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http://www.cookshill-s.schools.nsw.edu.au
And so we begin the next cycle in our learning. This is our second round of learning, but our first round of authentic student interest. Some of our students are like a focused steam train, moving full steam ahead with great purpose and direction. The steel of the tracks is keeping them on a path to their goals. Some other students started off the term with a clear direction, but have derailed a little, or found that their interest had some barriers and challenges. The advisors have been working with our young people to help them steer back on track.

Still, some students are not so clear about their passions and our prompting is around ‘just start somewhere’. I look forward to hearing about the exhibitions and the personal qualities that each student has been working on to improve themselves as learners. Some words that I have heard used this week have been around resilience, courage, enthusiasm, motivation and persistence. So, this week’s TGIF is around starting points for our next project, our next learning plan and our next internship.

Quite a number of students are rolling over the internship and are working on a more in-depth work project into term 2. It will be great to hear their stories from the term 2 internship; to see what they learnt about the workplace. What did they find out about their interest? Are they still keen on this area of investigation? What do they need to do to pursue this area? Is there a way they can go deeper into the learning?

These are some great conversation starters for your children as you talk around the table at dinner, or simply driving in the car together. It is where we make the relationship of work, home and school all fit together, that puzzle pieces drop in and where the real-life learning can happen in a much richer way.

TRACEY BREESE

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

TERM 2 WEEK 8

Monday: Official Launch Day - 2pm. Parent Learning Groups 3.30 - 4.15pm
Exhibitions start Wednesday 18th June, 2014 until Friday 27th June. Online Bookings being taken now.
Questions for this week:

“Are you writing journal entries at least three times per week? Do these journal entries encourage you to reflect on what you have learnt and where you are headed with your learning?”

This week we took delivery of all the sporting equipment for our campus. A big thanks goes to Matt who has done a fantastic job of selecting, sourcing, ordering and setting up the sports facilities. To complement our new sports room we would like to add some treadmills and exercise bikes. If you have, or know of anyone who has an unused treadmill or exercise bike, we would greatly appreciate any donations of these to the school.

With exhibitions beginning next week, I would like to remind parents and students of the purpose of these. The expectation is that students will exhibit all that they have ‘learnt’ this term. A natural consequence of this is displaying what students have ‘done’; however, this is not the primary focus. Some students have voiced concern that they will not be finished their Interest Project by exhibition. This is OK. The preference is for high-quality projects, not projects which have been rushed to allow completion by exhibition. Students can still exhibit what they have done to date and how they have planned to finish the project next term. Along with this they should exhibit what they have learnt through completion of Science, Maths, History and journal writing requirements.

A reminder that this term we are trialing exhibition bookings online. Students should book a time slot through ‘teacher interviews’. The process for this can be found on the front page of our Moodle site (to access CHC Moodle, simply type ‘Cooks Hill Moodle’ into Google and it should be one of the first two links. Please ensure that the selected time is negotiated between you, the student, mentor and any other invited parties. We welcome any feedback on the appropriateness of this online booking process.

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

Darren Ponman

Deputy Campus Leader

Cooks Hill Campus
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We’re getting closer and closer to exhibition week and we’re all working really hard to get our projects ready in time. Sarah is working on researching the process of filmmaking, Erin is studying the evolution of music and music technology, and Caitlyn is doing Marvel character profiles.

It’s been challenging to organise a date for our exhibitions, as we have to find a time that suits both our mentors and parents.

On Monday, 2nd June the school had a fundraising event for Neurofibromatosis, called “Get Comfy for Neurofibromatosis Day”. To contribute to the fundraising, we all wore pyjamas and comfortable clothes to school, and donated a gold coin to the cause.

Two weeks ago Tiana had a week-long work experience at Taronga Zoo.

The handball competition is well underway. The quarter-finalists are Matt E. and Dylan. It’s been fun to watch in our breaks.

We’re all enjoying our internships for this term; those that haven’t found one yet, are working hard to do so. Two weeks ago Tiana had a week-long work experience at Taronga Zoo. And we’d all like to wish Keely good luck at her job trial on Friday with Dog Overboard!
At my internship on Tuesday, I had a really good day. It was the best day I had since I’ve been doing them. I was in the Butterfly Room instead of the Caterpillar Room. The Caterpillar Room is the younger children around 2 & 3, and the Butterfly Room is for the older children around 4 & 5.

I enjoyed my day because it was something different and I liked it better.
After a wonderfully long weekend of doing practically nothing, we are straight back into a full-blown week of work. Preparing for the upcoming exhibitions next week, we are all working hard and readying ourselves. Some of us are nervous, other excited, but one thing we all have in common is the effort we are putting in. Feedback from our class about booking exhibitions via the website is a mixed bag. Some of us like the idea that as times change, methods for things as simple as making plans and common bookings have progressed along with them. Others feel it is a simpler idea to continue making plans in ways that aren’t virtual, but all in all, we are a happy class.

We have had some great days lately, such as the handball competition that was excitingly competitive. All money from the $2 entry fee has been donated to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter service for all of the wonderful work they do. Advisory Number One will be raising money for Red Nose Day, SIDS and Kids, in week nine and we look forward to having fun whilst helping out a good cause.

