Western Heights College is the place to be!
This is the phrase developed and shared recently by Magan Turner, one of our 2014 College Captains, and I must say that I agree with her whole-heartedly!

I take this opportunity to reflect on the year that is almost complete, and as I do I thank and acknowledge the input and contributions of many people who make Western Heights College the fantastic place that it is.

Firstly I would like to acknowledge all of our students. Your youthful enthusiasm propels us forward for you are our 21st Century Learners and our future. We have the opportunity to celebrate with you the many big milestones you experience during your secondary schooling; your first day and your last day of secondary school, the times you learn through your mistakes and the times we celebrate your achievements together. It is an absolute pleasure to be involved with our younger generation!

Thank you to the Western Heights College staff who are tireless in their efforts to focus on our students, to push them to excel and to support and care for them along the way. I think we are the luckiest people in the world to do the job we do; to support our students to become the people they aspire to be. Western Heights College is very lucky to have our team of skilled practitioners who have their eyes firmly focused on student learning and I applaud them all for their tireless efforts in making our college “the place to be.”

My thanks are also extended to members of our College Council, under the leadership of our College Council President, George Taylor.

We have a fantastic group of parents, staff and community members who have the best interests of our college close to their heart and who guide the strategic direction of our college with a real sense of moral purpose.

During this year we celebrated two years in our flexible learning spaces on the Vines Road Campus as we now watch the $12m Stage 2 buildings taking shape, quicker than I imagined. In 2015 the whole college will be on one site, enjoying purpose built spaces made for 21st century learners. Few schools can boast such amazing physical facilities; rich in ICT with inside toilets and locker areas, climate controlled heating and cooling systems and monitored air quality.

We take every opportunity to celebrate success. Over 100 students were recognised due to their academic achievements at our Semester One Success Celebration. College assemblies have also been a highlight; inducting student leaders in term one, respecting ANZAC day and Remembrance Day in terms 2 & 4 and celebrating the contemporary learning program on offer in the college as students from each learning community shared their highlights during term 3. The revival of the house system has supported three great college sports carnivals, with dress-ups enhancing the team spirit of each house and the day generally. Chess competitions and book clubs arranged through the Vines Road Campus Library have continued to add points to each house throughout the year.

This year was the inaugural introduction of MyLe - the My Learning Program, where Year 7 students gained access to their own take home slate PC. Our modern
I wish you all a very safe, happy and enjoyable Christmas break. I look forward to the opportunities we will share together in our future, one that is focused on the learning of our young people; your children and our students. Thank you for your support during 2013 and I look forward to continuing to work with you during 2014.

Robyn Jeffery
College Principal

Network News

BACKUPS

In 2013 we introduced the MyLe program to Western Heights College with the use of OneNote and SharePoint and next year MyLe will expand to half the College at Years 7, 8 and 10. The program has represented a shift in our use of technology at school towards a more personal model where students take responsibility not just for their new Slate and their learning but should also be thinking about the protection of their files and data stored on the slate. Student OneNotes are backed up by the Network staff but not any personal data or files on the slate.

The end of the year is a good time to consider some housekeeping in the digital domain. This year we have had to think about how we maintain student OneNotes as a record of their years of work at WHC so they have a complete digital ePortfolio when they leave school. At the network level we make sure all our data has been backed up securely and student work has been archived and cleaned up appropriately. MyLe students should consider this also. Do you have a backup of the personal files you store on your Slate? There are lots of options now to do this easily and cheaply. Most on-line services like SkyDrive and Google offer free accounts where you can store files in the cloud. Large memory sticks only cost a few dollars, or pocket drives for not much more let you store Terabytes of files. It's too late to save those files if disaster strikes, so have a think about it now.

Mr Good
Network Manager
KRYAL CASTLE EXCURSION
On Thursday 28th and Friday 29th November Year 8 students went on an excursion to Kryal Castle as part of the History unit in MESH. Students started the day by walking through the labyrinth. Students watched a weapons display including fighting with spears and swords and saw a trebuchet being launched. Students learned about becoming a knight and went down into the dungeon to look at medieval torture devices. They watched a pantomime where they had to participate by calling out “Oooooh” for the princess, cheering the hero with “Hazaar!” and booing the villain. They also watched a mounted display and got to pat the horse afterwards. Some students spent some time in the pillory too!

Mrs Lynch
Year 8 Learning Community Leader

The Year 9 unit 'I Can Make a Difference' provides students with the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their local and global community.

A dedicated group of students organised a Fundraising Day for Thursday 5th of December, where all students of the Year 9 community could participate in various activities. The students worked hard to decide on the charities to support, designed engaging activities which would cater for all interests, advertised the event and took a leading role in the running of the day.

All students from Year 9 provided a gold coin donation and $112 was distributed to The Aids Trust of Australia, World Vision and the World Wide Fund for Nature. A sausage sizzle was also organised, advertised and run by a dedicated group of students who managed their resources well and raised an impressive $300 for the Geelong West Fire Station.

