ENRICHMENT and EXTENSION NEWS

Semester 1 is coming to a close and the students have participated in a variety of learning tasks and experiences.

Our program, guided by the needs of gifted learners, encompasses cognitive, affective, social and aesthetic areas of the curriculum experiences. We focus on strategies that will help your child develop as a creative, independent, motivated and cooperative learner remaining open to continuous learning. Students are provided with opportunities that promote a high level of achievement through differentiated activities. These are both intrinsically motivational and cognitively demanding and develop knowledge, application, thinking skills and attitudes appropriate to the students’ needs. The open-ended learning tasks promote risk-taking, flexible thinking and a range of possible learning outcomes. Students work collaboratively as well as independently. Building relationships, teams and partnerships assists in the cultivation of creativity, leadership skills and excellence in performance. Students are engaged in negotiating aspects of their own learning and this encourages autonomous learning. Each session emphasises the importance of reflection. The program focuses on developing the ‘Habits of Mind’ which relates to continuous growth and improvement in learning and requires the students to be self-reflective. As students reflect thoughtfully on their learning they gain important self-assessment information.

Language and Expression

The focus this semester was on Visual Literacy. It is important for students to develop visual literacies to make connections, determine importance, synthesise information, evaluate and critique. The visual literacies were interwoven with textual ones to develop a more complete understanding and ability to master the message. The students developed skill in moving fluently between text and images, between literal and figurative worlds. Students studied a number of complex ways in which the words and pictures in picture books may interrelate. This involved interpreting the words and pictures in a process which involved reviewing and reinterpreting. Particular attention was paid to every feature of the picture book as an art object, an aesthetic whole with every part contributing to the total effect. The students developed skill in speculating on why the illustrator, designer, author and editor made choices in the publication. This helped develop the students’ critical thinking, inference-making ability and visual interpretation skills. Students created their own stories displaying an understanding of the style of the authors studied. Some students created a video using Adobe Premiere Elements or Photo Story which incorporated technology and promoted student ownership and engagement in their learning.

This week Boori (Monty) Pryor visited the Years 5 and 6 Language and Expression session and shared his expertise in the process of planning, writing and having his books illustrated. He demonstrated the importance of making connections with past experiences and developing themes through writing. His books have received many awards including the Prime Minister’s Literary Award for his book entitled Shake a Leg. Boori played his didgeridoo and the students expressed their feelings through dance. It proved to be a very worthwhile experience and Boori commented on how he thoroughly enjoys interacting with our students. We were very proud of the students’ thoughtful and interesting responses to the underlying messages that they identified in the stories he told.

During Semester 2 we will continue to promote the use of technology in the sessions through Photo story and Adobe Premiere Elements. The students will be working in teams to develop skills in this area of expertise. A visiting author has been organised to visit each of the Language and Expression sessions during week 5 next term. These are always very enlightening experiences for the students and are designed to fit into our program of work.

Solution Finding
The focus in all years was on problem posing as well as problem solving. Solving complex problems is a higher-order thinking process which requires the metacognitive skills involving understanding, monitoring, evaluating and regulating our cognitive tools. The tasks were designed to develop these skills through meaningful, practical, intellectually stimulating challenges that contain high motivational appeal. The students solved mathematical problems using the main solution strategies. The project-based learning engaged students in active hands-on, team based design tasks that make learning maths and technology meaningful. The problems systematically develop knowledge, understanding and skills that can be applied to future learning. The senior students used the ‘Engineering Design Process’ for each challenge in the Amazon survival mission, finding a possible solution to a problem that exists today. Years 3 and 4 developed an understanding of problems facing our oceans and sought possible solutions using creative, futuristic spontaneity in their challenges. Years K-2 were introduced to the design process and formulated solutions in a variety of scenarios. Students worked in cooperative groups enabling them to share ideas, negotiate and work towards solutions. Students reflected on each stage, celebrating their successes and discussing ideas for improvement. Coding robots in all stages formed an integral part of finding solutions to challenges.

In Semester 2 we will continue to develop skill in both mathematical and real world problem solving. The topics that each stage will be focused on will be published early next term. Years K-2 are excited about working with the We-Do Lego kits.

The students’ work will be on display early next term during Education Week in the Enrichment room. Thank you for your on-going support.

Hilary Hutchinson

Enrichment and Extension Program Coordinator