Brittney Martyn gets up close to furry friends at her LTI at Anipet, Redhead.
A Fine Balance

One of the things that help to shape the learning in our Campus is a concept known as ‘tight-loose-tight’. It is founded on the learning of the students and when they have the independence and capacity to allow for a ‘loose structure’ by the advisory teacher, whereby they are on the right track of deep questions, finding sound research, asking questions about their research and testing this research against other data and readings they have collected.

The ‘tight’ is where students have perhaps ‘lost their way’ a little and need to be rounded back in by the advisory teacher and ‘re-find’ their way around their projects. This is where the one-on-one sessions with advisory teachers are most useful in steering the students towards aiming high and reaching their academic goals.

This is where the fine balance of my title comes to the fore. As a new and emerging design for learning, we are working with each other to achieve this fine balance ourselves. It is not possible for a student to simply sit and ‘do nothing’ in advisory. It defeats the purpose of our philosophy. It is also up to all of us as a learning community to continuously engage young people in deep conversations about their learning. Try not to just ask: ‘what did you do today?’ Try to ask,

“What did you discover in your learning today?”
“What new questions came up in your research?”
“Did you look beyond the internet for sources to help you?”
“How has your learning plan changed since you first started this term?”

These skills in research and initiative will help our young people in the world beyond the school gates and take them into the 21st century more prepared for the world of work, where as we all know, nobody expects you will only work while someone is watching you!

TRACEY BREESE
From Darren’s Desk

Question for this week:

“How has your mentor assisted you with your personal interest project?”

Last week I had the privilege of heading to the Big Picture Education headquarters in Sydney to assist in LTI training for Advisors from several Big Picture Academies around the state. Through the process of sharing my experiences from Cooks Hill, I was able to reflect on the practices of our students with regard to LTI (Learning Through Internship).

The group were very impressed with the ability of our students to adhere to the Big Picture design and select internships which were aimed at supplementing and extending their learning beyond the school gates. The difference between LTI and work experience becomes very clear when we consider examples such as Abby, Isabelle and Charlie. These three amazing students have sourced mentors from Newcastle University in fields of interest to them, with the goal of “leaving to learn”. They are not sweeping floors, or being kept busy with menial tasks. They, along with many of our students, are learning deeply from an expert in a field of interest to them, and amalgamating this experience with their learning on campus.

With term four quickly approaching, I would encourage all students to begin considering the following questions:

“Do I have a mentor who could assist me to learn more about my area of interest and assist me to go deeper with my learning through my Personal Interest Project?”

“Where could I find a mentor who could do this?”

As always, please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding your family’s experience at Cooks Hill Campus.

Regards,

Darren Ponman
Deputy Campus Leader
Cooks Hill Campus
Darren.ponman1@det.nsw.edu.au
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

TERM 3 WEEK 7

Wednesday: 27th August - visit from Police School Liaison Officer
Friday: 29th August - Design & Technology Task due

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

If life is a journey, education would be the compass that guides you towards new adventures.

share - teach - inspire - reflect
Share your ideas and inspire other teachers at www.connect-education.org
Starting week 3 this term, every Tuesday I have been doing my internship at Gymbaroo.

At Gymbaroo parents participate with their child in weekly sessions of fun and learning. They run age-appropriate sessions for babies as young as 6 weeks up to 5yrs. Appropriate learning experiences and stimulating activities in the early years have a positive impact on a child’s entire life.

Every Tuesday I get there at 9:30 and help run and set up for the four 45 minute sessions that run throughout the day and I finish at 1:15pm.

Each term they have a different theme and this term has been all about Transport. Then each week is something different within that larger theme. This week has been about boats. Each child brings in a toy, picture or book etc. They call this “treasure bag time”.

The Mobile Babies (those who are crawling) need special play equipment like a baby swing and toys that make noises.

I hand out the musical equipment that the kids will be using in their next session. I go into their class and help with the collection of the equipment, the cleaning of the equipment and the packing away at the end.

I have really enjoyed being at Gymbaroo. It has given me an insight to how babies and kids learn.
Newspaper Report

The Ugly Truth

By Tiana Binskin

For most of us, Christmas and other celebrations would not be the same without the roast feast, which may include meats like lamb, beef, ham, duck, turkey and chicken. But we never spare a thought to where all these animals come from, beyond the local supermarket.

Sadly, most of these animals come from factory farms, a prison-like place where animals never see daylight and are shoved behind bars where there is no room to even turn around. To produce the pork, ham, lamb and chicken that we eat, most animals live lives of misery.

Most people don’t even know what factory farming is and that’s because the industries don’t want you to know. They don’t want you to know that the ‘cute farm animals’ suffer in tiny cages. They don’t want you to know that they were born to be killed, to be prisoners for profit. If everyone knew the truth, factory farming would be getting nowhere, because people would stop buying.

