Hello and welcome back,

Congratulations on having managed to find/buy/fix/borrow school shoes, uniforms and school bags; arrange hair cuts, organise bedrooms and study areas, pack lunch boxes, find out technology needs and supply them, get up, out the door and to school on time, all while having mentally prepared your child and siblings for what lies ahead of them at school for the next year! You are a champion!

It is no small task to educate children: from the practical to the emotional to the academic dimensions, there is so much to know but fortunately we are not alone in this endeavour. It may be that you are handing over your kindergarten student to a well-experienced teacher of many years who has seen innumerable students come and go or perhaps your child’s year 7 teacher is new with not so much experience but loads of enthusiasm. Whatever the situation, the key to your child’s success and enjoyment of their school life is to build strong relationships with the teacher and the school.

Make a point of getting to know the layout of the school so when your child tells you about their day you can visualise their story, make yourself known to their teacher so they can connect you to your child. Don’t be afraid of the principal, you are the example for your child. Be friendly and courteous so that you have already established a good rapport in the event that you are required to deal with more sensitive matters later on. Most importantly drop into the office from time to time, say hello to the office staff and share a smile. Often, they have good knowledge of the students and goings on at the school, but remember they are very busy!

The teachers, office staff, and principal at each school are your valued partners in educating and nurturing your child’s growth. How lucky we are to have a ‘village’ of trained, experienced, enthusiastic and dedicated individuals to assist us in rearing happy, good and hopeful young people.

Parents and Students

Speaking of families........

2015 Synod on The Family – In October this year, Pope Francis and the Synod of Bishops will meet again in Rome to consider ‘The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World’. This synod follows on from the Extraordinary Synod held in October last year where Pope Francis and Bishops considered the survey responses from Catholics on The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the context of Evangelisation out of which the document Relatio Synodi – Lineamenta was produced.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference have compiled a series of 30 questions for you to answer which will help them to shape the response they send to Rome for the upcoming Synod. While the questions are quite deep and require some serious thought, the language is simple and there is no compulsion to answer each question. Don’t be put off by Question 1 which asks you to comment on Lineamenta, if you haven’t read it or do not wish to comment just continue with the rest of the questions which are of a more general nature. If you would like to read the document Relatio Synodi - Lineamenta from the last Synod before answering the questions it can be found here:

This is your chance to have your say on some very important and pivotal issues for Catholic families today. Don’t miss this opportunity to be involved in a world-wide survey. The question has been put to us to comment “about the beauty, the role and the dignity of the family” and it is critical that the voice of Australian families is heard. Visit your diocesan website or ask your parish priest, but hurry as the closing dates range from February 1st to the 10th.

28 March State Election

The NSW state election will be held on Saturday 28 March 2015 and it is important for parents of children in Catholic schools to understand the issues. The CCSP & Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) have focussed on two core issues with the major parties ahead of the election - increased capital funding and a fairer planning system for Catholic schools.
On capital funding, non-government schools are asking for an additional $70.5 million per year. Currently, non-government schools in NSW compete for just $11.6 million in capital funding for new projects each year, with Catholic schools receiving just $7.6 million in 2014. We expect the NSW Government to announce increased capital funding during the election campaign, but we do not know the size of the increase or the timing at this stage.

On planning, we are looking for fairer treatment. Catholic schools, despite their non-profit status, are liable for infrastructure levies and bonds on their capital projects (costs that government schools are not charged). Over the past three years, Catholic schools authorities in the four Sydney-based dioceses alone, paid $18.5 million in levies and bonds.

We are also looking beyond the election. There will be an influx of new MPs after March 2015. Past experience suggests very few of them understand schools funding, particularly in relation to non-government schools. CECNSW plans to brief as many new MPs as possible in their first 12 months to inform them of the importance of Catholic education, its structure and components and how all school systems are funded – to ensure our children’s schools continue to receive the funding they need to provide a quality education.

