Singfest 2014

On Wednesday 20th August, forty-two students from Years 5, 6 and 7, excitedly headed off to Singfest at the Old Museum, Bowen Hills. Conducted over several days, Singfest attracts many school choirs, and is getting bigger every year. Members of the McDowall State School Senior and Honours Choirs prepared seven pieces, mostly by Australian composers. They joined ten other State Schools under the direction of local choral conductor, Mr Stuart Gillard.

The choral director worked his magic with approximately 380 students, keeping them engaged throughout a long day of rehearsals, and entertaining them with his great sense of humour, and some hilarious stories.

The day culminated in a Twilight Concert of almost 400 voices, delighting the audience of parents and teachers. We offer a big Thank You to the organisers, students, parents and teachers who worked together to make this amazing day happen. Let’s hear about it from some of the participants:

Emily B, 5D2: "We enjoyed participating in Singfest and performing in front of our parents. Our overall experience was fantastic because we knew we’d contributed to the Massed Choir that consisted of many other schools as well as our own.”

Liam G, 7D3: “Singfest went off with great aplomb! Some of the songs we sang included: ‘Pass it Along’ - a song about songs that get stuck in your head and make you want to sing out loud! Everyone in the audience and the singers would agree that Singfest had a most enjoyable repertoire.”

Mr Stuart Gillard conducts more than 380 students in preparation for the Twilight Concert.

CONTACTS: Ms Amber Pomroy - Music Teacher, Mrs Rita Anderson - Extension Literacy and Numeracy and Ms Vanessa Crowhurst - Head of Curriculum.
Deputy Principal’s Post

THE X- Factor (Part 2)

In an earlier edition of Tartan Times, we looked at Executive Function skills in relation to learning. The metaphor of an Air Traffic Controller was used to illustrate the highly complex way in which Executive Function skills work together in the brain to produce competent Executive Functioning. We then examined three types of brain function: Working Memory, Inhibitory Control (Self-control) and Mental Flexibility.

In this article, we’ll explore:
- Executive Function Milestones
- The Impact of Executive Functioning on Learning

Executive Function Milestones

The building blocks of Executive Functioning are acquired during early childhood. However, the full range of skills continues to develop into the adolescent years, and early adulthood. Below is an overview of Executive Function milestones at Ages 3, 5 and 7.

By Age 3

Early signs of Executive Function skills emerge toward the end of the first year of life. By age three, most children can organise themselves to complete tasks that involve following two rules. For example, If it’s red - put it here; but if it’s blue - put it there. To successfully complete such a task, children must have good Working Memory, good Inhibitory Control (Self-control) and good Mental Flexibility.

By Age 5

By age 5, emerging Executive Function skills still require considerable practice. However, while there are large individual differences with children’s capacity to use these evolving skills, the five-year-old mind is remarkably complex compared to that of a three-year-old child. Again, the actual strength of Executive Function skills is heavily dependent on the situation and the child’s experience with it. However, most older five-year-olds are capable of conscious problem solving. That is, they are able to shift their attention from one rule to another rule that is incompatible with it, and then swap back again. For example, when playing the Colour Game, the teacher might say, “Put the red square here”. Then the game is changed to the Shape Game with the teacher saying, “Put the red square there”. The five-year-old would need to be able to work out - I’ve been sorting by colour but now I need to shift to the shape rule.

Five-year-olds also have the capacity to inhibit or block responses that are inappropriate, even those that are highly desirable. For example, a five-year-old with good Inhibitory Control (Self-control) would think like this - I have yummy, chocolate cake for lunch and I want to eat it right now, but I’ll wait because I know it’s not lunchtime. Also, five-year-olds can execute multi-step, deliberate plans. For example, the teacher might give the following problem to solve - I want you to stack these balls in the right order with just three moves. The five-year-old’s brain would begin to tick over like this - I need to start here, do this next, and then do that.
By Age 7

By age 7, some of the capabilities and brain circuits underlying Executive Function are remarkably similar to those found in adults. Once foundational skills such as directing attention, keeping rules in mind, controlling impulses, and executing plans are in place, children learn to refine and use them more efficiently in adolescent and early adult years.

