Loreto Normanhurst

Transcript of the Principal's Message – 19 November 2021

Good afternoon to you, to all members of our Loreto Normanhurst community. It's lovely to be with you. I hope you've had a lovely week and good day as well. I know here there's a lot happening and I'm coming to you today from the library that has been the hub of innovation, that's been the hub of 'sprinting' for our Year 10 girls who have traveled through SPRINT Week this week and engaged with that SPRINT methodology. And it's just been wonderful for me, as I've been walking through to either stop in and chat with the groups or see the evidence of their learning. Not only their learning, but see the evidence of their challenges, their struggles, what they've had to grapple with, the discomfort of not having all the answers and not having them immediately. And this process and this methodology that the girls and their teachers have engaged in this week has really enabled them to deliver on some wonderful solutions to real world problems.

In fact, one of the school-based problems that the girls, a few of the groups, were looking at was how we might actually create a more inclusive and collaborative learning space here in our library. So I'm really keen to hear what the proposed solutions to that problem will be when they pitch this afternoon and hopefully to back one of their solutions as well.

And that's what the week's been all about. We've been really lucky and very grateful to have been joined by subject matter experts and leaders in industry, social enterprise, business, and our leaders here in the school, so that we could give the girls some real-world problems and, and really seek that they find those solutions. So I'd like to thank the subject matter experts, as well as the Head of Innovation from Google who joined us earlier in the week to give the girls their keynote, and all those who've accompanied them along the way as they try to resolve the problems that these businesses and social enterprises are dealing with.

My deepest gratitude on behalf of the students and the staff, and we've been joined this week amongst others by representatives who've had problems from Netflix, Universal Music, Two Good Co, Guzman y Gomez, the Westfield Group, and AJ+C, our school architects as well, who were subject matter experts for this problem here. Our school architects have been busy with we us, our school project team as well. As I said a few weeks ago, really finalising the pieces of planning and of work to accompany the projects relating to our Master Plan.

And a little earlier today, you would've received some communication from me outlining some more detail than what I was able to provide a few weeks ago, in relation to what has been approved for the first set of works that will commence over the break. So I hope you find that informative and useful, and that it gives you an opportunity to visualise what you might have read about or heard about, and as we've explained it throughout the months. And then place it within the visual of these beautiful grounds, as we continue to steward the space, this beautiful land, this ancient and spiritual and sacred land, and this land that's been school and home for so, so many families and students over the years.

We think of the past and we think of the future, we think of problem solving and really what the Year 10 girls have demonstrated. Definitely the ones I've been engaged with and have observed is the need for collaboration and creativity and good communication skills when

you're solving complex problems. And I'm thrilled that a few of our Year 10 students who've applied to be part of the King's School Future Project have received confirmation of their inclusion in that project from next year. Because they'll take this great buildup, if you like, of holistic learning and of approach, that requires a sense of how do I work things out with others, how do I approach a problem from a really clinical and methodical manner, and work with others who I'm not used to working with.

And so congratulations to Emily Burns, Genevieve Bolster, Elli Barron, Elizabeth Heilman, Betty Wolkenstein and Edie Tassell. They will join students from other schools and will work in the remarkable laboratories that are part of the Future Project under the supervision of a professor, and they'll work towards contributing to the science and the research that goes towards solving some of the scientific problems that our community and leaders in the field are dealing with. And so we look forward to hearing about those pieces of work.

Of course, as it is with so many fields and disciplines, and definitely is with medical science and the science and scientific inquiry and discovery, you contribute to that field of research, never often being at the point in time where the solution's found, but knowing that your research, your contribution will actually add to the field of knowledge and that's critical. And that's, again, what Year 10 have been part of this week, that not having the whole answer is just okay, actually.

Sitting with the complexity of the problem is what our Future Project girls and our Year 10 girls more broadly are really embarking on. So I wish you well, girls.

So we've gone from numbers to drawings, to having our eyes under the microscope in the laboratory, to lots of words being celebrated too, and I'd like to acknowledge in the last two weeks, since we were lastly with you, through the newsletter you might see and read a little bit about it in this edition, that a lot's been happening with how our students have been playing with words, crafting words, taking the words of others and developing them. It was a highlight of my week last week when our Primary School Principal’s Spelling Bee final took place.

