

Dear Families,

Welcome to another fun filled week at Melton West Primary School! In this Newsletter I have put together key points from a document titled '**Evidence Based Guidelines for Mindfulness in Schools.**' We hope that you will find these key points of interest and perhaps explore the concept of further with your children.

Key Ideas taken directly from: '**Evidence Based Guidelines for Mindfulness in Schools.**'

The modern world is becoming faster, more stressful with distractions and children are particularly susceptible to these influences. It is growing more and more evident that the modern child and teacher needs new skills and awareness to deal with such an environment.

Mindfulness is like gym for the mind. Practising mindfulness is mental exercise that literally strengthens the brain's grey matter in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, two key learning areas, supporting the mind's ability to focus, pay attention and reduce worry – the more we practise the stronger the mind becomes. Therefore, mindfulness is like gym for the mind. We don't just go to the gym to enjoy the benefits of fitness for the half hour we're there, we go to the gym in order to enjoy the benefits of fitness for 24 hours of the day, and that's the same approach we need to be taking for our mind.

Research has shown us that practising mindfulness strengthens areas of the brain that control 'executive function' such as the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus and amygdala. For this reason, mindfulness leads to better attention, memory, regulation of emotions and self awareness. In turn, improvements in these areas can lead to reduced stress, anxiety and depression, and improved academic skills, social skills and self esteem.

Deep and lasting changes in areas of the brain related to learning Mindfulness causes changes in brain structure and activity. Studies tell us that people who have practised mindfulness show thickening of the grey matter in their frontal cortex. This is the area of the brain responsible for attention, self regulation, executive function, and planning. They also show thickening of the hippocampus (responsible for memory function), the insula and precuneus (responsible for self awareness and emotional processing). Those who practise mindfulness also show reduced activity in the amygdala (associated with distraction, anxiety, fear, depression and stress) and the default mode network (associated with worry and rumination and depression. Because brain changes are considered more permanent than behavioural changes alone, improvements that come from mindfulness are thought to be lasting.

Below is a FREE App **SMILING MINDS** that you are most welcome to download and explore further.

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>

Warmest Regards,
Kathy Cvitkovic
Assistant Principal

'Mindfulness is the practice of focusing attention on the experience of the current moment, with an attitude of non-judgemental acceptance and curiosity.'

PROTECT

Everyone has the right to be safe and be protected from abuse. No one should behave in a way that makes you feel unsafe or afraid, including anyone in your family, anyone at school or anywhere else in the community. Tell a teacher or any adult at your school if you feel unsafe.



Melton West Primary School is a Child Safe School

We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school and base all our decisions on what's best for the students. Please talk to a staff member if you have any concerns about a child's safety at any time.

Hello Melton West Community,

Last Friday our Grade 1 students boarded two buses and made their way down the Western Highway to Sovereign Hill in Ballarat. This excursion supported their learning in their Inquiry unit based on how people lived in the past, how people live now and how it has changed over time. We spoke to a couple students from 1W to get an insight to their day at Sovereign Hill and the experiences they were a part of:

Stevie – We looked for gold in the creek. My favourite part of the day was the houses.

Blake – I liked seeing the old buildings. They are very different from our houses today.

This Friday our grade 4 students are going to the Melbourne Museum. The focus of their excursion is to understand how the British Settlement impacted the lives of our nation's first people – the aboriginals. We can't wait to hear all about their excursion.

Book Week is fast approaching. This year's theme is "Reading is my Superpower". On Friday 23rd August we will be having our annual Book Week parade. Come dressed as your favourite book character. Get your thinking caps on as there are prizes for the best dressed, as well as daily book and author related competitions.

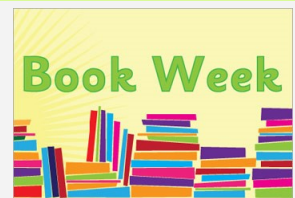
Your vice captains,

Daniel and Akur



BOOK WEEK DRESS UP DAY

FRIDAY 23rd August



Have you organised a costume of your child's favourite book character? Only 2 weeks until our Dress Up Day. How creative can you get?

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It is the mission of Melton West PS to work collaboratively to ensure high levels of learning for all.

Getting it right in Reading!

What is phonics and why is it important?

Phonics is the understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds. It is an important component of reading (and writing!) and supports children when attempting to solve words that are not immediately known. In teacher speak, the process of solving or working out unknown words is referred to as 'decoding'.

It is helpful if the names of the individual letters of the alphabet are learned early, preferably before children begin school. The letter names are constant and help to provide a reference point for teachers (and parents) when teaching the different sounds that these individual letters, or combinations of letters make.

Combinations of letters to make a sound are referred to as 'blends'. Some examples of these are /sh/, /ck/, /th/.

Children need practice identifying letters and blends randomly in their environment and in a variety of print displays i.e. signs, posters, billboards, books, food labels. Singing an alphabet song or reading letters in order off an alphabet chart does not guarantee letter knowledge.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, it is important for students to develop their oral language and vocabulary skills. This will support the development of phonic knowledge and skills. Children need a reference point to decide whether the word they are attempting to name using phonic knowledge, is a real word and/or fits in the context of what is being read.