Impact of Executive Functioning on Learning

Neuroscientists propose that Executive Function skills are the biological foundation for school readiness. They argue that strong Working Memory, good self-control, and good attentional skills provide the basis upon which children's abilities to learn, write, and do Maths can be built. In other words, Executive Function skills support the process of learning as they enable children to participate in the school experience as actively engaged, competent learners.

Recent American research indicated that five-year-old children who had strong Working Memory, good self-control, and good attentional skills made larger gains on tests of early Maths, language and literacy development than peers who had weaker Executive Function skills. (Bierman et al., 2008; Blair & Razza, 2007; Espey et al., 2004; Fuchs et al., 2005; Gathercole et al., 2005; Howse et al., 2003; McClelland et al., 2007; Sektnan et al., 2007).

Supporting these findings, a later American study (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2009) showed that children who had good behavioural self-control and who demonstrated academic engagement at the beginning of Head Start Year (equivalent to Queensland's Preparatory Year) scored higher on tests of early reading and language skills in Year 1, compared with children who demonstrated less well-developed Executive Function skills.

It comes as no surprise that the acquisition of traditional academic skills depends on a child's capacity to follow and remember classroom rules; control emotions; focus attention; sit still; and, learn through listening and watching. Together, these various brain functions lay the foundations for competent Executive Functioning. Significantly, Executive Function skills are seen as a common denominator for both learning and social interaction.

The implications for home and school are significant.

In a future edition of Tartan Times, we’ll explore:
- Executive Function Skills and Social Play.
- Enhancing the Development of Executive Function Skills.

[Ideas for this article were derived from a paper delivered at the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs. Building the Brain's 'Air Traffic Control' System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function. Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011)].
ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A YEAR 6 OR 7 STUDENT?

Here is one of the problems from the District Maths Tournament:

Three surfers meet at Caloundra. Surfer A has 5 muesli bars, B has 3 and C has none, but C has $8. A and B agree to distribute their muesli bars so that everyone has an equal share. C agrees to pay for the muesli bars with his $8. What is the fair amount that C should pay A?

**Key Skills:** division, fractions, proportional reasoning.

**Reasoning and Solution:**
5 muesli bars + 3 muesli bars = 8 muesli bars to be shared amongst 3 surfers. Divide the 8 muesli bars into thirds, so they can be shared equally among the 3 surfers. Eight muesli bars will be divided into 24 pieces and gives each surfer eight thirds or 2 and 2/3 muesli bars. Both A and B need to give C some of their muesli bars, so they will all have an equal amount. B can only give C 1/3, in order to retain 2 and 2/3. A will give C 7/3, also retaining 8/3 or 2 and 2/3. All students will now have an equal share of the 3 muesli bars. C was given 8 pieces of muesli bar, and now needs to pay A and B for the portions they shared with him/her. C must give A proportionally more money than B because he/she received the most pieces from A. C had $8 and was given 8 pieces of muesli bar, meaning each piece was worth $1.

The fair amount for C to pay A is $7 (and $1 to B) for their portions of muesli bar.

**Academic Challenges**

Selected Year 5, 6 and 7 students competed in two academic challenges this month: the Wavell Literacy Olympics and District Maths Tournament.

**Wavell Literacy Olympics**

On Monday 18th August, two Year 6 and two Year 7 teams travelled to Wavell State High School to compete in the Literacy Olympics.

The day required students to stretch their brains as they solved spelling and grammar problems in ‘Grammar Gains’. In one game called ‘Crazy Words’ students had to act out a famous person, draw an object or make it out of play dough, spell a word backwards, hum a song or do charades. The final part of the day tested their knowledge of movies and soundtracks.

The Literacy Olympians were: Millie A, Tylah B, Keegan K, Maya C, Lily D, Ben E, Liam G, Carly L, Trent M, Zach O’D, Bella R, Takumi R, Owen T and Isabel T.

Congratulations to all students chosen to represent McDowall State School at the Literacy Olympics. An enjoyable and challenging day was had by all. Thank you also to the parents who were able to assist with transport on the day.

**District Maths Tournament**

Four teams of Years 6 and 7 students competed at the District Maths Tournament held on Monday 25th August. All teams performed well, tackling some tricky maths problems. All McDowall State School teams earned good scores. Thanks to all students for participating, and a special thank you to our parent helpers for transporting the children and supervising on the day.

