

Preshil News

29 October 2010

WHOLE SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Foundation Update October 2010

Continuing the Preshil Tradition of Giving - Preshil Foundation Update

The relaunch of the Preshil Foundation has been very well received by the school community and I'm delighted to report that our fundraising in support of the e-library, masterplan and heritage report is progressing well. It's fantastic to see our community coming together to ensure Preshil remains at the forefront of progressive, child-centred education in Australia for generations to come.

I trust all parents and guardians have now received personal invitations to attend our first formal fundraising event on the evening of November 8. This night is especially for current parents and guardians who are a vital part of the school community and a great source of energy, ideas and support.

Please email foundation@preshil.vic.edu.au or call 9817 6135 to confirm your participation in what will be an informative and enjoyable evening. Thanks again to the supportive parents who have generously offered to host this event.

Look out for further updates from the Foundation as we advance towards our goals over the coming months, and don't hesitate to get in touch if you can support our efforts in any way.

Regards,

Peter George
Chair, Preshil Foundation

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

As shown below, fundraising for the development of our e-library is moving forward.

TARGET	\$1.21 million
RAISED	\$900,000
STILL TO GO	\$310,000

We look forward to bringing you more information about our progress towards the Heritage Report and Master Plan in our next update.

WHY WE GIVE ...

Each update we ask Preshil parents who have recently donated to the Foundation to share their reasons and reflections. It's one way to celebrate and promote our tradition of giving at Preshil. A sincere thank you to all families who have supported the Foundation in recent months.

'My family has contributed towards the cost of preparing a masterplan for Arlington. I'm passionate about the unique pieces of Victorian history that are the Borland buildings at Preshil and feel deeply about protecting our built heritage. By preparing the Master Plan, the school is aiming to attract some serious government funding to restore and maintain our buildings and I'm really excited about this opportunity.'

Nic Dowse, father of Louis (5s) and Stella (8s & 9s)

'It is important for me to invest in Preshil – it occupies a special place in our culture, representing an essential social and educational philosophy in both its built form and pedagogy. That is why we send our children here, and why as a family we are happy to support Preshil's fundraising initiatives. We have made a contribution to the Master Plan and Heritage Report in order to document the importance of the school and plan for its future.'

Zahava Elenberg, mother of Boaz (5s) and Lilith (8s & 9s)

Congratulations

Throughout this year, Danniell (one of our teachers at Arlington), has been working with Preshil children from the 8s and 9s in his program, the 'High Voltage Rock School'. News at hand is that their two bands, 'The Striped Pyjamas' and 'The Ghost Girls' have been asked to perform live at the International Launch of The Primary Perspectives School Broadcasting Initiative to be held at Box Hill Town Hall on Wednesday, November 3 between 6.00 and 7.00 pm. The bands will perform as people are arriving and then during the drinks and wine break. Congratulations to all the children! Have fun!

French @ B/K

Oohlala, what a busy time it always is for French! Here's a snap shot of a few of last term's events.

At the Movies

From Delphine Laboureau and Molly O'Neil

On Tuesday August 17, Years 9 and 10 French students went to ACMI to see a recent French comedie called "L'emmerdeur" ('A pain in the ass' in English). Students thoroughly enjoyed themselves while practicing their listening skills. This was also a good opportunity to brush up on some French swear words...

This excursion was organised and significantly subsidised by the *Association of French Teachers Victoria (AFTV)* of which Delphine is an active committee member.

Farewell

From Delphine Laboureau and Lucie Dickens

The following day, Wednesday August 18, French students from Years 9 to 12 farewelled our three exchange students, Manon, Enzo and Maxime, who stayed with us for five weeks this term. We all gathered at Fruit Time and shared some lovely croissants and cakes from *La Torpeziennne* patisserie. Miam miam!

Manon gave a little speech and we could all see she was a bit sad to leave. She had a lovely time here at Preshil and wishes to come back to Australia "apres le Bac" (after her VCE). Merci to Lucie for organising the food and all the students who helped on the day.

