Prayer

Loving God, as we continue to journey through Lent, may we put in the work to more closely follow the Gospel in our everyday lives. We make this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen

From the Principal

Student Voice and Leadership
This week has seen the finalisation of Student Leaders at all but Year 7 level (which will take place in the days following the Year 7 camp). It is both a joy and a challenge. Many students have once again put themselves forward for service to the College, and each of them could well do so. Students and staff however must select from such strength to but a few roles. I commend all students who so willingly engaged in the process of presenting themselves and in some cases being interviewed for leadership roles. Congratulations to those appointed and we now look forward to your service of students by truth and love, in the Ave way. I thank all girls for their very evident love of the College and their desire to be young women for others. A full insert with Student Leaders across the College will be included following the Year 7 camp.

We were pleased to host a Student Leadership Seminar this week. This day brought together students from St Bernard’s and newly appointed Ave Maria College leaders for an all day event to explore student wellbeing and goal setting.

Student Excellence
It was a delight to welcome back many students from the Class of 2015 to our VCE Awards afternoon last week. Occasions such as this are a real celebration for our whole community, teachers who have watched these fine young women thrive over many years, parents who quite rightly can be proud of their daughter’s achievements to date, students who can see, hear and reflect on what it takes to reach goals set and excel in various fields of study. As always, last Thursday was a highlight for our community and it is always a particular delight to hear our ‘Women of Ave’ speak so warmly of the College, of an environment and staff who nurtured them to achieve more than they themselves ever thought possible.

Student Enrolment
A reminder to all families with siblings entering the College in 2017 that applications close next week, Monday 29 February. Thank you to those who have already done so.

Lenten Reflection
A Lenten message from Pope Francis:

The mercy of Jesus embraces everyone in every part of the world: open your hearts!

Peace,
Elizabeth Hanney
Principal
Deputy Principal Leadership & Learning

In 2016 College teaching staff have embarked upon the process of identifying specific goals for our learning and our teaching practice in the year ahead. This process is referred to as the Objectives for Improvement Plan (OIP). Fundamentally it is about each teacher finding a direct connection between their daily practices and the Strategic and Annual Action Plans to drive improvement in student learning. Teachers choose three Key Strategies from the Annual Action Plan as their focus for improvement over the year. Their task is to put into practice, actions that work towards achieving these goals. They then gather evidence to determine the extent to which they have succeeded in doing so.

The challenge for teachers is to find the best evaluative measures of their success. That is, what will teachers use to determine the extent to which they have met their goals? Feedback! Feedback is king when it comes to such evaluations. For example, if a teacher sets To improve teacher empathy, stimulating learning and purposeful teaching as their improvement goal, the true judgment of their success in this must be based on what their students feel. If students, and their parents for that matter, can report that the teacher is delivering on these then the teacher is meeting their goal.

This is a good example to show why we value feedback and seek it constantly. As a teacher I may believe that I deliver lessons that stimulate student learning; however, if my students do not find the learning stimulating then I am not meeting this goal. So I need to hear regularly from them on this. This is why teachers are seeking feedback from students and parents so often. Feedback provides validity to any judgements about the extent to which we are meeting our goals.

Like me, you may well get annoyed by the endless customer satisfaction surveys you receive when you have bought the tiniest of items. However we are hopeful that parents and students will see beyond what they may regard as a tedious process when we seek their feedback. We are genuine in our desire to provide the best learning outcomes for all students, and without feedback we are limited in our judgements on how well we are doing this. I am pleased to report that in our experience, students and parents do see the bigger picture and engage in the feedback process when invited. On behalf of the College I thank you for this and urge you to continue your participation at every opportunity.

Phillip Tascone
Deputy Principal Leadership & Learning

Heads of School

Parent Information Nights

Thank you to all those parents that attended the Parent Information Nights. We were thrilled with the number of families present. The nights were a great opportunity for parents to hear about the programs being implemented across the College. They also provided a great opportunity to meet the Homeroom Teachers and Year Level Team Leaders.

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg Parent Seminar

The College is delighted to announce that it will host Dr Michael Carr-Gregg, Australia’s leading adolescent mental health expert, on the evening of 5 May 2016 where he will talk to families about adolescent mental health, technology and education. Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is prominent spokesmen and regularly appears in the media, discussing the issues around the contemporary issues affecting teenagers. Please watch out for further details about this event.

