Parent Afternoon Information Session – Maths

A number of parents took the brave step of coming after school yesterday to learn more about how we teach Maths. Feedback from the parents has been extremely positive – thanks to all the staff for sharing your time, expertise and resources with our parents.
Principal’s Report

“... over time the brain became increasingly efficient at retrieving facts. Think of it like a bumpy, grassy field... Walk over the same spot enough and a smooth, grass-free path forms, making it easier to get from start to end.”


I found the above quote in an article summarising recent findings in how the brain reorganises itself as children learn maths. As our newsletter’s cover story about our inaugural Maths Parent Information session indicates, we’ve had a strong focus on the teaching of maths over the last couple of weeks. In this report I’m going to be drawing connections between the recent findings on how our brains become better at doing maths with activities that we’ve been doing at school.

How our brain becomes better at doing Maths

In the article, the key point that is made is that drilling kids on simple addition and multiplication does pay off. Skilling and drilling, learning times tables off-by-heart and doing basic addition and subtraction problems, create strong connections between a child’s short-term working memory and their long term memory – hence the analogy of making a clear path through a grassy field. Researchers cited in the article argue that this switch from counting to fact retrieval should typically occur when children are about 8 or 9 years old. The real benefit of this sort of rote learning is that over time, the brain needs to spend less time doing simple maths calculations and more time learning new or more complex concepts and formulae, or attempting to solve difficult problem solving questions. One last tip from the article is, rather than ask children to robotically recite, say, the 8 times table, mix up what children are asked to do instead:

“Quiz your child in different orders – nine times three and then ten times nine – to make sure they really remember and don’t have to think it through.”

Understanding the language of Maths

Yesterday afternoon we had our final parent information afternoon of the term. This information session focussed on showing parents and caregivers how we teach Maths from Prep through to Year 7. Part of the session involved staff sharing with parents and caregivers the activities we do to improve students’ recall of basic maths facts, creating the path through the grassy field from the quote that started this report. Importantly, it also attempted to de-mystify some of the language we use in schools when teaching students Maths. Here’s a slide that was shared with parents and caregivers yesterday to give them an example of...
The language used, and in particular the names used to describe and classify activities and processes, is an important way to label and simplify seemingly complex processes or strategies. Students are explicitly taught what the terms represent, and how to use them during class. However, we realise that this language can at the same time create a barrier of understanding for parents who are trying to discuss with their children what they are doing in class, or trying to help them with their homework. Hopefully yesterday’s session went some way towards demystifying for our parents what we are doing in class. If you weren’t able to attend this session, but do find it difficult to understand some of the terms we use, don’t hesitate to ask your child’s teacher. Staff are well equipped to explain the terms we use, and why they are used.

**CAMS and STAMS**

In the last newsletter I noted that our success in NAPLAN Reading exams can, in part, be attributed to the Wave Reading program that we have been running for a number of years now. This term, we started a new Maths program run on a similar model to that of Wave: teachers and teacher aides working with small ability-based groups. The program is called CAMS and STAMS, and it is designed to encourage the development of students’ problem-solving strategies. We’ve used part of our *Great Results Guarantee* money to fund the resourcing and staffing of the program, which means that each semester three of our year levels are gaining an extra hour of intensive Maths tuition each week.

Over time, we’re hopeful that the CAMS and STAMS program will help our students better demonstrate their abilities to solve both simple and more complex mathematical problems.

**Professional Development with our Maths consultant, Steve Griffin**

This week we also played host to a Central Queensland Maths consultant, Steve Griffin.
Steve has been spending time in class observing staff teach maths and providing them with feedback. Steve has also spent time doing activities with students to encourage them to open their minds as to how they can solve problems, thinking laterally and using guesstimates and estimation to help determine if an answer is suitable:

“Not all maths needs formulas to solve problems. Using estimation and logic to judge if your answer is reasonable is just as valid a strategy.”

Thanks Steve for the time you have been able to spend working with our staff and students.