Causes are important to us as we understand the issues people face and how many wonderful companies and charities out there are the supporting hand people need to help them along the path of happiness and health. As a school, we are trying our best to look for opportunities to give back and help out, even as young students in this new community.

Our class keeps growing and we are more than happy to welcome them with big smiles and encouraging bursts of humour. It’s pretty fantastic to have a whole bunch of interesting, funny personalities in one classroom, all helping and learning together. Personally I am more than pleased to be spending the next couple of years growing closer, and learning lots together.
ARTspace

Photographs by Alex Newman

Artwork by Cheyenne

Rhiannon & Maddy out for a walk

Photograph by Rhiannon
Last Thursday, we began moving the room around. Ever since we moved we have been way more Zen, and we earned back our “Zen Pen” pictures.

On Friday, we had sport, and some of us played on the new ping pong tables. Jack F. and Mykaela were the champions.

Monday was a public holiday, most of us spent the day sleeping, or just relaxing.

Tuesday was our internship day and most of us were out on internships.

Wednesday was a good day, we got a lot of work done. We spent session 3 in Town Hall catching up on our maths with our university intern, Jo. The Handball competition was on and Alex smashed Mike.

On Thursday, Connor received the Zen Master Award in recognition of being calm and relaxed all term. Congratulations, Connor!
It’s been two weeks since the last TGIF entry, which means we have a lot to talk about, beginning with what’s happened throughout the past 2 weeks.

Our advisory project, Get Comfy for NF Day, was a huge success, raising over $200 for research into Neurofibromatosis. Thanks to everyone who contributed with yummy treats for the bake sale and also to Vickers Home Improvements who donated the sausages for the BBQ lunch. This project showed what a great team we are.

For internships, Joni is doing exceptionally well at the Yoga For All Studio, where she is building her instructor confidence to conduct her very own class at the end of term. Anybody aged 12-18 is welcome for the yoga experience when she hosts her class. Kirra had some fun with the kids at the BT Preschool, and everybody in the class is going well. The Retail Course, of which Tayla and Paige are members, is also going well. Though, perhaps a little stressful, we hear.

Our Advisor, Lizzy, was away all of last week and was absent again this week due to a particularly nasty back injury. We all hope she gets well soon! Especially since there are only 4 weeks left of school term and Exhibitions are once again, fast approaching.

We welcome our Advisor, Sheri, for the remainder of term whilst Lizzy recovers. Students should be addressing their work in preparation for the presentations. We wish you all good luck, this term is short and it’s been busy, but it’s been great. Wolfpack out.

LOUD HOWLING

VICKERS
HOME IMPROVEMENTS
trusted.. first time, every time, from start to finish
Hello everybody!

This week in our advisory we were lucky enough to have a BBQ at Blackbutt Reserve, which was organised by Brittney for her Personal Interest Project. Being her LTI workplace, Brittney gave us a tour through the park seeing all sorts of birds, wombats, koalas, peacocks, ducks, turtles, eels and even a kangaroo! After our tour we then had a lovely BBQ lunch. Thanks to Brendt for driving us in the mini-bus that Brittney hired.

We also have exhibitions coming up, starting this coming Wednesday, so there’s been lots of hard work for all members of our advisory. We have some wonderful projects being completed and we look forward to talking about our progress this term. Thanks to Matt for getting the Wii which we use in the afternoon when we need some down time.
Health & Wellbeing

“Mindfulness practice means that we commit fully in each moment to be present; inviting ourselves to interface with this moment in full awareness” Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR Pioneer

In this edition I want to discuss the benefits of the practice of Mindfulness meditation, a tool which has transformed my life over many years. But first I’d like to explore the reasons why I think it is a beneficial practice that should be (and can be) learned by everyone, especially teenagers.

1) Our brains are over-loaded & addicted

In our “always-on” world, we are constantly bombarded with input from a variety of sources. As technology has transformed our working and domestic lives, our ability to slow down and process this sublime experience called “life” has also been affected. In my own life (and you may have had a similar experience) time-saving technology has let me get more done but what has become increasingly aware to me is that as my engagement with technology has grown, so has my need to seek “down time” where my brain can rest and process the average of 34 gigabytes of input we receive each day. Aran Levasseur, in his blog post on The Importance of Teaching Mindfulness, takes this further and explores the link between our consumption of media and neurological changes in the brain:

“Our colossal consuming habits are not only crowding out essential neurological downtime, but they’re creating a chemical addiction that has interest in little else. When we consume media — from watching TV to surfing the Net, and from playing videogames to using social media — we’re triggering the brain chemical dopamine. Dopamine creates a “high,” and we are wired to do what it takes to maintain this elevated state. When the dopamine levels decrease, we begin to look for diversions that will restore the high.”

Have you noticed how people now tend to spend their spare moments intently gazing at their phones (sometimes while walking or driving!?)? Now you know why: they’re addicted. We’ve become habituated to seeking a flood of stimuli, with no time for relaxed contemplation of our lives, which leads me to my next reason...