Preparing for exams

Our Year 12 French students, Romey, Cathy, Michael, Des and Fin, gathered on Sunday morning, August 22, at the Melbourne Convention Center alongside 1500 French students from all over Victoria for *Les Matinees du Francais*, organised every year by the AFTV. They were briefed about the format of the French exam, the Dos and Don'ts of a good exam and were given the opportunity to practice their listening, reading and writing skills. They were given a booklet and plenty of tips to do well at their exam. We wish them BONNE CHANCE!

New Caledonia

From Delphine Laboureau and Rodney Waterman

The adventure of the 16 participating students on the trip to New Caledonia started at 6.00 am at Melbourne Airport on Thursday September 2. Watch our for the link (coming soon) to our blog...

French Connection

By Isabella and Emily from the Year 7 team.

In the past two terms, the Year 7s have been working on a French play called *Salut Mon Ami*. At the end of Term 3, we walked over to Arlington to perform our play to the Arlington kids.

They showed us some of the French plays and songs that they were working on. It was very impressive!!!! They sang the songs really well and their pronunciation and actions were amazing. Then we performed our play to them in three separate groups, all in costumes. Then they had to vote which group was the best by judging who showed the most emotion and had the best French pronunciation. The winning group got movie tickets to see a movie of their choice. We then came back to Blackhall/Kalimna and got individual prizes. We really enjoyed going over to Arlington to socialise and interact and have fun with the awesome kids.

In the end we all had such a fun afternoon and hope that we can do this kind of thing more often.

Good job everyone!

Aftercare News

By Chris White

Our Aftercare Coordinator

On Tuesday October 26, what started off as a fairly normal day turned into an EXTRAORDINARY day. We had just finished our activity of Halloween Biscuits (delightful concoctions of biscuits with red and black icing). Some of the children had been out the front of the hall raising money for the flood victims in Pakistan. The children then came up with the idea of making up more biscuits and selling them to the parents. They ended up making \$40. It was fantastic. Thankyou to my wonderful Aftercare kids for doing something so spontaneous and wonderful. Thankyou too to the fabulous parents who happily paid the sums asked for and never cease to amaze me with their continuing support in everything we do.

Did you tune in?

**From Karen and Elissa
(Teachers 8s/9s)**

What an exciting week it has been with the outstanding highlight, our Primary Perspectives radio program on Tuesday at 94.1FM 3WBC. We are so proud of our achievement, having worked extremely hard to create an entertaining, rounded and meaningful show. Everyone was involved in some way; interviewing, editing, song writing, mentoring and supporting each other along the way. The feedback we have received has been that we sounded confident and happy; what more could we ask for? Congratulations 8s and 9s! We have been assured that a podcast will be available for those who were unable to listen in on the day. We will follow this up over the next couple of weeks.

Straight off the back of the radio show the children have many ideas of where they would like to take our project next. We are committed to exploring some of the scientific concepts raised earlier in the year around alternative energies, electricity and power in nature. We won't give too much away just yet.....

Camp Reflections

The first week of this term was an exciting one for the 8s and 9s when they went away for three days to The Lady Northcote Recreation Camp near Bacchus Marsh. Focusing on outdoor education, team work and personal development, the activities included low ropes, the flying fox, a giant swing, archery, camp fire cook, canoeing and a team challenge. Two of the reflections from the children say it all.

From the moment I put my harness on I knew that it would fun but not scary. As they started to lift me in the air it felt intimidating but as I got higher I saw the most beautiful and amazing countryside and rolling hills. All the calmness got interrupted by the count down 1..2..3. I pulled the cord and for a second I felt as if I had left my stomach behind. But then it seemed to float back and I was on the ground. Next year for camp I would like to go water skiing because I think it would be a good way to relax.

Harry C

I felt great and happy and I confronted my fear of heights. I went high on this thing called the giant swing. I had fun doing archery, low ropes, team challenge and that is it. For the camp next year I would like to do surfing and some sports like dodge ball.

