

Parent Newsletter

Hurlstone Agricultural High School

Address: Roy Watts Road Glenfield NSW 2167
Email: hurlstone-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au

Tel: 9829 9222 Fax: 9829 2026
Website: www.hurlstone.com.au



2015 Issue 1 Term 1 - Week 4

19 February 2015

CALENDAR

Term 1, Week 4, B Week

Monday, 16 February

Swimming Carnival

Tuesday, 17 February

10M & 10E Warilla Beach Excursion

Wednesday, 18 February

Yr 7 Creating Connections

Thursday, 19 February

10R & 10O Warilla Beach Excursion

Friday, 20 February

10N & 10I Warilla Beach Excursion
Mufti Day - IOWA Fundraiser

Term 1, Week 5, A Week

Monday, 23 February

Yr 7 Camp - The Tops

Tuesday, 24 February

Yr 7 Camp - The Tops
Yr 12 Senior Science - Task 1 Assess.

Wednesday, 25 February

Yr 7 Camp - The Tops
EPIC Outdoor Concert - Clarke House

Thursday, 26 February

Friday, 27 February

Closed Weekend



I know that this first edition of the newsletter for 2015 has been tardy in its publication. I beg the indulgence of the community in understanding that this has not been an easy edition to write; indeed I have had many false starts and abortive efforts in finding a way to welcome in the new school year.

Those of you that have met me know that I am very rarely lost for words but the last month has been a time that I have struggled to put to paper what has been happening at the school. The passing of Grace Gay during the last holidays has seen a cloud of concern and fear, which is slowly dissipating, settle into the nooks and crannies of the school and which has blurred our vision, made us much more cautious and slowed our progress.

Being the eternal optimist I have searched for this cloud's silver lining, not in the incident of course as nothing good can be said of that, but in its aftermath. Beginning at the cloud's edges, and slowly but surely taking it over its core, have been the people affected by it. The staff, parents and, most notably, the students of Hurlstone Agricultural High School have, once again, shone in the face of adversity.

It was both my great misfortune and absolute honour to have to let all the students know of Grace's passing on their first day of school. Misfortune as there is nothing sadder than sharing such news and honour as I marvelled at the ways in which both staff and students supported each other and showed such respect and reverence to both Grace and the situation.

It was those initial assemblies and the following three weeks which made me realise that the 'silver lining', if you can call it that, lay in the response of the school. This response was most notable in within the boarding community. The students who travelled with us to Grace's memorial service are to be lauded for their integrity, their behaviour and the way in which they supported each other and thus honoured the school name.

Once again, as the leader of Hurlstone Agricultural High School, I was flooded with pride in the community's commitment to its members and humbled by the innocuous way in which this commitment was executed.

It was a combination of this pride and humility which led me to be somewhat concerned with an article in a local paper which made some spurious, indeed incorrect, comments about Hurlstone Agricultural High School and its boarding facility in the first week of school.

The article claimed that the school was dramatically low in its boarding school enrolments and was and that there was a chance that it would lose its selective status. Even though both of these claims were completely and absolutely refuted by the DEC, the article was still published with false details and the DEC's disclaimer.

It is true that the boarding school enrolments are at 125 for this year and that this is far from the approximately 300 students of the past. Yet what the article neglected to say is that, under current occupancy standards (currently being codified in national standards for boarding schools) there is no way that the school could get to that number. There is no way that students would be allowed to sleep on bunk beds on verandas and in ten to a room accommodation; it would be against current WHS legislation. In fact the school has grown its boarding community by approximately 30 percent from 2014 to 2015 and this trend will hopefully continue until a comfortable number of students, for the available space, is reached.

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE Continued

The article failed to discuss the substantial improvements to the boarding facilities made in 2014 and the associated monies put into them, it failed to discuss the substantial monies going into the refurbishment of the pool, it failed to discuss the improvements initiated for the catering services and it failed to acknowledge the work of the boarding school leadership team and how they have worked tirelessly to increase both the numbers of boarders and the quality of the service afforded them. Indeed, they failed to do any research about the current realities of the boarding school.

Likewise the article's statement regarding the selective nature of the school being rescinded, which was attributed to 'somebody close to the school', was not just misguided but false. There has never been any discussion about the school's selective status in any forum I have attended. The staff, students and parents of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School are incredibly proud of its service to the educational needs of gifted students in both South West Sydney and rural communities. The DEC fully acknowledges the past, present and future service that Hurlstone will continue to supply in this area.

In my opinion, anybody who intimates that Hurlstone might lose its selective status is not close to the school and cannot know of any of the great gifted and talented programs we are engaged in and the results they engender. I think that the distance from both the school and the reality of the situation here can be gauged by the fact that the photographs used in the article were approximately 5 years old. I think it is important to note that I was not approached by the journalist to give any information regarding the school and, even though the DEC were quoted, that the article relied on incorrect, anachronistic and unsubstantiated anecdotal 'evidence'.

The tumult of the previous two topics highlight the fortitude, steadfastness and tenacity of our community as well as their desire to develop and improve upon who we are as Hurlstonians and this brings me to the last of the topics – Lunar New Year.

Today is a celebration for a large number of our Chinese families as we herald in the year of the Sheep / Goat which is characterised by kindness, tenderness and sympathy. This year will reportedly be a year for contemplating and appreciating what has already been accomplished, to think about bringing goodness to others, to take a deep breath and of calm. To those people celebrating Chinese New Year I wish Gong Xi Fa Cai (Mandarin) and Gong Hey Fat Choy (Cantonese).

For those of our Vietnamese community celebrating Tet I wish Chuc Mung Nam Moi and for our Korean families observing Seollal, I say Sae Hae Bok Mani Ba Deu Se Yo.

Whatever your heritage, I think that this is a great time of year to reflect on the year to date, evaluate your approach to it, assay the qualities of kindness, tenderness and sympathy and to refocus on the future – I know that is what I will be doing.

Mr Daryl Currie, Principal

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome back to all parents, carers and students, especially new students for the 2015 school year.

2015 sees HAHS commemorating perhaps the most significant single event in Australia's history. That is the landing at ANZAC Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula on the 25th April, 1915.

To coincide with this event, Year 7 are undertaking a Project Based Learning activity (PBL) that will give them a greater understanding of the events of World War One and its effect then and now on Australia and Australians.

I have personally visited some of the PBL classes and the enthusiasm of your students is fantastic, especially those students who have a direct ancestral link to the ANZACs.

I hope all parents and carers will be able to come to the school when we have our ANZAC Day service.

Shortly parents and carers of Year 7, 11 and 12 students will be receiving vaccination information notes. Year 7 vaccinations this year are for HPV (vaccination against cervical cancer), chicken pox, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). Year's 11 and 12 will be vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). I would implore all parents and caregivers to give permission for these vaccinations as they are done at school with no expense to families.

Finally, I would like to remind all parents that unless your student has an early morning class or an excursion, they should not be at school before 8:10 am. There is no supervision before this time.

Mr Nick Wenban, Deputy Principal

NEWS

Europe 2016 Tour

Currently we have 22 participants for the Study Tour to Italy, Belgium and France in January 2016 who are busy planning, and saving, for the trip of a lifetime.

If there are any new students in Years 10 or 11 who are interested in this tour please contact Mrs Y. Vercoe in the HSIE faculty for details. Phone 9829 9222 or email yelena.vercoe@det.nsw.edu.au