It is important to be aware that letter-sound knowledge alone will not guarantee that children are independent and successful readers. It is possible to solve words yet not know their meaning or comprehend an author's message.

**Sourced from Letter-sound knowledge (phonics), Anne Boyetto, Flinders University*

Activities to support the learning of phonics

1. Start with supporting your child to learn the individual letters and sounds that make up their name.
2. Use magnetic letters for children to match letters and build words
3. Sort letter cards *What is the odd one out and why?*
4. Have your child make their own alphabet book that includes names of family, pets, hobbies and interests
5. Play games with letter cards such as Snap, Memory or letter-sound-picture bingo
6. Put a plastic pocket over your child's home reader and have them use a whiteboard marker to circle a nominated letter or letter blend. Make this more challenging by setting a time limit.
7. Use and practise with simple flip books (see picture)



Apps and websites for phonics practice



www.teachyourmonstertoread.com

**Also available as an iPad app*



Eggy Alphabet
iPad app



www.starfall.com

**Also available as an iPad app*

Sarah Mills- Leading Teacher Literacy

Exploring Numeracy

YEAR 3 TO YEAR 6

Exploring sports

Sports provide a good opportunity to engage your child in maths, particularly if they are a keen sports person.

Here are some questions to ask your child when watching or playing their favourite sport:

- How does your favourite sport tally the score? What maths is presented on the tally?
- How do other sports tally the score – for example, tennis, golf, cricket, netball, football?
- What maths do you use to find the total of the scores?
- Who is at the top of the ladder? How is this determined?
- Are there other ways to record the score?
- How long do your favourite sport games go for in minutes and seconds? How is the time in the game divided into halves, quarters or something else?
- What are the shapes of different playing fields and courts? Talk about edges and angles.
- How can you estimate the perimeter and area of a playing field?
- How many cars could be parked on the MCG field? How could we work this out?



Browsing catalogues

Discussing catalogues can be a great way to improve your child's maths knowledge of money and percentages.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- How would you spend \$40 from a catalogue? How many products can you buy for \$40?
- Select five products from the catalogue, then calculate what the cost would be if there was a 50% sale. Does it make a difference if you add up the items, and then deduct 50%, or if each item is reduced by 50% then totaled?
- What is the best value sale item in the catalogue? Can you explain your reasoning?
- Compare the cost of a product across different stores using different catalogues. What did you find?

Travel timetables

Here are some questions to ask your child that improve their knowledge of time and their problem solving skills:

- Can you identify your starting point on the timetable?
- What is the earliest and latest time to travel on this route?
- How long does it take to travel the entire route?
- How many stops are there on this route?
- What is the difference in the time travelled when not making all the stops?
- What is the cost? Is it good value compared to other travel options?
- Which is the best route to travel? Why do you think this?
- To get to training on time, when will you need to leave?

Connecting online

Here are some other useful websites you can access from home or the local library. Some are also available to download as apps on various devices:

- » <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au> (select Primary Students tab)
- » <https://education.abc.net.au>
- » <https://www.wolframalpha.com/> (start with the Elementary Maths link)
- » <http://www.ictgames.com/resources.html>
- » <https://www.scratchjr.org/>
- » <https://www.kodable.com/parents>



insights



Developing leadership skills in your child

by Michael Grose

Your child has the potential to be a leader given the right circumstances and environment. The following five leadership skills have been observed in student leaders in Australian primary schools and can be promoted by parents at home.

Responsibility

Being a leader means that your child is willing to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions. Personal responsibility is shown when your child is accountable for their behaviour, for their belongings and for others.

Practical ways to develop responsibility include:

- Giving them responsibility for part of their day
- Encouraging them to restore relationships with others when they mess up
- Taking responsibility for household chores

Communication

While most leadership positions require your child to speak publicly their communication skills can be developed through regular one-on-one or small group experiences at home and at school. Practical ways to develop your child's communication skills include:

- One-on-one conversations with adults
- Regular discussions at the meal table
- Encourage your child to participate fully in speaking activities at school

Organisation

Personal organisational skills and the ability to organise others are important for effective leadership. Practical ways to develop organisational skills include encouraging your child to:

- Keep their personal space tidy and organised
- Use a diary to help manage their time
- Organise a weekly chores roster including all members of the family

Teamwork

Cooperating, encouraging and accepting others are essential qualities of an effective leader. Practical ways to develop a sense of teamwork include:

- Play team games where children work together
- Encourage siblings to cook and do other chores together
- Focusing on your child's contribution to a team or group rather than individual achievement

Emotional intelligence

An underestimated quality shared by most admired leaders is their ability to remain calm when things don't go well. This emotional intelligence skill requires self-awareness, an ability to recognise their emotions and respond appropriately to the emotions of others. You can nurture these skills in the following way:

- Help your child recognise their emotions
- Help your child recognise emotions in others
- Teach your child to shift their mood

Leaders are needed in all walks of life – at work, in school, in families, in sport and in the wider community. The skills of leadership are sewn in the first group that they belong to – their family. By encouraging your child to be a contributing member of their family you are also helping to develop leaderships skills they can practise outside their family.



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation* and the best-selling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. His latest release *Anxious Kids*, was co-authored with Dr Jodi Richardson.