



## **LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS**

**[26/07/10]**

### **PRINCIPAL'S DESK**

Reading, Writing and Mathematics – *a commonsense approach*

Recently our teachers reported to parents on the achievement standards expected for reading, writing and mathematics. I take this opportunity to thank the many parents who have provided us with feedback relating to our “trial” for reporting on the National Standards. During this school term we will be reviewing the processes used and offering teachers further training for the areas they identify as their next steps towards improving on what has already been achieved to date. Much of the knowledge building will centre on refining the alignment of the New Zealand Curriculum with the progressions expected to meet the National Standards expectations. We will also be focusing on our own continuous improvement strategies for all children at all levels.

There are a number of fundamental teaching practices that enhance progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and parents can also develop these when supporting their children at home.

The most successful teachers of reading are those who bring reading alive through their own passion for books and their desire to share books by reading aloud to the children on a regular basis. Not only does the experience create a special time to connect book language with the children, it also contributes significantly to the child's growth as a reader. Whether it be a child having a good laugh about the characters, engaging in debate about the story-line or predicting what's going to happen next as the plot unfolds, the children are naturally learning through their curiosity, imagination and appreciation of the tale read to them.

Parents can play an important role in encouraging children to read books. At home reading aloud to your child can be one of the best parenting experiences. It enhances your child's love for books and learning through books. It can start well before the child's first birthday and needs to be established as an important time in your child's daily routine. We are creating lifelong readers. This can be continued through the teenage years. This level of support develops the children's confidence with books and sets them up to read and enjoy books for a lifetime. Books are the heart of the children's literacy development, are part of our everyday life and are available in local and school libraries, bookshops, supermarket shelves, news agencies and through a variety of book clubs.

There are a number of approaches used in schools to promote good writing qualities. Oral language experiences are often used to share and talk about real experiences before going on to write about them. Shared writing involves the teacher working with the children to plan and construct text together. Often the children are taught how to make use of a 'mind map' or 'web' to show how the writer develops ideas and sorts them for writing. This approach helps the children learn about how the text can be organised. At other times teachers model quality writing by helping the children scribe a common text, or by guiding the children through focused tasks.

It's all good fun and as it has always been, good writers have common writing attributes. They are usually imaginative storytellers who read a lot and love to write.

Having good knowledge of writing conventions enables writers to enjoy expressing their thoughts in a variety of forms. Some other key features of good story writing include carefully thought out title selection, a good beginning to capture the reader's interest, paragraphing to highlight sequence of thought, and a closing message that leaves the reader with something to reflect on. These qualities at different stages can also be recognised in your children's writing samples.

With mathematics it needs to be pointed out that "numeracy teaching" is only one strand of this important subject. However other strands such as measurement, geometry, statistics, and algebra – each key aspects of teaching maths, require good numeracy skills for them to be successfully embarked on. Instruction that will develop children's knowledge as they advance through the stages of learning (*i.e. from basic counting sequences, counting sets of objectives to solve simple addition and subtraction problems and visualising sets of numbers, through to the more advanced multiplication and division of fractions and decimals using a variety of mental strategies*) is the key to "numeracy teaching" today.

At the core of "numeracy teaching" is *The Number Framework*. This framework assists teachers, parents, and students to understand the requirements of the Number strand from *Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum*. The children learn through a progression of strategy stages. You will hear teachers refer to these stages as 'emergent', 'counting one to one', 'counting from one on materials', 'counting from one by imaging', 'advanced counting', 'early and advanced additive stages' through to an 'advanced proportional stage'. In plain language this is all about learning to count, learning to add and subtract, learning to multiply and divide and using fractions and decimals. The way we teach this is to focus on the development of "number sense". It is recognized that a strongly developed number sense leads to "algebraic thinking".

In classrooms it is common to see children exploring and questioning the world of numbers in a visual and practical way. They will also be learning about measurement, shapes and space using a variety of materials including mathematical games that encourage them to see for themselves the order and patterns of numeracy. Children still need the mastery of the basic knowledge and skills that will allow them to successfully add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers. As it has always been, teaching mathematics requires plenty of experiences with equipment, and activities designed to reinforce & consolidate new knowledge and concepts taught.

Finally, "practise makes perfect", and it comes down to how much time is allowed for this to happen!

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Principal