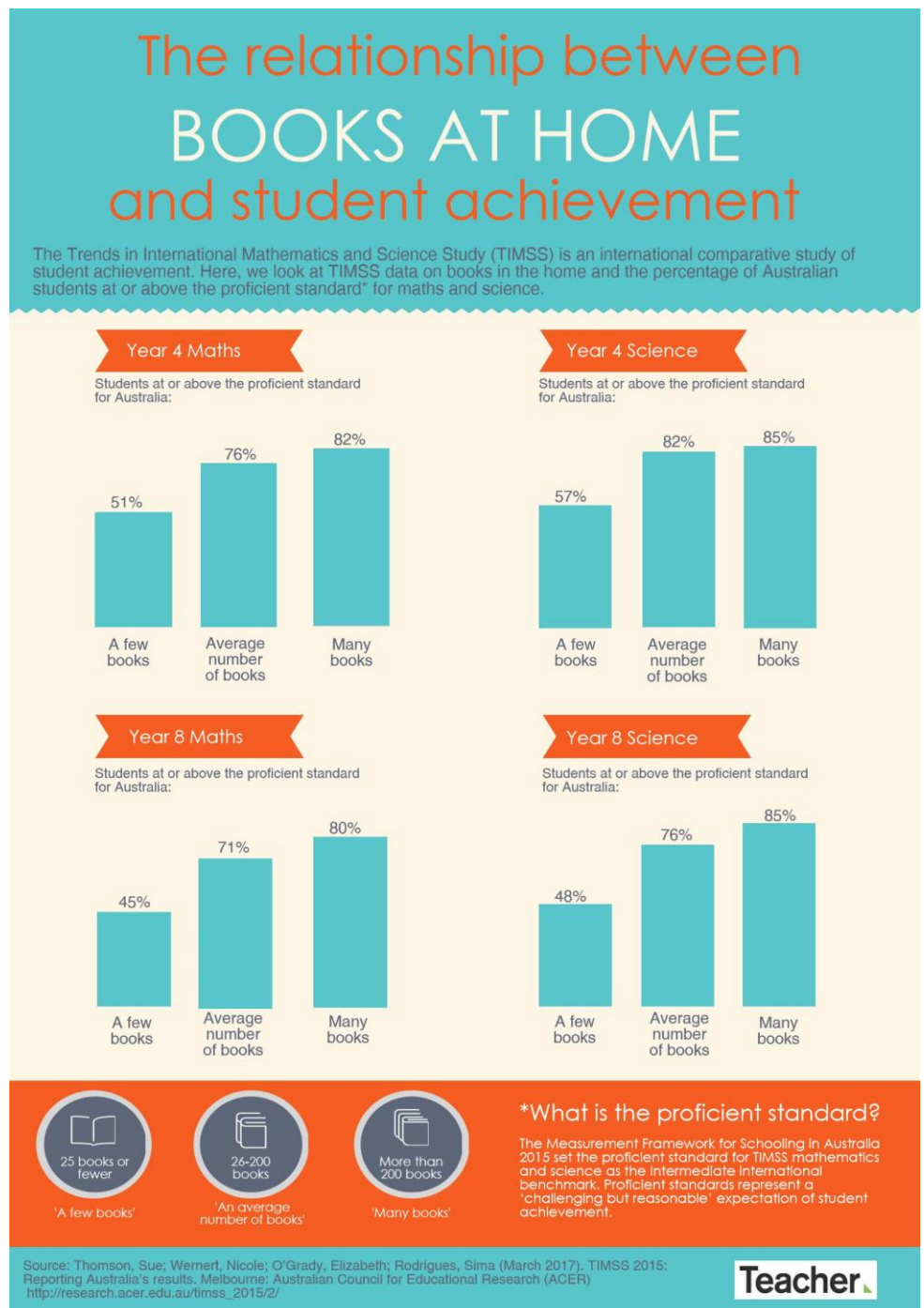
I can see you shaking
From what you fear,
You won't let me in
Yet I still come near

Short excerpts from
the winning entries.

From the Junior Head of Teaching and Learning.