Seb

The camp gave many further opportunities for learnings. Some fun activities for Maths included estimating and measuring the weight of the left over chocolate from camp. There was an amazing 1.9kgs!!!!!!

More on Extreme Ornithology

From Rod Waterman

See their latest [blog](#)

The Wedding Singer - A message from the producer

From Jo Porch

On August 14 - 16, 68 Preshil students and staff presented *The Wedding Singer* to over 700 enthusiastic audience members. It was the culmination of 4 months work using class time, after school and weekend rehearsals.

It was a fabulous for students to experience the rewards of being involved in such a spectacular event. Many have commented on their new friendships across year levels and how great it is to meet and work with people they otherwise would have never talked too.

From a producing point of view it was great to experience the enthusiasm and commitment of the students. It takes the entire village to put on an undertaking of this scale and I would like to once again thank the staff and parents who put in many hours of their own personal time to bring *The Wedding Singer* to fruition. Stay tuned for our next exciting venture.

Photos coming soon!

Preshil comes to Dizzy's Jazz Club

A wonderful evening was had by all who attended Preshil's inaugural jazz night at Dizzy's at the end of Term 2. What a pleasure it was to listen to such great music by students, teachers and special guests in such a lovely warm atmosphere. A highly appreciative crowd packed the venue and supported each performance, applauding every solo with gusto.

The evening was designed to showcase the talents of Preshil's instrumental programme, and it was truly beautiful to watch and hear the genuine interactions between our budding jazz aficionados and the dazzling performing skills of Preshil's music teaching staff. There were many highlights on the evening's programme, the full extent of which you can see below.

Charlotte (Yr 7) – *Nature boy*
Emily (Yr 7) – *Gatekeeper*
Luca (Yr 9) – *Skylark*
Tess (Yr 10)– *You've got me wrapped around your little finger*
Ed (Yr 7) - *G Blues*
Ned (Yr 9) - *Serenade to a cuckoo*
Preshil Chamber Orchestra with Elaine and Felix (Yr 9)
Cailean (Yr 11) – *Autumn leaves*
Rebecca (Yr 11)
Nick (Yr 9) – *Baker Street*
Lalage (Yr) – *original composition*
Max and Ben (Yr 11) - *Summertime*
Nick, Chris, Ben (Yr 12) - *Song for my father/Dance of Maya medley*
Ben (Yr 12) – *Faith*
Emily (Yr 12) – *Willow weep for me*
Adrien (Yr 10) – *Nice work*
Ruby (Yr 10) – *Every time we say goodbye*
Michael M (Yr 12) – *Moondance*

Special guest performances also came from Eli (class of 2008) currently studying jazz at Monash Conservatorium of Music, who wowed the crowd with his playing on the bop standard "In walked Bud".

Rodney Waterman, one of our teachers, showed us his fine recorder playing skills on the latin-tinged “Bebe” , and teachers Larissa Cox, Fran Johnson and Jo Porch surprised everyone with their performance of the ‘Tango la Cumparsita’.

Special thanks should go to the fantastic house band that supported students, comprising instrumental staff Ainslie Wills, Ivan Rosa, Lawrence Folvig, Phil Bywater, Phil Day, and Phil Collings, as well as Music Coordinator, Tim Dargaville, who conceived and directed the event. The event was a fundraiser for Preshil, and \$300 was raised. Owing to the success of this event, another music evening at Dizzy’s is planned for November 4. Don’t forget to book your tickets.

STOP PRESS!

Music night at Dizzy’s Jazz Club

**Thursday November 4
Dinner from 6.00 pm; Music from 7.30 pm**

Dizzy’s Jazz Club, 381 Burnley St, Richmond

Following the huge success in second term of the Year 7 - 12 night of music at Dizzy’s Jazz Club, another evening has been scheduled for this term. All family and friends welcome. Come just for the show or make a night of it and have dinner at the venue before the show.