**CONTACTS:** Ms Rita Anderson - Extension Literacy and Numeracy and Mr David Pedwell - Deputy Principal
Merrille O’Neill Poetry Competition

Last week, the winners were announced for McDowall State School’s annual Merrille O’Neill Poetry Competition which we hold as part of our Book Week celebrations.

Each Preparatory and Year 1 class wrote a class poem. The poems were clever, funny and colourful. Well done to all Preparatory and Year 1 students. Please come and have a look at their work as well as the shortlisted and winning entries from Year 2 to 7 on display in the ELearning Centre within the School Library - before and after school.

From Years 2 to 7, a different style of poetry was written in each Year Level. There were six finalists from each Year Level and from these one writer was selected as the overall winner. Our winners were presented with a certificate and book prize on assembly.

Thank you so much to all the McDowall State School teachers and students who put in so much work to produce such wonderful poems! Special thanks must also go to the teachers in the English team at Craigslea State High School for taking the time to judge our students’ poetry. They do this each year, and we really appreciate their support. Thank you everyone!

Pyjama Party

During Book Week and our Book Fair we held a Pyjama Party in the School Library. It was fun! It was noisy! It was busy! It was crowded! It was happy! It was colourful! Most of all, it was successful – thanks to everyone’s enthusiastic involvement and support (however, we would have liked to see more parents in their PJs!).

Thank you for coming out on a cold night to attend our event, hopefully the sausage sizzle meant at least you didn’t need to cook dinner that night. Geronimo Stilton had a great time, though he was a little tired at the end of his birthday celebrations.

Many thanks to those who helped to organise this event and were there on the night. Our party was such a success due to the tremendous team effort involved, and has reminded us of the great community we have here at McDowall State School.

CONTACT: Mrs Jan Saunders - Teacher Librarian
Sports News

Regional Athletics

From 26th to 28th August, we had a large contingent of McDowall State School students compete at the Regional Athletics Trials held at the University of Queensland. At the time of writing, Metropolitan North had not released the results. However, I am aware of the following achievements. Congratulations to the following students who will next compete at the State Titles:

Long Jump (girls 12 years): Kyra E – 1st place
Multi-event (girls 12 years): Kyra E – 2nd place
Discus (boys 10 years): Jakob T – 1st place
High Jump (girls 12 years): Neasher M – 3rd place

Our three relay teams also did very well at the Regional Athletics event, with the following results:
- Girls 10 years – 4th place
- Boys 12/13 years – 3rd place (Bronze Medal)
- Girls 12 years – 1st place (Gold Medal)

Many other students competed over the two days, and I heard of some great performances and some ‘Personal Bests’. Well done everyone!

School Tennis Tournament

Congratulations to the many students who competed in the Year 6/7 Tennis Tournament. Thank you to all parents and staff who helped with the umpiring, as well as Everton Tennis for donating some prizes and supporting our event. This year’s winners are:

Boy Champion: Kai B  
Boy Runner-up: Tiernan B  
Girl Champion: Laura J  
Girl Runner-up: Kyra E

CONTACT: Mr Paul Henderson – PE Teacher

Amart Sports Community Kickback Programme

Whenever you shop at Amart Sports, should you mention McDowall State School at the checkout, through their Community Kickback Program, approx 7-10% of your purchase value will then be made available to McDowall SS as free sporting equipment. Recently I was able to acquire $600 worth of free sporting goods for use by our students. For more information, visit www.amartsports.com.au/community-kickbacks.

Defence Family News

The Defence Community Organisation is currently recruiting for a part-time (10 hours per week) Defence School Transition Aide for Oakleigh State School.

For more information, please email, admin@oakleighss.com.au or call the school on 3510 2888.
**Music News**

**Honours Music Camp**

This year’s Honours Music Camp will run from Tuesday 9th September to Friday 12th September.

**Music Fest**

The annual Music Fest competition is on again in Term 4. The Adagio Strings and String Ensemble will be performing on Saturday 18th October, while the Wind Ensemble and Concert Band will be performing on the evening of Wednesday 22nd October and Wednesday 29th October respectively. Notes will be sent home to all students once times are confirmed.

**Mau Music Voucher Program**

Mau Music (Dallas Pde, Keperra. Tel: 3355 3955) have advised the school of pending price rises in October for most instrument purchases. Should parents purchase an instrument from Mau Music, commensurate with purchase value, they provide McDowall SS Instrumental Music Teachers with $ Vouchers which may then be redeemed for Music Programme items. Mau Music offer layby should it be required. Parents should always compare offers, services, guarantees and prices between a number of suppliers. Should Mau Music be comparative, parents are requested to support local businesses that support your school.

