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. I would like to especially mention the parents and staff who prepared and brought a variety of salads to share. Once again, Sandra, Keenie 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.

Welcome to a newly enrolled student
Blayne Cunnings is a dual enrolled student who has joined Jaime Bradley’s class at the Acton hub on Mondays and Tuesdays. He also attends a Grade 2 class at Romaine Park Primary. Judging by his smiling face and talkative disposition he has quickly made friends with other students and is keen to participate in the programs on offer.

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.
DONATION

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! (article is attached with this newsletter)

Hydrotherapy

Mr Jeremy Lyons who manages the pool at the NW Regional hospital at Burnie has informed us that the hydrotherapy pool will be re-opened and our sessions for students will re-commence on Tuesday, 10th March. This year we will run hydrotherapy sessions for students on 3 days per week which will ensure that all students who require this form of therapy will be participating on a weekly basis. Hydrotherapy forms and specific information for new students in particular will be sent home to parents and carers as soon as possible. Signed permission forms must be returned by no later than Friday, 6th March. Students will not be able to attend their first hydrotherapy session unless the forms are returned by the due date.

Annual General Meeting & Election of Office bearers for School Association

The SOSE Burnie School Association meetings will take place on Thursday, 26th March commencing at 3.00 p.m.
Several office bearer’s positions will be advertised in the fortnight’s newsletter and in particular parents/carers and interested members of the local community may be interested in joining our School Association 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.

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 the Devonport Campus on Wednesday, 25th February. Finer details and options were clarified with the final draft of the refurbishment to be worked on and presented in late April/early May.

Kind regards,

Grace

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE is COMPULSORY.

Parents/Carers MUST advise the school office (64 338870) if a student will be away and the REASON.

Medical Certificates are required for 5 days or more.

The Dept of Education requires this information which is entered daily by office staff.
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 ordered, they will be installed in suites in the Devonport and Burnie campuses.

“ We were absolutely startled 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 “Did I do that?” 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 preference.

“ They’re communicating and they’re able to participate fully in literacy and numeracy.”

Eye tracking means students who have involuntary movements and cannot use a mouse or keypad can 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. “I think it actually allows them to see that their child has a voice. They become a participator in family conversations much more effectively.”

The grant application was made for the School of Special Education by the Independent Living Centre (ILC).

“ It’s 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.