



MERCURIUS

The News Magazine of Fort Street High School

February 2015 Term 1

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Dear Parents, Carers and Fortians

The 2015 school year has started at its usual hectic pace. During week one Ms Moxham was asked to take a position as Relieving Director of Public Schools for the Marrickville area. This has resulted in me stepping up to be Relieving Principal for term one and Ms Manson relieving in my Deputy Principal position. Ms Arcamone is supervising the LOTE faculty for term one and Ms Nasti is replacing her in the classroom. Mr Dopierala is relieving as Deputy Principal for Mr Osland while he is on leave during term one. When Mr Osland returns in term two he will be the Relieving Principal.

Speech Day

Speech Day was held Friday 20th February at the Sydney Town Hall. This was an amazing celebration of the school's achievements throughout 2014. A day such as this is not possible without the hard work and dedication of the whole staff but in particular I would like to acknowledge Ms Evelyn Manson and her team. The ceremony flows seamlessly thanks to their many hours of logistics and organisation. The musical performances were again extraordinary and the school's thanks go to the music team who practice and perfect such professional performances from our students. Fort Street thanks also go to Brendan Edgeworth, an IMP parent who drove the truck to transport the musical instruments. The 2014 HSC results were detailed in the previous Mercurius and we will have many photos and images of the day in the next Mercurius.

Congratulations:

Siobhan Ryan (Fortian 2014) who won an Alexander Award her study of Ancient Greek historiography as part of her HSC History Extension. Alexander Awards are presented by the Australian Hellenic Educators' Association and Siobhan received the award



in a ceremony at NSW Parliament House in February with Professor Marie Bashir in attendance.

Eilish Salmon who set new records at the school swimming carnival in 50m freestyle, 50m backstroke, 50m butterfly, 50m breaststroke and 100m freestyle.

Philosophy and Latin

The Philosophy and Latin classes are up and running. We were very pleasantly surprised to receive over 90 expressions of interest for the 30 places in the Philosophy class. It is wonderful that students are involving themselves in the many opportunities that exist at the Fort in co-curricular activities. We encourage all of our students to be involved in at least two co-curricular activities as this broadens and enriches their education.

Subject Changes

We have started reviewing the requests for subject changes. We have completed those for Year 9 and Year 11. No more requests will be considered as students will be disadvantaged as they have missed a half term of work. We are currently reviewing those for Year 12.

Marking Rolls

We are currently trialling teachers marking rolls online so that information about absences can be sent out to parents much earlier in the day. As with any new system, we have had a few hiccups and we apologise if you have received an unwarranted SMS. If you receive an SMS in regard to your child's absence, simply reply with the reason for their absence. You can still call the school earlier in the day on 8585 1600 if you

would like to notify us but you can no longer SMS the school as this number is no longer valid.

P&C Welcome Evening

It was lovely to meet so many parents at our first P & C meeting of the year where we did a “getting to know you” activity and helped the new Year 7 parents understand our supportive welfare system. I am looking forward to meeting more of you at the next meeting on Wednesday 11th March.

To support Year 7 parents in understanding how their child is settling into Fort Street this year we will be issuing an interim Year 7 report. This is not an academic report but designed to communicate how your child has settled into high school. We will be mailing these on Wednesday 18th March and hope parents find the feedback useful.

I am looking forward to the remainder of term one and meeting many of you at our various activities.

Karen Di Stefano
Relieving Principal



2015 Fort Street High School Swimming Carnival

The Carnival took place on Monday 3rd February 2015. With a cloudy start to the day it soon cleared to perfect weather. There were many closely contested races and many records were broken. Mawson showed it was the dominant house throughout the day after the disappointment of losing the carnival in 2014 at the conclusion of the relays. Barton improved to finish in second place with Kennedy holding off Preston for third place on the day.

Throughout the day spectators got to enjoy the Eilish Salmon show as she performed her annual obliteration of records that had stood since the early 1990s. Congratulations to all students who competed on the day to ensure a successful carnival.

New Records

Eilish Salmon

- 00:29:37 50m 17 Girls Freestyle
- 00:36:12 50m 17 Girls Backstroke
- 00:32:81 Open Girls 50m Butterfly
- 00:38:35 50m 17 Girls Breaststroke
- 01:06:04 100m 17 Girls Freestyle

Preston House

- 02:04:34 4x50m Freestyle Relay

Important Dates

March

- 4 Zone Swimming Carnival
- 4 School Council & Foundation meetings
- 9 Year 7 Cybershorts
- 11 Year 8 Study Skills
- 11 P&C Meeting
- 11-13 Year 7 Camp
- 17 Regional Swimming Carnival
- 18 Year 11 Parent Teacher Evening
- 19 Year 7 Interim Report
- 21-22 IMP Camp
- 25 Open Morning
- 25 Year 11 Seminar Day
- 26-28 CHS Swimming