Discipline Audit

Finally, last week we hosted an auditor who was taking a detailed look over how the staff at Walkerston State School have been working to create a safe, happy and disciplined learning environment. I’m pleased to say that the auditor was most impressed with the pride in which students spoke about their school, and the way that students he interviewed and observed demonstrated a caring and considerate attitude towards both staff and each other. The feedback from the auditor will play an important role in determining steps we can make to continue to show that Walkerston is a great school for children to learn at and be safe.
Student of the Week Awards for Term 3 — Weeks 6 & 7

**Prep A**
- Allirah Finch for working hard to stay calm and ask for help when things get tricky. Great job Allirah!
- Zander Quinn for trying VERY hard to do his homework tasks with Mum each night. Great effort Zander!

**Prep B**
- Roman Nikolic working hard in literacy. Well done!

**Prep C**
- Isabella Harder for always trying her best in class. Keep up the great work Isabella!

**Class 1A**
- Tamsin Biddle for ALWAYS transitioning between activities promptly and efficiently. Keep up the good work!

**Class 1B**
- Charli Bostock for being a delightful and enthusiastic student. You always brighten my day!

**Class 2A**
- Ethan Larsen placing a huge effort into his English writing assessment task. Well done Ethan and keep up the good work.
- Andrew Dickson for showing increasing effort in class activities.
- Charlotte Harder for writing a well detailed recipe. Great work, Charlotte!
- Jordan Morris for always being a conscientious student and completing all set tasks.

**Class 3A**
- Caleb Hansen you are a Maths Wizz! Your stupendous effort recalling your Mental Maths should be acknowledged.
- Jeremy Woodhouse you have been working like a Super Trouper! I am very impressed with your work and attitude. BRAVO!
- Jacob Rice you wrote such a sensational retell of Tiddalick. I was impressed with your fancy noun groups.
- Teneale White you are a writing gem! Your retell of Tiddalick was stupendous. Well done!

**Class 3B**
- Hayley Draper putting 100% effort into all tasks. Her enthusiasm is an asset. Well done Hayley!
- Tamiah Palmer writing a GREAT retell in English. Well done Tamiah!!
- Caden Sayles great improvement in mathematics. You have been working EXCEPTIONALLY hard Caden. Well done!!
- Chelsey-Lee Lote working SUPER HARD on her reading and comprehension. Keep up the hard work Chelsey-Lee!!

**Class 4A**
- Sam Newman for starting to show more working out in his Maths problems.
- Liam Skaines for showing a very good understanding of Fractions.

**Class 45B**
- Dylan Kay for an awesome attitude to learning. You rock!
- Chelleah Single for working really well in reading groups. You’re awesome!

**Class 5A**
- India Sayles for always working conscientiously with a positive attitude towards her work. Keep up the great work
- Mackenzie Harder for always being a polite, friendly student who always tries his best and works hard. Well done, Mac
- Cade Ryland for displaying excellent enthusiasm and knowledge with your narrative writing this week. Well Done.
- Nadia Maritz for completing your narrative writing to a very high standard. Keep up the great work, Nadia!

**Class 67B**
- Ryan Creber for having a positive attitude towards his learning. Keep up the good work, Ryan.
- Alexander McWhinney for fantastic effort in all subject areas.
- Tristen Rawsthorne for making positive choices about his learning.

**Class 7A**
- Georgia Frerichs for working enthusiastically in all subject areas.
- Jye Barker for improved focus in class and working hard to complete his work.
BreastScreen Queensland
Digital Mobile Unit
Will be located at
WESTS LEAGUES CLUB
Branscombe Rd, Walkerston
29 & 30 September 2014
Women 40 years and over are eligible to join
the BreastScreen Queensland Program
Phone 13 20 50 for your FREE

FOR SALE
3 Seater with 2 Recliner
Australian leather Lounge
As New
$2500.00
Phone June on 0419196132

FAMILY FAIR
A Family Fair will be held at the Pioneer Valley Sporting Assoc. Grounds, Gargett on Sunday, 28th September from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
It will feature entertainment and competitions including a Wife Carrying Competition with the winner collecting his wife's weight in beer. A $20 nomination fee is applicable for this event.
Stall Holders are invited, with sites being available for $10.
All nomination and site fees are payable to Pioneer Valley Ladies Bowls Club, P.O. Box 66, Gargett, 4741 and are to be received no later than 14th September.
There will also be a Sausage Sizzle, coffee and cake and the bar will also be open. Bring the family along for a fun filled day.
Enquiries; ph 4958 3180 or 4958 4603.