2) The need to develop creative self-awareness to deal with stress

When our habitual patterns of media consumption leave us little time for self-reflection, there’s little chance for us to develop a greater awareness of ourselves, other people around us, and the world in which we live. It’s my belief that this lack of metacognitive and emotional awareness is one of the reasons for the prevalence of stress and mental illness such as depression in our society today.

The Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness practice has allowed me to better deal with life and the stresses that come ‘part and parcel’ with living. While my practice has never been consistent, the time that I have spent cultivating mindfulness has certainly paid off in greater levels of self-awareness and resilience. As Martine Batchelor, in her book Meditation for Life, puts it:

You will become aware of certain negative patterns: anger, jealousy, jumping to conclusions, feeling negative about yourself. With meditative awareness, it is possible to understand negative patterns and so have the motivation to work with them creatively... It is easy to get lost in thoughts and emotions. We are inclined to make up stories about ourselves, other people and situations, which are not always accurate. These stories are built up over time from an accumulation of our fears, memories, expectations and ideals, and also from what is said and expected of us by family and society. Caught up in the storyline you are spinning in your head, you become unaware of your body and your surroundings.

I believe that it’s this ability to become more mindful, more objectively observant of your habitual thoughts and feelings that makes mindfulness meditation such a powerful tool for life. Levasseur says that in recent times “researchers have found that more than 40 percent of our actions are based on habits, not conscious decisions. Unconscious habits and assumptions aren’t destiny, but if we don’t bring them into focus then the force of these habits will continue to chart our course.” Sitting quietly in mindful awareness, consciously withdrawn from the flood of external stimuli, we can recognise the twists and backflips our “monkey minds” love to make. By practising not getting caught up in those thoughts we don’t subject ourselves to unnecessary suffering and are able to carry that awareness into our day, making us better able to react to life as it happens.

This is why I also believe that mindfulness practice can have a beneficial effect on teenagers and why I have encouraged my students to be open to the practice. School should be about educating the whole child, and giving them the tools to deal with life is just as important as literacy and numeracy. Mindfulness practice is easy to learn, but takes a lot of discipline to do well. Health organisations have realised the benefits of meditation in helping young adults to develop resilience and have produced a free mobile app called Smiling Mind to guide teens in the practice. If your child has an Android or iDevice then I can highly recommend this app. Until next time...

Brendt
MEDITATION EDUCATION

Several studies have examined the effects of meditation using controlled trials in elementary and high schools. The meditation practices ranged from 10 to 40 minutes, were daily to biweekly, and lasted three to six months.

High school students practicing daily focused meditation had

25% FEWER CLASS ABSENCES

and

38% FEWER SUSPENSION DAYS

before

after

Students in grades 1-7 practicing mindfulness meditation achieved significantly

IMPROVED scores on validated ATTENTION-SKILLS TESTS

Students in grades 4-7 practicing daily meditation demonstrated an

8% REDUCTION IN AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

High school students practicing daily focused meditation committed

50% FEWER RULE INFRACTIONS

*(Barnes et al. 2003) **As measured by the ADD-H Teacher-Ratings Scale and Test of Everyday Attention for Children Scale (Napoli et al. 2005) and the Teachers' Rating Scale of Social Competence (Schonert-Reichl and Miller 2005) ***As measured by the Teachers' Rating Scale of Social Competence (Schonert-Reichl and Miller 2005)
WORKSHOP
WITH CVETA & KASSIE

Stress Less with YOGA
A teenage girl’s life is anything but stress free. From exam stress to social pressures there are so many issues that our teenagers are faced with!

Stress Less with Yoga will teach you how you can calm the mind, relax the body and stay present so you can deal with the daily pressures that life tends to throw at you.

Cveta will take you through a fun yoga class to relieve stress and anxiety, while Kassie will provide you with necessary tools to deal with those unavoidable emotions and feelings that arise. You will gain more energy and practice mindfulness that you can use for life.

This is a series of workshops that would benefit so many of the girls in Newcastle.

Perfect for ages 14-18
Bookings essential!

For info on workshops for boys contact info@yogaloft.com.au

WHEN
Saturdays
June 14th & Sept 20th
12.30-2.45pm

WHERE
Level 5, 50 Hunter Street

COST
$35 for 1 Session
$55 for 2 Sessions

Level 5, 50 Hunter Street Newcastle
Call 4927 1010 | Open 7 days a week | www.yogaloft.com.au
SHOUT OUTS!

SHOUT OUT

Shout Out to Kirra for organising “Get Comfy for Neurofibromatosis Day” on Monday 2nd June.

Shout Out to Aurelia and Jacob for winning the guessing competition for “Get Comfy for Neurofibromatosis Day”. Enjoy your prizes!

Shout Out to Alex and Amanda for taking over as our Internship Coordinators. We are looking forward to working with you.

Shout Out to Keely who has a job trial in a small business called “Dog Overboard”. Good luck!

Shout Out to all of the competitors in the handball competition. Good luck everyone!

Internship Workplaces who support us

[Image of internship workplaces]