

1 February 2010

Dear Parents,

### **PAUL: AN EXEMPLARY STUDENT**

Our school year started very well with a special Assembly last Thursday morning. Rev John Alley shared an inspiring word for students, using the Apostle Paul as an example of someone who studied well in school. Through Paul's writings, we still benefit from his life today. His life of self discipline and dedication to Christ are an example for us. Samson is an example of someone who would not listen to his parents or teachers and died young, even though he had a great gift from God.

### **PARENTS COFFEE & INFORMATION NIGHT**

Come this Wednesday at 7pm and enjoy great coffee, good fellowship and the latest information for every family with respect to College routine and policy.

### **MYSCHOOL.EDU.AU**

The media has given a lot of attention to the Federal Government's new website designed to compare schools that are statistically similar. Some newspapers have used the opportunity to create league tables based on the national testing (NAPLAN) scores. Those who have seen this happen in England are aware of how damaging this has been to the education system there.

After looking at the site myself, I knew that I would need to write to you with an intelligent response, but feel more inclined to exclaim, "IT'S RUBBISH!" A softer word would be, "disappointing."

The NAPLAN test was designed to evaluate a student's progress in light of national expectations in that year level. However, in its effort to differentiate "good" schools from "bad" ones, the Federal Government has decided to use an average of student's results as the measure. This is not an accurate measure of a school's performance!

Averaged NAPLAN scores do not show:

- The real measure of a student, teacher, or school.
- The spiritual and character development of a child.
- Lives that have been changed through the positive influence of good teachers.
- The outstanding performance of our brightest students.
- How many students moved to CQCC after experiencing difficulty elsewhere.
- The tremendous progress some students have made since moving to CQCC, even though some scores may still be lower than average in the mean time.

- How many budding artists, chefs or craftsmen we might have.
- ... the list could go on

With the development of this site, we were told that schools would be compared with others that are “statistically similar”. The method used is not clearly defined, except when selecting the link for more information we are taken to the definition for their socio-economic index. If this is their method, it is a strange basis of comparison to me. I would have thought it much better to compare schools of similar size, stage of development, number of staff, etc.

In reality, trying to evaluate a school on its’ average score when there is only a handful of students in each year level is bad practice. Accurate data cannot be obtained from schools that do not have a full class in each year level.

In recent years, some schools have responded with strategies that improve their average score, but do not improve the student’s education. Some such strategies are:

- Put aside subjects such as Science, SOSE and others to focus more on test practice.
- Withdraw students experiencing difficulty from class for more test practice, causing them to miss other important lessons.
- Ask students still experiencing difficulty to stay at home on the day of the test.

We have no interest in implementing such strategies here.

For some years now we have run a school-wide strategy to improve numeracy and literacy, including working with students one-on-one when needed. We are interested in students doing their best, and following the career path that is right for them.

If a parent is looking for a good school, I would recommend asking the following questions:

- Do school staff genuinely care about the wellbeing of my child?
- Are school staff a good example and role model for my children?
- Does the school support my beliefs?
- Is good education taking place?

A website isn’t able to measure these factors. A parent can only gauge this by visiting the school, talking with staff and talking to other parents.

Going into the launch of the MySchool website, I wanted to give Ms Gillard the benefit of the doubt and the opportunity to come good on her promises. However, my assessment is that, “it is a very disappointing waste of tax-payer’s money” (in short, “IT’S RUBBISH!”)

Warm regards in Christ Jesus,

Michael Appleton  
PRINCIPAL