All students should be commended on the dedication and organisation they displayed throughout the unit and should be proud of their efforts in making a positive contribution to their community.

Mr Greenhalgh
Year 9 Learning Community Leader

2013 ALCOA AWARD WINNERS
In the final bulletin for 2013 I would like to congratulate the Year 11 students on their positive attitude and participation throughout the year. Their commitment to the examination week was excellent and the staff all commented on their way in which they performed throughout should be commended. Transition week was also well attended and many students took the opportunity to have a “Flying start” in their Year 12 studies.

Over summer a number of our students will be attending camps to help further their knowledge. Luke Hatton won a scholarship to attend the Australian Science Summer School and Giani Ristuccia and Cameron MacLeod with be attending a summer camp at Melbourne University. Both these experiences will be a great learning and networking opportunity for these boys. We would especially like to thank the Rotary Club of Geelong for these scholarships and they are a great supporter of our students at Western Heights. I would also like to thank Goran Gromilic for his work in relation to these.

Finally, the Year 11 team and I would like to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable break and we look forward to seeing everyone back in 2014.

Mr Bullock
Year 11 Learning Community Leader

TIME AND CHANGE

The other day during the Transition Program two of our 2014 Year 8 boys assisted me with a few important tasks. As we walked and chatted, we passed the Stage 2 building site and saw the steel girders and framework up. The exclamation was, “far out, that has gone up quickly” to be countered immediately by another “Nah not really!” My thought was – both are true.

One of the realities we never seem to grasp is that time moves on constantly, whether we notice this or not. Some days fly past (for me, it seems each week is like this!), others seem to plod. In truth, it is all the same; only our perceptions can affect how we experience time. I have enjoyed hearing comments about the new buildings, and actually there is audible excitement growing among many of us as the construction takes shape. This is for two reasons, the simple one is that each progressive step - fences, slabs, frames, roofing - brings us closer to completion, the deeper one is that it demonstrates in a tangible way the fulfilment of the promise made to the community many years ago.

In other words – change has been promised, changed has been hoped for, change is being realised, therefore ultimately – trust has been forged.

If I think across this year, I find it amazing not so much at how quickly it has gone, but how much has happened and been achieved in this time. From a wellbeing perspective, there have been many, many highlights. The common component of each highlight have been where our students have stepped up and excelled. My personal favourite was when we held our College Remembrance Day Service last month; for the first time the participation and running of the event was 95% students – including our keynote speaker (Leah O’Brien Year 10). It was a moment of pride for many of us! Previous events include the information evenings, the positive behaviour programmes, connections with the community through community service, leadership training, and a new initiative – linking of senior students with middle years for 1:1 mentoring – all successful with thanks to our students.

On behalf of my colleagues and friends on the Wellbeing team, I wish you all a safe and wonderful Christmas, and I look forward with sincerity to realising, building upon and sharing with you all our great school in 2014!

Marcus Allport
College Chaplain
“It’s up to you, what kind of world do you want to live in?” This key question has been the catalyst for Year 7 students as they have re-imagined the type of culture they want to live in both at school and in the community around them. The highly enthusiastic Year 7 students have recently celebrated the successful completion of an exciting new ‘Respect Ambassador Program’, more commonly referred to as RAP. Exemplary of the college’s commitment to strengthen respectful and positive learning relationships, the RAP program effectively guided students to develop their awareness of different bullying behaviours, as well as equipping them with the skills to safely and positively intervene.

The success of the program was driven primarily by the Year 7 students who applied themselves diligently to learning new information and engage with a variety of creative activities including art projects, mindfulness exercises and role plays. The students were supported by the excellent program material, developed by the NIRODAH team of school wellbeing experts, Paul Zappa from NIRODAH who facilitated each session and the year 7 teaching team.

Paul was able to share a wealth of experience and stories with students, drawing on his experience as a teacher with at risk young people, work in juvenile justice and the Victorian Women’s Trust. By contextualising bullying in a wide variety of situations Paul was able to effectively demonstrate to the students that bullying is a preventable behaviour and people who choose bullying behaviours can also be re-educated to lead happy respectful lives. Each week students created role play scenarios to practice using positive words, body language and mindfulness strategies to calmly intervene in potential bullying situations.

Throughout the program students grew in confidence to respond appropriately as well as developing their ability to empathise with the victim in each scenario. The culmination of the RAP was a special evening of role play performances where a group of students were able to share what they had learnt with parents and family members. On behalf of the Year 7 Learning Community Team I would like to recognise the exceptional effort of the Year 7 students to engage with the RAP as well as the valuable contribution these students are making to the respectful learning environment of Western Heights College.

The program empowered students to become more aware of what types of behaviour constitute bullying in their community, combined with the explicit teaching and practice of skills that would allow students to intervene in a safe and positive manner, defusing a potentially violent situation before it is allowed to escalate. with a specific focus on different types of bullying behaviours that are found in school communities throughout Australia such as cyber bullying, name calling and exclusion.

Mark Philpott
College Youth Worker