Dinner bookings essential. Tickets are \$14 adults \$10 students.

Contact: Roger Clark (Dinner bookings), T: 9428 1233; E: dizzys@dizzys.com.au

Preshil Music Festival Blackhall/Kalimna: August 23 – 24

Congratulations to the many students, staff and parents who were involved in this years Music Festival at Blackhall/Kalimna. Great excitement was in evidence around the campus on these days as students were treated to performances from special guest artists, as well as creating memorable performances themselves at the performance events during the two days.

The chocker block programme (printed below) delighted audiences throughout the two days of nonstop musical entertainment and enjoyment.

MONDAY

11.00 am – outdoor performance by special guests *The Wikimen* to students in Years 7-10.

1.00 pm – *Doorstep Concert outside Blackhall* featuring solo and group items from Years 7-12

TUESDAY

9.30 am The Big Samba workshop with special guest Steve Schulz

5.30 - 7.00 pm – Twilight Music Festival outside Blackhall.

Music by students from Years 7-12 – featuring solo and group performances from VCE students, Years 7/8 music electives, music technology by students.

7.30 - 9.00 pm – Years 7-12 Music Night, Arlington Hall.

Selected items from years 7-12, jazz from instrumental staff and special guests

Years 7-10 staff also contributed their expertise to run music electives on the Monday afternoon. Students were treated to a great array of activities, including Music Fashion, Singstar, Logic Pro music technology, Make Your Own iconic album cover, Lizard lounge LPs, Dance workshop, DJing, and French Hiphop! Particular thanks go to teachers Kris Austin, Tim Pringle, Chris Edwards, Molly O'Neill, Victor Toufas, Peta Close and John Collins for designing the workshops on this day

A great new feature at the Tuesday afternoon and evening concert was food and drink provided by the Year 10 Kitchen Gardeners (led by John Collins) and the Preshil Parents Group (coordinated by Sally, Noel, Victoria, Eva and Kim). Their efforts helped add to a fantastic atmosphere, despite the rotten weather!

In particular, thanks go to the many students who prepared for and performed at the events during the Festival. Special thanks go also to Preshil music instrumental staff for mentoring and also performing alongside students. And finally, a very big thank you to music staff Jo Porch, Rodney Waterman and Tim Dargaville for their great effort in putting this very successful event together.

From Family and Friends

Crafternoons

Mug's sitting-room fire provided the perfect backdrop to our adventure into the unknown creative jungle on Monday October 18!! A lively bunch attended, and we all assisted each other to make colourful woolly pompoms and daisies woven on little looms.

It mattered not that some of the rings ended up looking like spiders; the cinnamon butter cake was delicious, the conversation full of good humour, and ideas, and everybody's willingness to have a go really heartening!

This enthusiasm meant that this week, Tuesday October 26, those who came found out how to make a flapping silver-sequinned fish, and or variety of very simple and sweet little felt animals. Marina and Katharine very kindly offered to show us how!

Please come and join us at our next session on Wednesday November 3; remember that if you can't (or don't feel like) making something, you are welcome to just sit and eat cake!

Please contact Charlotte J or Judy R on 9817 6135 if you have any queries.

A Tribute to Preshil

By Merle J

I have been asked to write for the News because, I think, of my 50 years of association with Preshil: I have had three children and five grandchildren at the school, two of whom are present students; I have been a Council member five times, most recently in 2007; I have taught at Preshil for a short time and was on the committee that brought the secondary school into being.

But even before all this, I attended a school in Brighton called *Rosbercon*, a cradle of progressive education in Victoria, where Margaret Lyttle, I later learned, also spent her school days.

Years later, looking for a new school for my children after some unfortunate beginnings in the private school sector, I went to Preshil to make enquiries. As I walked in the gate of Arlington, it was like coming home! I experienced the familiar ambience of safety, warmth and 'rightness'. There are many people encountering Preshil for the first time who speak of experiencing this special atmosphere. I once took a friend to walk through Preshil during school hours; she was a paediatrician. Her comment was 'I have never seen so much joy in one place'. All those who have spent time at Preshil recognize the magic, but to convey it in words to those who have not has been elusive.