And it's just that delight of words and what it can do and where words come from and just how we get to explore vocabulary and what it can mean for us as we grow in our love of literature, in our expression through language. And it was just such a delightful experience for me, knowing that so many girls had gone through the various rounds. So congratulations again, girls, and I was most impressed by your grit, by your perseverance, and as I said to you last week, primarily I was impressed by how they supported and picked each other up. If somebody got it incorrect and had to be out of the round, the encouragement and support was just lovely. And then the thrill of seeing other girls go forward into future rounds is what it's all about. That true friendship, that real circle of friends who learn together, slip up together, and face the celebrations together as well.

Congratulations to Portia Rowland-Stefanic and Portia took out first place of the Principal’s Spelling Bee and to Ava Carroll, who coming came in second place and Genevieve Rizk, who was in third place, well done to all of you. And then last week at our secondary school assembly, we, we celebrated the beauty of words in other languages and Signora Thomsett,

our Head of Languages, presented the finalists from Years 8 to 11 in the Patricia Webb Poetry Competition with their medals and certificates. And then we were treated to the most delightful segment at assembly, where the girls spoke in Chinese, Italian and French to introduce us to what they had been doing. And we were able to follow in English through the audio visuals, and then three students read the most beautiful poems again in French, Italian and Chinese.

And it was just delightful to celebrate in that, and to see. That is risky stuff, speaking at assembly at a microphone, reciting poetry, and then doing it in a language that's not your native language. So I take my hat off to you girls. And I know that it's added so many layers of beauty and wonder to you as you've gone through the Patricia Webb Poetry Competition, well done.

And congratulations also to our very first group of students who took part in the Mock Mediation Competition. We had a group of girls from Years 9 and 10, I do have their names here, Tahlia Moses, Jane Dobeson, Sairsha Davies of Year 9, Maria El Haddad, Hannah Cho, Xin Teng and Saskia Chapman of Year 10. They made it through to the semis and despite being awarded a remarkable 90 out of 100, just missed out on getting through to the grand final. But that is quite remarkable, having to go through the process of mediation, understanding the conflict that's happening between the two mock parties, and then taking them through to the mediation.

That is not an easy thing to do. And I know that you also did it virtually in that competitive space too, so well done, and I hope you come back for another experience next year. And on behalf of the students and of Ms. O'Dwyer, I'd sincerely liked to thank Mrs. Lincoln and Miss McMann, who coached the girls through that mock mediation experience, and I know really guided them through understanding the legalities, the process and the complexities of bringing parties together to negotiate a mediation.

I'm sure, girls, that you learned many skills that you will take into your daily life and into your future. So well done to you. As I said at the very beginning, it's hard to believe that we only have two weeks left of term, and sometimes you think oh, it's going to slow down. We'll have that slow gentle approach to the end of term. And let me tell you, that doesn't quite feel that way for me, and perhaps it's a similar sense you have in your families in your own work lives, et cetera. There is, of course, we head into that beautiful season of advent, as we anticipate, and we look forward and that's always such a time that buoys us at the time of buoyancy, a time of uplifting joy.

And so as that approaches, before I'm next with you, I wish you well for that period of time. So I thought for prayer today, in light of all of this, I draw inspiration from, I know the prayer book I've shared with you before the Loretto Prayer Book of Prayer Times. And I felt it might be a time to slow down. As my mother said recently, just slow down a little bit and all will fall into place. So here we go. And we enter into the presence of our loving God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with all the prayers in our heart, and in particular today, a prayer that helps us to slow down.

> Slow me down, Lord, ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind. Steady me with the vision of the eternal reach of time. Give me amidst the confusion of my days

> the calmness of the everlasting hills. Break the tension of my nerves and muscles by the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory. Help me to know the restoring power of sleep. Teach me the art of taking one minute holidays. Slow me down to look at a flower, to chat with a friend, to read a few lines from a book. Remind me each day that there is more to life than increasing its speed. Let me look into the branches of the towering trees and know that they grew slowly and they grew well. Slow me down, Lord. Inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values, that I may grow towards the stars of my real and greater destiny. Slow me down, Lord. Slow me down. Amen.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

So with lots of minute breaks and lots of minute holidays, I wish you well for a slow relaxing rejuvenating weekend. I look forward to being with you again soon for our final wishes for the year. Thank you.

Ms Marina Ugonotti

PRINCIPAL