April

- 1 Cross Country
- 1 School Council meeting
- 2 Last day of term
- 3-16 IMP Tour



2015 Swimming Age Champions

Boys

Girls

12	Artem Sydorenko	Jessica Yoon
13	Derek Sae-Jong	Vedika Goel
14	Daniel Guo	Marlena Stanhope
15	Richard Trang	Bonnie Ou
16	Jason Pang	Ruth Lin
17	Michael Tan	Eilish Salmon
18	Vincent Hsu	Linda Xu



SCHOOL PRINTING

All students pay a \$30 technology fee which gives them access to student printers around the school.

- Printing is charged at the rate of \$0.20 per document page. Double-sided printing is charged at \$0.20 per document page, not per sheet.
- Students can print in the library or in computer labs. Students cannot print from staffroom or office printers
- Colour printing is not available.
- The Paper Cut icon on the student’s network desktop shows how much credit is available.

Printing access is managed by Mr Tran

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT WITH THEIR LEARNING

Whilst parents are often involved in their teenager’s sporting, musical or dramatic activities, parental support on the sidelines of their adolescent child’s studies can be also be beneficial, particularly to academic performance. Research shows that children are more likely to succeed if parents are involved in their learning. Hendersen and Mapp (2002) found that ‘the more families support their children’s learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education’.

Strategies for Parents to help their secondary school aged students achieve their potential:

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The obvious logistical support is providing a quiet, open space with few distractions for working at home. Involve your student in creating this space. Workspace tools for effective learning include a desk, ergonomic chair, a noticeboard and good lighting, as well as a shelf or drawers for folders, reference books and non-essential work. Spending time to discuss options, alternatives and reasons for establishing a dedicated work area is valuable.

BREAKFAST

Importantly students need to start the day with a nutritional breakfast, as this will increase energy, attention, concentration and memory, particularly if the breakfast includes grains, fibre, protein and is low in sugar. Parents can facilitate this good start to the day as part of the daily routine. Similarly, nutritious snacks and lunch will enable the student to remain more focused throughout the day.

ORGANISATION

A calendar for each term should be created and displayed near your student’s desk and in prominent thoroughfares in the home, such as the kitchen. The calendar or term planner should include: all co-curricular and social activities, as well as assignment, assessment or test dates. This helps the student see the big picture of commitments and not simply a weekly or daily vision as school diaries or digital devices usually allow. The student, and parent, can clearly see when heavy workload periods occur, and social activities can be tailored to ensure work has a priority. It’s a good idea to sit down with your student every couple of days to discuss the

schedule ahead, when the work can be slotted in, and how a parent could help by reducing family commitments, or by setting boundaries with social engagements. Regularly sitting down to discuss workloads and tasks due, reviewing activities and schedules can help students learn to be more productive and organized.

FILING SYSTEMS

Master folders should be set up for each subject at home, so after each topic is completed the notes can be placed in appropriate categories. This also gives students somewhere to file completed tests and assignments. Most students carry their current notes to school each day, but naturally as the term and year progresses it's impossible (and risky if misplaced) to have all worknotes in one folder. Students may also need help organising the files on their computers and devices (although it is likely that many students know more about this than their parents!).

ROUTINES

Helping your student to establish routines can add an element of calm to each day. Simple routines such as having the school bag packed and uniform ready before going to bed each night, can eliminate unnecessary angst in the morning. A useful addition to the evening schedule is to determine the next afternoon's program: when homework and daily revision will be done around co-curricular activities, dinner etc. This can give a clear direction when your student comes home each day. Some students find that having regular times set aside for schoolwork each day helps them to develop a routine of working. Other students will need to make a plan each afternoon as their schedule changes each day.

TIMETABLE

Know your student's timetable, so it's easy and relevant to ask "What were you doing in Science today?". A specific question can often open a conversation where your student not only shares but, in doing so, reinforces what was learned which increases memory (and understanding) of the lesson.

SUBJECTS

Know your student's subjects, and become aware of the topics covered each year in those subjects. 'Improved educational outcomes result from a genuine interest and active engagement from parents' (OECD 2011), so knowing the topics could allow parents to expose students to different dimensions of the subject through film, books, contemporary issues, the Internet,

exhibitions, travel etc. Students appreciate, perhaps subconsciously, that the parent is truly interested in their learning and *what* they are learning. Some schools will give students a course outline and the state's educational body will also have a website where parents should be able to access the syllabus (what will be taught) for each subject.