I believe that Preshil remains unique. Although many schools now advertise in terms that resonate with Preshil – individual learning, 'bringing out the best' etc, their long distance goals are different, their methods regulated, [their students] measured [and] compared.

Individual learning at Preshil meant exactly that. Groups of children at similar ages, working each with their own set of books, at their own pace, with the amount of personal assistance each needed from the teacher or from more advanced people. In a different subject the hierarchy would change.

Competition was never used as a goad. Understanding was to be achieved and it took as long as it took. Time was elastic.

Margaret Lyttle (Mug) considered the most important things to acquire were a love of learning, to think independently, to get along with other people and self-discipline.

What other things characterized Preshil? The importance of each and every child; knowing each child well. Every child knew he/she was important and would be listened to, consulted, considered.

Children would be free of fear, humiliation, [free] of comparison. Honesty would be rewarded with trust established. No punishments (other than occasional segregation), no 'carrots', no prizes. Consensus in decision-making was sought rather than the tyranny of number crunching.

One of the big differences at Preshil was the celebration of childhood - the acceptance of mud, muck and mess when curiosity and creativity was in full flow. Responsibility was learned in the care of animals. The care of the environment meant protecting trees from being chopped down, preserving hiding places and cubbies and growing things in the garden. 'Now' is the most important time to a young child and the importance of 'this' day, every day, was more important than far off educational achievements (though these beginnings paid off in excellent results in later examinations).

In recalling the things that made Preshil so special, I am aware of the vast differences today's children will encounter in the outside world. To me, these challenges will be best met by those with the qualities that have been cultivated at Preshil.

Indeed, the inspired intuitive teaching of the Lyttle women is now being justified and verified by scientific advances in biology and psychology.

The best way to do honour to Margaret Lyttle and her work is to keep the lines of communication open with those who knew her, worked with her: past pupils and their parents and philosophical educators.

At the recent Annual General Meeting I suggested an ongoing work party/discussion group of Preshil Association members be formed to retain what has been inspirational in the past and to anticipate the future. I hope it will happen.

I am unable to fully express my admiration and gratitude to Mug. She has given us the ultimate goals for the school – to make better people who will make a better world.

Competition: A Negative Force in Education

By Fred M

Competition is normally interpreted as competing in some sort of race to win, usually for self-centred reasons and to “prove” something.

Climbing a mountain or going bushwalking, on the other hand, is most often working together with somebody to see the scenery and to feel the achievement, to smell the scents, to breathe the air, and to present oneself with a challenge, to stretch one’s horizons. The walking or climbing and exploring is most often done in a group, where each member has the obligation to support each other member, and each has the right to expect to be supported in the challenging environment, so that in the end all members have achieved and can enjoy the view with a sense of satisfaction and joy.

Rarely would they stop at the end of the climb or the walk and work out how to rank the performance of the participants. Rather, they would celebrate the achievement of all the members of the group, and the fact that they all arrived safe and sound and in a fit state to celebrate, and they would look around, to see what beautiful sights there are to be seen in this world. This, I believe, ought to be the model for learning, too.

Why then is ranking of people and scoring of performance so essential to education, when education is about the discovery of exciting things, like being able to read and “see” the huge and glorious expanse of worlds available through literature, like being able to perceive the patterns and shapes in the world of mathematics and the sensory delights of the world of art and music? Why is our government wanting to send children down narrow little dark lanes, where they are uncomfortable, unmotivated, imprisoned inside other people’s expectations, and in many cases doomed to fail as soon as they start? Why are people speaking and writing of “Literacy”, and equating it with the “Three R’s”, which mean Reading, Writing and “Rithmetic”, and “the basics”, which we have to “get back to”, as if these were ends in themselves, rather than the means to far more spectacular ends; where mystery and uncertainty ensure that there is always somewhere left to go?

