Hello parents, carers and friends,

I’m pleased to report that all full-time students at both campuses of the School of Special Education NW have settled well to new class programs and new teaching staff. In particular, it was pleasing to note the wide smiles on the faces of students who are returning this year to access particular programs.

This year at the Burnie Campus we will be supporting students enrolled from their neighbourhood schools who will travel quite long distances to be included in a whole day’s program – Boat Harbour, Wynyard, Smithton and Queenstown.

Links Program
The Links program has commenced under the leadership of Ms Cathy Bester. Students diagnosed with severe disabilities are nominated by their regular schools to receive specific assessment and intervention within a small group setting. These students are supported during the whole day Links program by a teacher aide from their school. Specific PODD strategies, signing and direct speech are modelled by Mrs Felicity Lovatt, the Speech & Language Pathologist who services both SOSE campuses. Gym and circuit activities are set up and each student’s gross motor performance is monitored by a DHHS physiotherapist. Music therapy, ICT and hydrotherapy are also included within the day’s program.

The Links program operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Burnie campus and on Wednesdays at the Devonport campus.

Over the next few newsletters, I will introduce several new students who are accessing the Links program in 2010.
The Surf Life Saving Experience Day
What a fun day it turned out to be on Friday, 26th February at the Devonport Bluff. The weather was perfect for students from both campuses to fully participate in beach activities and surf boarding in the shallow water under the guidance of trained life savers.

Once again, the co-ordinator of the event, now in its third year, was Ms Sharon Kemp from the Hellyer Polytechnic College. Over 35 students with severe disabilities from SOSE NW, Reece High, Ulverstone High, the Don Polytechnic College & Parklands High took part. The needs of students with physical impairments were acknowledged with the availability of two beach wheelchairs that allowed direct access to the waves.

It was a pleasure for past students e.g. Jessica Cox Patchin to meet up with friends from the Burnie campus.

The photos tell it all!

This year’s experience day was financially supported by Westpac and a senior banking officer from Sydney attended and actively took part by meeting and talking with students, parents and staff members.

His camera recorded the student’s fun and active participation which will be shared in the next Westpac magazine.

Many thanks to Sharon, the team and the life savers who organised this very successful event.

Mrs Keenie Baker will be taking leave as from Thursday 4th March to visit her daughter and new grandson, Asher Charles who was born last week in Auckland New Zealand.

Crazy Hair Day
On Tuesday 9th March we are going to be having a Crazy Hair Day to support the Leukemia Foundation. The Crazier the Hair the better - so add some colour or some bright hair bands to a crazy hairdo to support this great fundraiser. We are asking for a gold coin donation from all of our students to support this worthwhile cause.

Workshop – Dr Richard Lueking from USA
The several staff members attended the whole day workshop entitled ‘Seamless Transition from School to Work for People with Significant Disabilities on Monday 1st March. I was accompanied by Mrs Bronwyn West who co-ordinates work experience and transition for students at both campuses and Mr Ted Barrance from D’port campus. This workshop was funded by Ability Employment.

Richard’s presentation confirmed that the student transition plans that are currently evolving across both campuses are modelled on the successful USA structure. In particular, we gained an insight into successful approaches with prospective employers that ensure positive work placement leading to paid work for students.

I wish you all an enjoyable and safe long weekend. School resumes on Tuesday, 9th March.

Regards,
Grace

Reminder: MONDAY 8th March 2010 is a public holiday!!