ASSIGNMENTS

A helpful strategy is to keep abreast of when assignments are given. Talking to your student about assignment expectations, drawing out their understanding of the topic, criteria and parts of the assignment can instill a deeper appreciation. It's good to probe and ask more about the assignment topic with questions, as this could give your student other perspectives, and once more, help the student feel the parent has a real interest in learning. When planning the workload for an assignment, parents can help break the work into chunks or parts. This can reduce the sense of the overwhelming enormity of the task and the task can be broken into manageable parts, which are then scheduled to be done into the calendar or diary.

TESTS

Similarly, parents can help students prepare for tests by quizzing them, asking for concepts to be explained or helping write practice tests. Explain to your student that memory and understanding can increase if the brain is using multiple processes to use information, such as writing, reading, speaking, drawing or singing! When tests are returned, focus on what was achieved and note concepts to revise. If students know parents are not solely focused on the grade, but also on the process, and that tests (and assignments) are tools to learn, intrinsic motivation can develop.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

There comes a time in secondary school when some co-curricular activities need to be cut for a period of time, as academic demands increase or the student is juggling too much. It's unlikely students will initiate severing an activity so it's generally up to parents. Students, like adults, can give more to an activity when there is time, and academic work needs to be one of the main priorities during the school terms. Parents will often be the first to notice when their student is over-loaded (and it varies for each individual), when school work is rushed or dismissed, when their student is tired or out-of-sorts, when they have no "downtime" on weeknights. Everyone needs *some* downtime, even if it is only for an hour of escapist freedom.

TECHNOLOGY

Parents need to be the “bad cop” when it comes to limiting computer games, or other digital device activity. It is advisable that devices are not in bedrooms when students go to bed. However, rather than dictating the rule, parents should talk about the need for solid, sufficient sleep for the brain to re-wire neural pathways to consolidate the day’s learning. Lack of sleep can lead to reduced concentration and attention span, delayed response time, and decreased short-term memory. Rules for technology (including TV viewing) should be developed together if possible so there is agreement about the approach.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL

It’s now fully acknowledged that together, parents and teachers play a dual role in educating students, so it’s vital to maintain open communication with the school. It’s important for parents to keep abreast of school information conveyed to through newsletters, school portals, emails and so on, as it’s not uncommon for a student to miss information at school. This allows parents to flag or discuss with their student what the school is offering, advising or sharing. For example: a newsletter may alert parents to additional “maths tutorials” offered before school, or “homework help sessions” after school. This reinforces again that the parent *is* interested in their student’s learning. It is equally important for parents to advise the school of extraneous issues happening at home, as this would give teachers an understanding of atypical behaviour, work ethic, concentration etc. An illness or death in the family (including a family pet), parent absence for more than a fortnight, or challenging issues on the home front, are examples of when parents should contact the school. Moderated assignments, extensions on homework, or relaxed detentions could result, and allow the student to resume their learning journey without additional stress. However secondary school students also need to gain skills and strategies to deal with life’s variables, and to become independent, confident problem solvers. So it’s also important for parents to give students opportunities to manage issues at school themselves. Parents should not approach the school to “fix” every minor problem, such as a student missing a page in an exam which lowered his grade, or a student feeling they had been maligned by a peer. Both these instances are life-lessons to learn from or solve, so parents should encourage students to ask for approach teachers themselves when needed.

The strategies above should be developed with the child, and hopefully will be independently adopted by the student when they reach their final years at school. It’s worthwhile noting that each point is related to the child’s learning, as this sends a very positive message that the parent is engaged and interested in the learning process.

[OECD 2011] PISA in Focus, (2011). *What can parents do to help their children succeed in school?*. [online] Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/49012097.pdf> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2015].

[Henderson and Mapp 2002] Henderson, A. & Mapp, K. (2002). A new wave of evidence. The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). Available: <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf> [Accessed 2 Jan 2015]

Learn more this year about how students can improve their results and be more efficient and effective with their schoolwork by working through the units on www.studyskillshandbook.com.au. Our school’s access details have been emailed to students via their DEC email accounts.



Fort Street High School Exit Profile

(Ratified September 2007, School Council Meeting)

Our aim is that on completion of Year 12, Fortians will have:

- Maximised their full academic potential
- Developed individual skills and talents across a range of areas
- Developed learning strategies to equip them to be independent self motivated life long learners
- Developed emotional resilience, self reliance and leadership potential
- Recognise their responsibility to the wider community
- Developed a strong sense of social justices as well as commitment to fairness and equity

Fortians in Focus

Paisley Williams (Fortian 2013) has been accepted into the Stage Management course at NIDA. This is a really competitive course and it's a great achievement. Paisley was the Producer/ Stage Manager for the Senior Drama Production (Antigone) in 2011.