Ranking of children is a part of our system at the moment, but it is alien to learning, because it takes the focus away from true learning, which is usually done best by sharing, interacting, exclaiming joyfully at beauty and surprise, by facing challenges with fellow learners, and by helping each other to learn. What learners respond to is an individual matter, of course.

Ranking children often has the effect of isolating children from each other. Imagine a group of 10 children, ranked from 1 to 10 in ability in a subject area, as for example mathematics. Now put yourself in the position of the “top gun”, who has outperformed the rest. You have decided to retire from the competition. You still love maths, but you are *not allowed* to retire from the competition, which is a constant source of stress, because not only *must* you compete, but you are defined as a failure if you do not defeat all comers.

Or perhaps try yourself as number two in the ranking. Probably you also are locked into the competition and do not have the option of not competing, because of the class or school culture, but you can never win, no matter how hard you try to overcome Number One. So, you are a constant failure, and not only that, you have the people below you on the ladder who believe they should be above you, trying to “knock you off”, which is perfectly appropriate for a tennis club ladder, or a squash club ladder, or an AFL ladder, but has nothing to do with education.

There are disastrous outcomes for some “low rank” children, who are defined as “losers”, “veggie maths kids”, “dopes”, and so on, but on the other hand the “winner” in this kind of ranking and labelling game is sometimes the one who is defined *out of* the ranking, is last on the ladder, knows that he is free of the competition, and sees all this school-generated competition as nothing to do with real life, and will live life in other ways. He may quite happily say, “Aw, I’m no good at reading. Would you like a game of chess/footy/downball...?” They are not trapped in the main competition, or even in some sort of “sub-competition” in smaller groups.

It is a very common experience (and one that accompanies “labelling”) that people will *stop* running, climbing, reading, or learning, if they are defined (by themselves or others) as not very good at the activity, or if they are too stressed by the whole idea of competition - unless, of course, there is something wonderful to experience; those who do succeed in reading despite being labelled as failures in the competition probably only do so because they experience something emotionally or intellectually rewarding.

The *jungle* is a good metaphor for learning - one can enter it (whether it be spelling, science, art, music, mathematics, or whatever field) with fear, or with excitement, to hide from unknown and scary aspects, or to explore and discover. The fear in learning comes from fear of failure as a learner, fear of meeting expectations [usually those of other people], fear even of being punished for not “performing”. It comes from labelling, from loss of self-esteem, or if one’s “identity” is defined, by oneself or by others, as pathetic or inadequate. One of the best metaphors for such a catastrophe is one I heard from a man formerly “illiterate”, but rescued from this state by a friend who cared and was interested in language. “We are all born with a sort of computer inside us, and all the time, every day, it is being programmed by all those around us”. His own programmers were his father and his teachers, who had “recognised” that he was to a large extent “unteachable”, and whose diagnosis he himself had accepted. For about thirty years of his life he was cheated of any learning connected to reading and writing, before he discovered that the “programmers” were quite wrong, and that he was perfectly capable of reading and writing. He had been told, not only that the jungle was dangerous, but he was not even the right kind of person to be there! And it was not true! He is now a prolific reader.

The safest way to start exploring the jungle may be with a guide who has experienced it before, who loves it, and who can show you the unexpected patterns and pathways, and the ways in which different parts of it are connected. There are, of course, those who prefer to explore alone and do not need or want a guide, but they are not the norm, happy and competent as they may be to make their own way. These people also, I would guess, are not winning a competition, but enjoying the experience of discovery, unhampered by competitive elements and restrictions.

What the government wants is far from the metaphor of learning as bushwalking or mountain-climbing, or even walking through the Botanic Gardens, or even learning to play a team sport, where we encourage each other along, and point to exciting achievements, or scenes, or animals? Why does the government want all these highly statistical results? I suspect because it wants to make generalised statements about some policy or other, which by definition cannot be applied to any individual person. Politics and most politicians do not understand education at all, especially the Preshil version.