Mr. Dan Glennen

I have spoken on a several occasions to our Junior students on the importance of actively working to raise their literacy profile. The literacy skills of a student extend far beyond an English classroom, with a flow on effect across all subjects and year levels. Central to this is developing an enjoyment of reading for pleasure. 'Reading' ranges much further than studying a novel or comparing various forms of literature in class. The results of *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*; a large-scale international comparative study, communicates some interesting research which examines the number of books owned within a household and the percentage of students who are at or above standard for maths and science at Year 4 and Year 8. It is evident from this research that there is a direct, and strong correlation between the number of books within a home and a student's success in achieving a proficient standard within these subject areas.



Whilst the infographic included with this article does not explicitly link reading and the number of books that a child has access to, I feel that a student's overall academic capacity and the practice of reading regularly are inherently linked. Therefore, it would be a very reasonable assumption that the more children are surrounded by a culture of books and reading, the more likely they are themselves to read.

So, the question 'does my child have homework?' poses an opportunity for a great discussion at home. Regardless of the year level and subjects studied, developing a healthy appreciation and love of reading is paramount.

Careers Report – Term 3

Mrs Jenny Phillips



Term Three Careers Focus

Term 3 has been a busy one in the careers department at McAuley Campus, as Year 10 students made decisions about their VCE program for the next two years and Year 11 students fine-tuned their subject selections to complete their VCE program. All Year 10 students were interviewed to assist them to choose subjects based on the following criteria: their enjoyment of the course content, keeping their post-school options open and meeting prerequisites for tertiary studies. The students approached these interviews in a positive manner, welcoming the opportunity to discuss their choices and, in some cases, ask for help to make their final selections.

The Year 11 cohort also had decisions to make regarding the studies they are going to take in their final year of the VCE. Again, all students were interviewed so that they had the opportunity to discuss the merits and implications of their subject choices. Those intending to undertake tertiary studies in 2018 or beyond, were encouraged to use VTAC CourseSearch to ensure their selections meet prerequisites for their preferred courses.

Term Three is also a very busy term for Yr 12 students, as they make decisions regarding their post-school options and continuing career pathway. Those students who wish to undertake further studies at a tertiary level have either submitted a VTAC application, or will apply directly to a TAFE institution, or private provider. Students interested in apprenticeships and traineeships are polishing their resumes, registering with employment agencies and contacting perspective employees. All Year 12 students were interviewed to assist them negotiate this process and they are all doing an excellent job of getting organised for 2018, whilst concentrating on their current studies.

Well done to all the students for taking such a positive approach, regardless of where they are on their career journey.

Literacy Resources:

[Melbourne Writers Festival Schools Program](#)

[State Library Victoria Centre for Youth Literature](#)

[Inside a Dog - all about books for young people](#)

[ABC Splash - reading for fun](#)