Egg-laying chickens are sometimes starved for up to 10-14 days, exposed to changing light patterns and are not given water in order to shock their bodies into moulting. Factory farmers use this procedure to make the hens lose weight, lose their feathers and stop their egg production. Why stop the hens laying eggs? They do this so that the reproductive system of the hens are ‘rejuvenated’, making the hens lay larger eggs, which makes for a larger profit.

Factory farms do not just affect the animals. They also affect your health. The animals are fed and sprayed with large amounts of pesticides and antibiotics, which sometimes are passed on to the humans who eat them. This is a serious health hazard. Housing so many animals in one place produces much more waste than our environment can handle, leading to water, air and land pollution. People living near factory farms are at a greater risk of getting respiratory problems, skin infections, depression, nausea and, in some cases, death.

You can help make a difference by not supporting factory farms and refusing to purchase any products made by factory farms. So spread the word and make this world a better place.
OUT & ABOUT

On Wednesday 20th August, Cooks Hill Campus students were invited to the University of Newcastle by Anne Spruce to see what the university was like and to ask questions about university life from Anne’s 3rd and 4th year Education students. 

Upon arriving at the Uni we visited the forum, an outstanding facility that students and the public can use. 

Brendt took us around the Hunter Building to see a lecture theatre and the Huxley Library. 

We then went through the maze that is the Richardson wing where we spoke to Anne’s class about what uni was like and they had plenty of questions for us about our campus. 

They were really impressed with how our school works and were keen to visit us. 

The university had a great relaxed vibe. We were expecting it to be a really strict and serious place. 

We stopped for lunch at the student union in the Shortland Building where we were amazed by the food choices, including crepes with nutella and ice cream! Yum! 

The university seems like an interesting and motivating learning environment. We really enjoyed talking to the uni students and they had a lot of great advice for us. 

With our self-directed style of learning at CHC, we’ll be more prepared for uni than students who are “spoon fed” their learning. 

We’d like to thank Anne for organising the excursion for us and letting us talk to her students. 

Brendt—I’m really proud of how our students took this opportunity to learn about the university. I was very impressed with the way our students spoke so maturely and confidently with the uni students. I’d like to thank Connor, Josh, Bianca, Kate, Paige, Jasmine, Lara, Cate and Joni for their exemplary behaviour on this excursion. I felt very proud to be leading them around the university.
Recently students conducted experiments in PH and water tension. Congratulations on Tiana’s record of 78 water droplets on a 5 cent piece!
This week has been a big couple of weeks in The Zen Pen.

A number of students from our Advisory attended the University open day on Wednesday to sit down with students to gain an understanding of how University works on a day to day basis.

All students also attended the Shortland Wetlands excursion last Monday to undertake some Science and Geography work.

Our Personal Interest Projects are coming along quite nicely and are becoming more in-depth and involved every day.

Madi’s Dirty Bandwagon clothing company has been going fantastic. She already has approximately 26 orders and the demand from both staff and students has been excellent. Contact the school or Madi on duff3y@hotmail.com if you are interested in purchasing some of her items.

Below is the logo for Jack Foster’s T-Shirt range which will be available for sale later in the term...
THE WOLF PACK

Week 6 in the Wolf pack, and we are getting closer and closer to our Gateway Exhibitions - our last exhibitions as year 10 students before we (hopefully) progress into year 11. We are planning out our days with the work we have due: the Design and Technology task, Maths Online, History and our Personal Interest Projects.

We have introduced our peers and advisors to our newest classmate and mascot – Jackson, who occasionally graces us with his presence. We are welcoming many new shadow day students each week and we give our best to them as they investigate our school and the Big Picture learning model we follow.

Many Year 10 students travelled to the University on Wednesday, where we toured the campus and sat with Anne’s students in one of her lectures. We met many people who helped us get to know the University and the many amazing things about it.

In recognition of the RSCPA and all the animals who have been neglected and abused over the years, a few of our peers help put together a cupcake stall to help raise money for the RSCPA and their animals. Many thanks to Bianca and her team with helping the animals get better homes.

May the odds be ever in your favour – Wolf Pack, *howls*
The RFPs

By Paige and Caitlyn

On Monday August 11, the RFPs and the other advisories went to the Wetlands Education Centre at Shortland. Some of us caught the train and others met us there. At the Wetlands we learned about some of the good and bad effects humans have had on the environment, including traffic noise pollution, introduced species (such as alligator weed), erosion and the positive effects of bush regeneration and monitoring the health of the wetlands. We learnt how to test water using thermometers, pH strips and a metre ruler. We used data loggers to test the accuracy of our results. We had to design management strategies to produce better water quality at the Wetlands. This was a great way to learn Geography and Science out in the real world. Thanks to Sasha and Aurelia for organising this experience for us and to Brendt, Lizzy and Anne for coming and supporting us on the day.