Year 12 Retreat

On 12 February 2016, the Year 12s took time out of their busy schedule to attend a retreat at Federation University, Ballarat. During the three-day retreat students reflected on their own faith and personal journey and were asked to focus their attention on setting goals for themselves. We hope the time away energised and focused each individual towards having a successful year.

VCE 2015 Academic Awards

Congratulations to all those students who received awards at the 2015 VCE Awards Afternoon on Thursday, 18 February. Notably, we further congratulate Kate Duggan and Rebecca Sirianni, who received the Dux Proximus and College Dux Awards respectively.

Swimming Carnival

A reminder that the College Swimming Carnival will be held this Friday, 26 February at Oak Park Pool. This day is compulsory. Students from Years 7 to 11 will be required to wear the College sports uniform or appropriate House colours for the day. Students are required at school by 8:30am for transport to the pool, or at the venue no later than 8.45am.

Head of School Years 7-9 Ms Jo Hammer
Head of School Years 10-12 Mr Matt Smith

Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) 2016

Applications (if eligible) are due for lodgement to the College Finance Office, along with your Health Care Card, by Monday, 29 February 2016.
Teaching and Learning Leader

Sharing in your daughter’s learning

During the recent Parent Information Nights I was fortunate to speak to the parents and students in attendance about parental engagement. Whilst academic research very much affirms the critical nature of teacher-student relationships, and the connections between the quality of teaching and student learning, much has been written about the parent engagement effect. Parent engagement plays a critical role in your daughter’s learning and success at school by way of improved academic achievement, wellbeing and productivity. As parents, you play a critical role in providing learning opportunities at home and in linking what your daughter learns here at school with what happens elsewhere.

Set goals together

Starting a new academic year often leads to renewed focus and thoughts about performance in the year ahead. Often goal setting can lead to increased motivation if the goal is challenging but realistic, and your daughter has some ownership over what she is working towards. Expectations should be high, with the necessary support and strategies put in place to progressively work towards achievement.

Speak frequently about learning

You may like to discuss current affairs over dinner, research shared topics of interest or ask your daughter to tell you something that she learnt at school that day. More practically, using applications such as Quizlet, Flashcardlet and Chegg+ can assist in the revision of content. You may also like to read the novel your daughter is , allowing you to discuss the text with her and offer her an adult’s point of view.

I would encourage you to contact the relevant subject teacher if you have any concerns, and likewise if she is experiencing success, so we can ensure a proactive approach as we all work towards best supporting your daughter in her learning.

Guest Speakers

If you have a particular skill or profession that you would be able to share with the girls, I would love to hear from you. We are always keen to hear from guest speakers in a variety of industries so please get in touch with me via email Jessica.Hall@avemaria.vic.edu.au or phone and I can add you to our database.

Jessica Hall
Teaching and Learning Leader

Faith and Religious Education

The 2016 Year 12 Retreat was three days spent as a cohort bonding, getting to know each other and finding different ways that we can cope with the stresses of Year 12. On top of this we also reflected on our pasts and how far we have come through reading letters we wrote three years ago to ourselves, writing positive affirmations to each other and discovering the power of being grateful. Faith was an integral part of the Year 12 Retreat. We found our own beliefs and strengths by working with our Homerooms and Religion classes to better ourselves in the way we see each other as well as ourselves. As a strong cohort we worked together to form our 2016 motto “Individually we are ranked, BUT together we stand as one. This year we will strive to believe, to have faith and each day we WILL stand as one.” Molly Kennedy, Faith and Social Justice Co-Captain

We have listened to parental feedback to increase opportunities to be involved in the liturgical life of the College and your daughter’s education. Masses at other year levels which involve parents have had wonderful success, you are warmly invited to attend the Year 10 and 11 Family Mass to be held on Tuesday, 1 March 2016 at Ave Maria College, Francis Hall from 7.00pm to 8.00pm. Please complete and return the slip below to your daughter’s Homeroom Teacher by Thursday, 25 February 2016.

In order to increase the opportunities for prayer in the College, meditation is offered each Day 4 at lunchtime in the St Clare Chapel. We are also fortunate that Sr Connie FMM is helping us by facilitating Taize prayer on Day 2 at lunchtime in the St Clare Chapel during Lent.