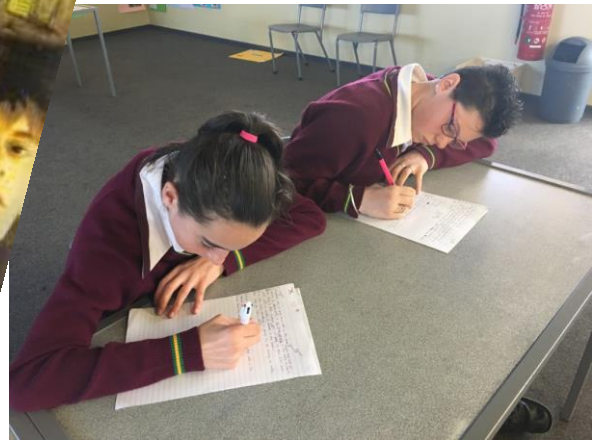
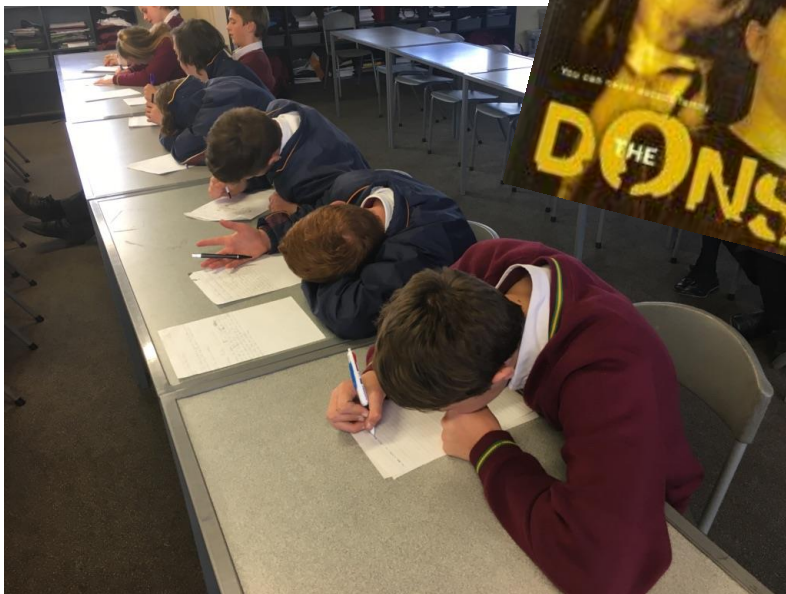
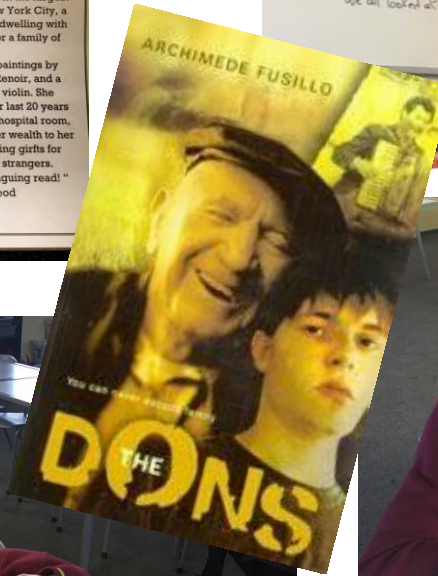
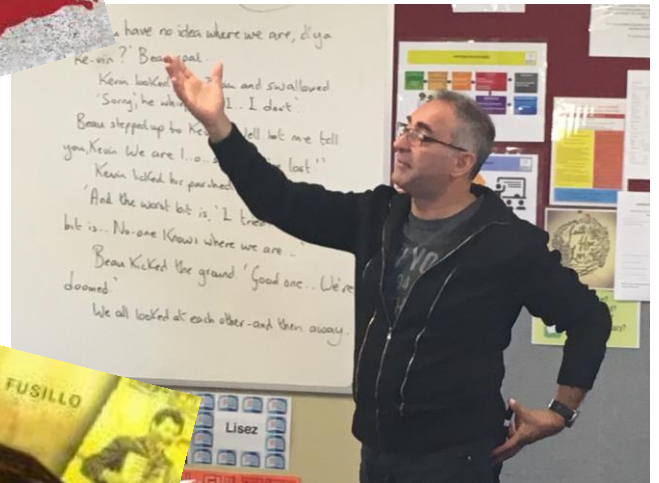
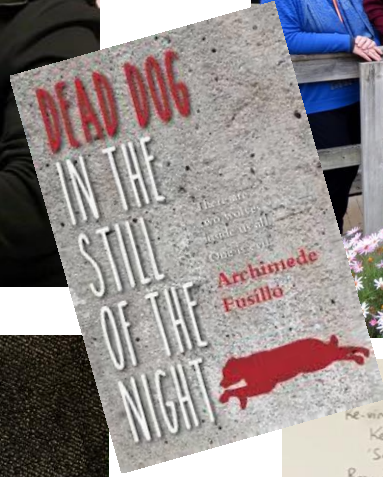
[Scholastic Better Reading Report](#)

[The importance of parents reading with children](#)

[SPELD Victoria - information on reading difficulties](#)

[Education Department - resources](#)

[Victorian Premiers Reading Challenge](#)





Melbourne 2017
Writers Festival

For everyone
who reads
25 Aug — 3 Sep
#mwf17