On Wednesday, Paige and Caitlyn from the RFP’s attended an excursion to the University with 7 other people from the other advisories. We walked around and looked at the campus. The Forum was amazing and anyone can use the facilities. We sat in on one of Anne’s Education classes. In Anne’s class we spoke to her students about Big Picture and how we learn. And then we were able to ask lots of questions about university life. We had lunch in the cafeteria where so many people hang out and there was so much food to choose from. A big thanks to Darren and Anne for organising this experience for us and to Brendt for taking us along.

The RFPs would like to welcome Jakiya to our Advisory and congratulate Jacob on getting his internship at the Wetlands. Tiana has returned from her Featherdale Farm work experience (more on that next TGIF) and Abby is away working with the Police Force this week.
The Linchpins

Woof. I’m Brittney’s dog, Pixie. I was lucky enough to visit the Linchpins during the week as a pick-me-up and I really enjoyed getting lots of pats and attention from the big people.

I’m going to miss Brittney next week as she and her mum, Raelie, are travelling to Sydney for the week where Britt will be doing a week long internship at the Taronga Zoo Wildlife Hospital. I know she will have lots of fun!

I overheard the Linchpins talking about their projects. Chelsea is doing hers on graffiti art. Cheyenne is going to design and paint a mural for an area in the school. Jade and Tiffany are going to design and make their own clothes. Zoe is really getting into iridology and eyes as part of her artwork. Bianca is organising the Gateway Formal. Amber has completed a booklet on Anorexia. Nikita is helping her clients at her LTI to make a book of photos and poems. Lara is writing a booklet for parents on children’s developmental milestones. Rhianne is putting together her video documentary on Vanuatu. And more!

The big people had lots of fun and learning at the Wetlands and the university.

I really enjoyed my time with the Linchpins and hope to visit again sometime!

Pixie
Health & Wellbeing

Go Fly A Kite

In the mid-year holidays I took my son to the local park to fly his kite. As I watched him in this activity I couldn’t help but reflect on the metaphorical/symbolic nature of flying a kite. Here are a few of my reflections:

You can’t let go when life gets tough: As we launched the kite into the strong breeze, the initial strength of the wind almost took the string and handle from his grasp. However, it’s the buffeting wind that makes a kite fly. No wind, no flight. And when the kite is up you can’t just let go of the string when the wind is really blowing. Life is full of events - non-stop causes and effects, the rushing stream of life flows past constantly. Sometimes those events cause happiness, other times they cause sadness. While ever we are holding onto the string, we have a chance. If we let go of the string, we will surely come crashing down. So when wind of life blows hard, hold the string tighter.

Survive the downs, appreciate the ups: There’s nothing more satisfying than watching a kite soar high above the ground. However, the vicarious nature of the westerly wind gusts meant that his kite would come plummeting toward the ground, before being miraculously saved moments before crashing to the ground to soar aloft once again. This was probably what he enjoyed most about it all. The sudden reversal in fortune, the anxiety followed by elation, brought a smile to his face and a laugh from his mouth. This can be seen in life as well. One minute we are flying high, then next our plans come crashing down to earth. But without the lows we can’t truly appreciate the highs. Ups and downs are part of life, acceptance of this (rather than fighting it) is one of the most healthy, balanced perspectives we can cultivate. Giving ourselves the emotional distance from our troubles (not always an easy task) allows us to see events in our lives from a bigger perspective.

When you get stuck, it’s ok to ask for help: Inevitably the kite would drop to the ground, or even get stuck in a tree. That’s when I got to play ‘SuperDad’ and save the day. Being taller, I was able to extricate the kite from atop the nearest gum tree and, working together, we got the kite flying again. In life, despite our best efforts, sometimes everything comes crashing down or we get stuck. It’s times like these that we need to be humble enough to ask for help from those who can help. While our despair may cause us to think that no-one can understand what we’re going through, in reality there are plenty of people out there who have trodden the same path, people who have reached the other side of the dark valley. Practising humility, we approach those who can best help us out of our doldrums so that we can soar again.

Til next time, go fly a kite!

Brendt
SHOUT OUTS!

Shout Out to Brittney from the Linchpins, who is going on an LTI at Taronga Zoo.
Shout Out to the Bootcampers (from Matt) for their effort during sport.
Shout Out to Anne & Darren who organized the Uni Visit.
Shout Out to Ros, our awesome office lady. We owe her so many thanks for all the help she gives.
Shout Out to Brendt’s walking group for a great walk out to the breakwall at Nobbys. We got to see the mother and baby seal basking on the rocks.
Shout Out to Tracey for getting better and to Darren for holding the fort down while Tracey was away.
Shout Out to Geoff Ahern for his Staff Training on Mental Health.

Internship Workplaces who support us