For more information about the election and issues visit our website at www.ccsps.catholic.edu.au/elections, speak to your school principal or P&F who will have received the CCSP Election Tool Kit. Remember, educating our politicians about non-government school funding is the responsibility of all of us.


How would you like to join with parents and educators from around the country for a weekend of networking, sharing and learning at Opal Cove Resort, Coffs Harbour? On the weekend of May 16, 17 well-known speakers will answer questions like ‘What Really Matters as a Parent’ – Michael Grose, ‘How to be the Best YOU as a Parent’ – Bruce Sullivan and ‘What does it mean to be a Catholic in the 21st Century’ by Fr Elio Capra. Ask your Principal, P&F, board or Council for their support in sending you to this important and affordable parent education conference. Register now at our website on www.cccsp.catholic.edu.au/conference. Hope to see you there!

SCHOOLS

Catholic Schools Week - March 8th to 14th

Catholic Schools Week (CSW) 2015 will be held from 8 to 14 March and the theme this year is ‘Educating for Today and Tomorrow’. It will involve the communities of all 615 Catholic primary and secondary schools across NSW and the ACT and as always will be an opportunity to celebrate the things that make our Catholic schools great.

Find out from your principal or P&F what your school has planned to join in the celebration. Students, teachers, staff, parents, volunteers, grandparents, priests, parishioners, the P&F, school board or council can all contribute to this year’s events. For more ideas visit the Catholic Schools Week website at www.catholicschools.nsw.edu.au

Web Resources

As the school year begins there are a number of go-to websites that will make the journey for you and your child that much easier.

Better Together

http://www.btadvisorybodies.catholic.edu.au/

The Better Together website is a brilliant resource for School Boards, Councils, P&Fs, school executives and others involved in Catholic education. Grounded in solid Catholic principles and practices, it features a bounty of excellent resources on everything from parent engagement to meeting procedures to why we have Catholic schools.

Partners4Learning

http://www.partners4learning.edu.au/

Teachers, parents, school executives, P&Fs, Councils, Boards and volunteers will all find useful resources on this website like take-away lists of tips for transition; Acknowledgment of Country resources, prayers, special needs expos. Whatever your need is, you are bound to find something useful on this website.

A to Z


This one-stop-shop website has tips for parents on everything from homework help to communicating with your school to a year by year guide for parents in secondary school.
Assistance is also available to parents and caregivers via the Back-to-School Hotline (1300 738 338).

The CCSP in 2015

2015 has been chosen as a year of reflection for the CCSP and so we are very fortunate to have Phil Billington, past Director of the Catholic Education Diocese of Sandhurst conducting our review with its focus on the future, appropriately coined ‘Reflecting Forward’. Many of our partners will be contacted through the course of the review, which will endeavour to assess whether the CCSP has remained true to its original intention while being well positioned to sustain relevance in the future. We ask for your prayers and goodwill during this process of discernment.

Launch of Waranara Centre

Congratulations Good Shepherd on the opening of the Waranara Centre which offers alternative education to students outside the mainstream. Good Shepherd has created an alternative education program to provide support for young people at risk of disengagement from education and training. Social and familial issues including mental health issues, family breakdown, transience, behavioural problems and victimisation mean that some young people struggle to engage with mainstream education and training and now the Waranara Centre can offer wrap-around services for students and their families.

CCSP Acting Executive Director, Linda McNeil with Good Shepherd Executive Director, Lyn Harrison and retiring Westpac CEO, Gail Kelly.

On a more practical note we have changed our post office box to P O Box 20756, World Square, NSW 2002 so please update your records.

Wishing you and your family a great school year.

Linda McNeil
Acting Executive Director

Schoolzine

Schoolzine has transformed the humble school newsletter into a multi-functional, interactive platform that can be accessed wherever you have Internet... at home on your PC, via your mobile or perhaps on an iPad - at your convenience. This is not simply emailing home a PDF copy of your old print newsletter. This is truly revolutionising the flow of information and communication between home, school and the broader community, resulting in the best possible outcomes for the youngest members of the community - our children!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=docqRB7KdCU