St Therese’s Parish, Essendon, have a Lenten series. These evenings, from 7.30pm – 8.45pm are at the Parish Centre on Lincoln Road. The remaining two evenings are Wednesday, 2 March (Mercy in John’s Gospel) and Tuesday, 8 March (The Passion narrative in John’s Gospel). No sign up is necessary and all are welcome.

Patrick Jurd
Director of Faith and Religious Education

Enrolment Applications Year 7 2017

Enrolment applications for entry in Year 7 2017 close Friday, 6 February 2016. Parents are reminded that siblings of current students who are wishing to commence Year 7 in 2017 must also ensure Enrolment Applications are received by this date.
The Quest for Truth

Young people are often very introverted, as they search for values, spiritual understanding, and begin an important quest for truth. It could be said that the principle of truth is formed in the adolescent years. It is also in this phase when the foundations are laid for the spiritual development of later years. Young people seek answers to the questions: "Who am I?" "What am I doing on earth?" "Where do I belong?" "Who is God to me?" Often at this time young people no longer feel understood by parents or teachers, and look to the external world for answers.

This search for truth and spirituality is a great one, and having sufficient and balanced access to scientific, psychological and spiritual truth is needed to acquire the conditions for positive development, a healthy critical attitude, and self-directed learning in later years.

The wild and out of control teenager is merely searching for truth, but nonetheless it is a scary time for parents. The only way parents (and teachers or other adult role models) can stand up to this wild quest is to remain genuine and authentic. Young people want to find truth in their parents, in the world around them, and in themselves. They no longer rely only on books, they also want learning through real experience.

The best thing parents can do is foster an environment which supports the teenager's philosophising and questioning. This requires a balance between freedom and responsibility. The more free someone feels within their family life, the less likely they are to desire external freedoms. The relationship of trust between parents and their teenager is critical – do not read the diary left on the bed!

What can parents do to support a young person’s quest for truth?

- Remain open, genuine and honest at all times
- Cultivate understanding through dialogue; conversations about that which has nothing to do with school, but about genuine shared interests
- Avoid total control; allow your teen to believe it is on their terms often
- Invite them into your spiritual world, share stories about your faith and your truth
- Encourage curiosity in all manner of things
- Embrace your daughter’s questions, even if you do not have the answers
- Encourage participation in co-curricular activities to open up different worlds of discovery
- Encourage emotional support with someone outside of the immediate family

Ceci Tankey
Student Counsellor

Pathways News

University student numbers are soaring. Australia introduced a demand driven system in 2012, ie it removed capping student numbers for courses (with the exception of Medicine) and the result was record numbers of students finding places from 2012 onwards. The result of this is manyfold: less Government funding per student; less social integration within university; huge classes or on-line classes; increases in student debt; the necessity for part-time work; the lengthening of the time taken to finish a Degree due to the necessity to work and study at the same time; a 20% drop out numbers before the second year; and if students do complete their Degree will they get a job? Is the rate of return monetary wise for a Degree worth the investment? However, it seems the penalty for not having a Degree is greater than ever in terms of self-esteem, life opportunities and earning power.

Consequently, work experience is essential. Work experience is a student’s introduction to the work force. This is where students build networks; develop work skills such as working with others, organisation and time-management skills and the confidence to find casual or part-time work, which will stand to their stead whilst at university.

Parents and students may also be concerned about university reputations or brand name and where the institution sits on the global league tables. For a first year student these tables are basically irrelevant as the tables are weighted towards research and may have little to do with the quality of an undergraduate university experience.

To understand more about the different ways rankings have been applied you can visit the Australian university rankings page and in that way develop an understanding about how rankings are being determined.

Towards the end of 2015, the Federal Government launched the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website. The aim of this website is to assist students in making informed choices about their higher education options by bringing together survey data from all Australian universities.

There are great courses available at all nine universities, some of which are very hard to get into. Students and parents are encouraged to participate in Experience Days at many different universities attend Seminars and Career Expos and Open Days and talk to students and lecturers, look at breadth of courses and find out about College culture before making future decisions about courses and universities.

Helen Aliaga
Pathways Coordinator