Mariela Powell Thomas was featured in the UTS Green News:

AYCC Hero

Welcome to UTS Mariela Powell Thomas! We need more people just like you. Fresh from Fort Street High, Mariela is the face of generation now - smart, savvy, engaged and keen to change the world for the better. And at UTS she's studying Public Communications and Creative Intelligence and Innovation. As soon as Mariela finished her HSC exams she started volunteering with AYCC (Australian Youth Climate Coalition). "I was looking for something to do over the holidays before starting uni and I've always cared about environmental and social issues, so AYCC seemed like a good fit," said Mariela. She hasn't looked back since. First she helped on the Don't Risk the Reef campaign helping to engage young people and explain the risks climate change poses to the Great Barrier Reef. Then she moved on to helping organise the AYCC 2015 National Summit which will be held at UTS for 3 days from 13-15 February. "When we started organizing the Summit I didn't know which uni I'd be study at, so it's kinda cool the way it's worked out." The AYCC Summit will bring together more than 250 young people from all over Australia and involve keynote speakers, workshops, events and some party time. "We'll definitely incorporate music, dance and plenty of fun, so come along and meet people. Getting involved in AYCC is one of the best things I've ever done," says Mariela.

Astha Malik was recognised by the CEO of High Resolves in a letter to Ms Starr, Head Teacher of Student Services:

As a part of the feedback survey from the Leadership Summit last November, students were given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a High Resolves Digital Design Workshop, which was hosted by Deloitte on Saturday the 31st January. Astha Malik was involved in the workshop, which focused upon the creation of a new and exciting online community for our students. She worked closely with an expert team of consultants from

Deloitte Digital and other High Resolves leaders from several schools across the Sydney region, to share her ideas about how we can connect and support young people to make a difference using technology.

In recognition of Astha's efforts we wanted to inform you of her valuable input. The volunteering was of a skilled nature and involved active participation around digital design concepts. She should be commended for having the personal motivation to step up and volunteer her time and also for her constructive contributions during the workshop.

We really appreciated her support and you should be proud of having such a great ambassador for your school.

*Paul Kelsey
CEO High Resolves*

P&C News

Thank you to everyone who attended our February meeting. We had a strong turnout and welcomed many new Year 7 parents. Some of the ideas discussed included exploring the idea of a 'class parent' to facilitate better communication between the school and home. We will discuss this further at our March meeting. At our next meeting we will also be asking for suggestions for focus items for our meetings during the year.

One of the challenges we face this year is the possibility that the turnover of the uniform shop will exceed \$150,000. While this is positive in many ways, it will require us to register to pay GST. We are presently working through ways to streamline our financial processes, including investigating on-line software packages. A further complication is that our treasurer of several years, Anna Bashkirova, has decided to step down as treasurer due to other commitments. I would like to thank Anna for her years of hard work as the treasurer of the P&C. Nominations for treasurer will be called for at our March meeting. If you, or someone you know, may be interested in taking on the role of P&C treasurer please contact me or put your hand up on March 11.

If you are looking for a way to get involved with the school there are a few other vacancies in the P&C. Firstly we are looking for a person or a team of people, who can take over from Cheryl Beatty, as Uniform Shop representative/s. We need a person (or people) to liaise with Gladys

our uniform shop supervisor; to assist her with the general running and organising of uniform shop sales. Ideally, a uniform shop representative would be available on most Wednesdays to give Gladys a hand or to meet with her when the shop is closed. If you think you could help out in this role, or even if you can offer to volunteer in the uniform shop, please contact us or again come along on March 11. Thank you to all the parent volunteers who helped out during the very busy time at the beginning of the year and thank you especially to Cheryl for her many years of service to the school.

We also need to get a fundraising team together. If you have some fundraising ideas or are keen to lend a hand, please contact us and we will be happy to get interested people connected. A vacancy also exists for a Year 7 parent representative on the P&C executive. Through the principal's report at our February meeting we learnt that all teachers at Fort Street

will be involved in training by Geric about Gifted and Talented education. You might be interested to know that through the UNSW, Geric is offering a series of free lectures for parents exploring aspects of gifted and talented education. The first lecture, in honour of National Gifted Awareness Week (15-21 March), will be held on Wednesday 18 March from 6-7pm. The topic is, "*Personal Best and Other Motivational Approaches for Gifted and Talented Students*". For more information and to register visit <https://education.arts.unsw.au/about-us/geric/>

Again, thank you to everyone who attended our February meeting. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 11 March at 7.30pm in the library; everyone is welcome.

Elizabeth Campbell
P&C President

Please report all student absences by phone on 8585 1600 and follow the prompts.