Hello Staff, Parents, Carers and friends,
What a great turn-out by families, staff and carers who attended the campus barbecues to celebrate the start of the 2015 school year!! The weather was balmy and perfect for eating outdoors! New families were welcomed and the students and their siblings had fun playing together in the playground. I would especially like to thank our male staff members who manned the barbecues – Garry and Graeme at Mooreville Road and Luke at the Middle Road campuses. I would like to especially mention the parents and staff who prepared and brought a variety of salads to share. Once again, Sandra, Keenie and Lindy excelled at organising the meat and setting up the salads in readiness for the event. Thanks to you all!

Welcome to a new teacher
Mrs Lynda Cameron has officially commenced teaching at SOSE NW. Lynda, her husband and family have relocated from Townsville, QLD to the North West coast. Lynda has taught in several special school environments and undertaken support teacher roles in QLD and possesses an extensive experience supporting students with vision impairment and in particular cortical vision. She has an extensive knowledge of Braille and orientation. Already Lynda has worked one on one with several of our students with vision impairment and she is particularly interested in working with teachers to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes for these students.
Lynda will work in partnership with Lynne Ryan, the
school’s ICT consultant and both these staff members will be responsible for supporting and co-ordinating staff training and setting up of the eye-gaze technology and equipment for specific students at both campuses over the coming months.

Annual General Meeting and Election of Office bearers for SOSE School Associations
The SOSE Devonport School Association meetings will be held on Friday, 27th March at 113 Middle Road commencing at 1:30 pm. Several office bearer’s positions will be advertised in the next fortnight’s newsletter and in particular parents/carers and interested members of the local community may be interested in joining our School Associations with a view of actively supporting and strengthening the school’s ethos as a ‘centre of excellence’ for students formally identified with a severe disability or multiple disabilities.

Our school requires ‘a voice’ across the local communities on the NW coast via energetic School Association members who are prepared to contribute and support the school’s overall vision and school improvement plans year by year.

Cheque Presentation
As you may be aware, the presentation of a cheque to the amount of $18,000 was presented to the Independent Living Centre on behalf of SOSE NW to support the purchase of eye-gaze technology and software which will improve the learning opportunities of at least 20 students across both campuses. This presentation was featured in the Advocate newspaper in the Coast to Coast section in Tuesday, 24th February’s edition. This was great publicity for our school!

System provides voice
Students experience massive change in a blink of an eye

By JESS BLACK

STUDENTS with multiple impairments will have a voice for the first time, using an eye-gaze system donated to the School of Special Education North-West.

The system, which is controlled by eye movements, was trialed by the school in June and will be funded by a grant from the Harcourts Foundation. Once installed, they will be installed in all the Devonport and Burnie campuses.

“We were absolutely staggered by our results. I remember one student looking at the screen and she realised that she had the power to use her blinking to change the context on the screen, and then she turned around to us and her message was ‘I can do this’”, it was a very powerful message for the teaching staff” principal of the School of Special Education North-West Grace Brown said.

“When they’re looking at the screen they very quickly realise that they are empowered via their blinking to make a statement or to make a preferred course. They communicate in more complex ways. ‘The children have the capacity to engage in small talk. It’s not just about what they want. This is the capacity to engage in small talk within the family and within the context of their extended family’,” Mrs Brown said.

“Through the grant application was made for the School of Special Education by the Independent Living Centre (ILC). The application was quite amazing actually you realise that there’s an intelligent person behind what you see, it’s not all about how a person looks and you can have a conversation,” executive officer of ILC Karen Frost said.

At the announcement for funding of the eye gaze system are (from left) ILC board chairperson Robyn Arlott, School of Special Education North-West principal Grace Brown, Harcourts Devonport and Burniewater staff Linda Laxton, Sharyn Crick and Kelly Brook, ILC chief executive Karen Frost. SSE Bannister teacher in charge Allison Hardstaff, SSE teacher in charge Deanne Fairweather, SSE teacher in charge Allison Hardstaff, SSE teacher in charge Allison Hardstaff, SSE teacher in charge Allison Hardstaff.
Further site visit towards the completion of a minor works submission
Ms Debbie Thomson, Senior Architect with GHD met with Lindy Parker, Joanne Corvinus and I to discuss the first draft of plans to refurbish the 3 classrooms off the main corridor at SOSE Devonport on Wednesday, 25th February. Finer details and options were clarified with the final draft of the refurbishment to be worked on and presented at a SOSE Devonport School Association meeting in late April/early May.

IEP meetings
Many teachers are already making contact with parents and carers to ensure that dates and times that suit all stakeholders are negotiated. These meetings are positive opportunities for you all to participate in reviewing and developing appropriate smart goals for your son or daughter. Your attendance also ensures that valuable discussion takes place and the sharing of updated student information occurs.

Kind regards,
Grace

Uniform Orders
The uniforms have now been ordered and are due back around 11th March. Once they are sorted out they will be sent home and invoices created.

Mobile Phones at School
Parents/carers are reminded that students should not be bringing mobile phones to school unless they have permission from their class teacher. Students are to be reminded that they MUST NOT take photos of other students or staff without asking permission first.

Sick Children
A reminder that if your child is unwell it is your responsibility to keep them at home to stop the spread of germs. If your child arrives at school unwell you will be asked to come and collect them.

Student Absences / Late Arrivals / Early Departures
- If your child will not be at school for any reason, it is the parent/carer responsibility to phone the bus company Phoenix on 6427 7626. You must also let Phoenix know if the bus does not need to pick up your child for any reason.
- You must also contact the school office before 10am to inform us. It is NOT the responsibility of the bus aide to pass the message along.
- If your child is arriving late (after 9:30) or leaving early (before 2:30) then you must sign them in/out at the school office.

Old Uniform Items
We are looking for some second-hand uniform items. If you have any items at home that your child has grown out of we would appreciate them.

School Hats
A reminder that we have school hats available at the school office for $10. During terms 1 and 4 students must wear hats when outside.
Photos from around the school

CONTACT DETAILS:
School of Special Education, Devonport Campus
113 Middle Road, Devonport  7310
Phone: (03) 6424 5554  Fax: (03) 6424 2992
Email: school.of.special.education.devonport@education.tas.gov.au