CONTACT: Ms Amber Pomroy – Music Teacher

**P&C Association**

**School Banking**

Don’t forget School Banking – every Wednesday. The School Banking Liaison Officer will be present at the upcoming McDowall State School Open Morning on 24th October for anyone who wishes to open an account for either an existing student or a student due to start at McDowall State School in the new year.

CONTACT: Mrs Kathy Wright – Parent Volunteer

**Active School Travel**

Spring Get Into Action Morning postponed. A new date to be confirmed. Watch this space!

CONTACT: Mrs Kathy Wright – Parent Volunteer
More Than Words Concert – What a Great Night!

The P&C Association hosted an amazing fundraising night, generating more than $2,000 last Saturday night, 30th August.

After receiving champagne on arrival, guests enjoyed a selection of tasty treats including a buffet of homemade desserts!

“More Than Words” were fantastic, singing old favourites and latest hits. They even managed to have the entire crowd up and dancing for the finale – an ABBA medley including Dancing Queen. Those dancing included Mr Fogarty and the Hon. Mr Tim Mander (MP for Everton)!

Special thanks to our major sponsor for the night – Wok Me at Rode Shops, Stafford. Without their support, the night would not have gone ahead.

This great night was such a success due to the hard work of dedicated volunteers. We can’t list all involved but want to say Thank You. You know who you are! A big thank you to Lara Johnston and Julie Forster for stepping up to the plate at the last minute – we truly appreciated it.

Of course, special thanks must go to Kathy Wright who organised this event and gave many hours of her time, even when she was unwell. Thank you Kathy - you are an amazing asset to McDowall State School.

CONTACT: Mrs Jodi Browning, Parent Volunteer

THANK YOU SPONSORS

We’d like to thank the amazing sponsors who helped make the night such a success:

- The Hon. Tim Mander MP
- Chermside Hyperbowl
- Victoria Park Golf Club
- Splash Chermside
- Australia Zoo
- Sanity (music store)
- Amart All Sports (Community Kickback program)
- Selina Tran
- The Wilkinson Family (the white wine/Women’s handbag)
- Zeffy Brown
- Jenni Davies
- Qld Show Choir
- Jetts Fitness (McDowall Village)
- Elini Swimgear
- Woolworths North West Plaza
- Panda Pearls (Nundah)
**School Uniforms**

**Uniform Shop**

Open Shop and Thursday  
8:15am – 9:30am

**Uniform Code**

**Daily**
- Tartan or red polo shirt uniform (at school)
- Tartan uniform only (when specified)

**Tartan Day**
- Tartan uniform only (when specified)
- House shirt uniform (at school)
- Red polo shirt uniform (interschool sport)

**Other**
- As formally advised (excursions and special events)
- Black leather or jogger shoes are school uniform wear
- Bottle green socks are worn with the Tartan Uniform and Preparatory Year variation
- White (red/bottle green bands) socks are worn with the Sports Uniform (polo shirt) specific purpose variation
- Bottle green jacket or jumper is to be worn. Tracksuit available
- Please mark all items with the child’s name

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**What's Happening**

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**Tartan Tuckerbox**

Tuckshop is busier than ever! We have not had a single day with less than 100 orders since the start of Term 3. We want to thank everyone for their fantastic support. All tuckshop profits go back into the P&C’s funds, which help to improve facilities and equipment for our kids.

**New Rainbow Birthday Cookies**

We sell more than 300 chocolate cookies in the tuckshop every week! Kids love them. You can now buy special rainbow cookies for your child’s birthday. Made of rainbow coloured chocolate, they’re double the size of regular cookies! They cost $16 for 24. Additional cookies are 50c each.

**Volunteers for Mondays**

As we are trying to operate the tuckshop with only one person on Mondays, we have to keep the menu limited, and there are no Flexischool orders. Can you volunteer on a Monday from 10:00am to 1:00pm? If so, please let us know as we’d love to hear from you! Either pop in and see us at the tuckshop or contact Mrs Anelle Moller (Tuckshop Manager) by phone 3872 5304 or email: tuckshop@mcdowallss.com.