Welcome to the last newsletter of the year.

2013 can be described as a year where we developed our programs by looking at the curriculum and improving our expertise in its delivery. The most significant achievement was the Pathways program offering both the VCAL and School Based Apprenticeships, and this year 18 students successfully completed Certificates II and III in Retail or Warehousing. We also looked at our teaching methods for students with severe language disorders by employing the services of a speech pathologist, courtesy of a special Federal Government grant. Throughout 2nd and 3rd terms we conducted a series of workshops on this subject, as well as every staff member receiving individual coaching sessions by the consultant. The end of year diagnostic assessments by Lyn Perry revealed a significant improvement in our students’ literacy and numeracy levels, at least 20% higher than in previous years, so I can confidently report to the new Minister of Education that it was money well spent!

Future Plans

2014 is definitely shaping up as a year we expanded the school. With the Box Hill site already full for next year we are negotiating with the Parish to secure two extra rooms in the building behind the school, thereby enabling us to increase enrolments from 30 to 40 students. This should be finalised by March, so to accommodate the extra demand we will start the year with three groups of twelve students, with an extra teacher and teaching assistant being employed to ensure no class is more than ten students. By 2nd term we will go with four groups of ten students. Also, we are still hopeful that the Box Hill site will be available for purchase sometime next year.

The Pathways program is also planning to expand from 24 to 36 students with the opening of the Elliot Street campus in 2nd term. There have been a few delays in organising an acceptable fit out plan for the cafe (mainly cost) but I envisage all this will be finalised by February and we will start serving coffee and cakes to the local community soon after. This project represents a great opportunity for our students to fulfil the work education requirement of their VCAL program.

Last September we received notification from DHS that we would be funded for a “Transition to Employment” program for some of our students that have graduated from Pathways. This means these students can be case managed for between 1-3 years, therefore providing a level of support beyond Berengarra. One of our youth workers, Jarrod Salton, has put his hand up to take on the role.
**Staff**
At the end of this year we said farewell to Katina Astles, the English VCAL teacher at Pathways for the past 18 months. Katina brought to the program a high level of curriculum expertise and has been primarily responsible for organising the VCAL program. Next year she has accepted a role with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, so all at Berengarra express our thanks and wish her the best.

**School Council**
This year saw a change of Chair, with Simon Le Plastrier stepping down after eight years, although he will stay on as a Council member. Simon led the school through the turmoil of the relocation years and he needs only to look at the healthy state of the school this year to judge the success of his leadership. As the new Principal during this time his expertise and advice were invaluable.
Simon has been appointed the new Principal of Eltham College and all the school community wish him well.
In his place has stepped Trudy Thompson, who although only being a member of council for 18 months, brings many years of experience in school leadership and policy development.

I would like to thank all Council members for their support and encouragement throughout the year.

**Finally..................
Best wishes to everyone over the summer break. Time for holidays ! ....Pete**

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**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**TERM 1, 2014 commences**

**Staff return** — Wednesday January 29th

**Staff preparation** - Thursday January 30th

**Parent meetings** - times to be organised Friday January 31st

**Orientation** - New students to visit Monday February 3rd

**All students return** - Tuesday February 4th

**Term Finishes** - April 4th

**TERM 2, 3, 4, 2014**

**April 22nd** - **June 20th**

**July 14th** - **September 19th**

**October 6th** - **December 5th (staff finish December 12th)**
This year at Pathways, students went to Tasmania with Katrina, Justin, Catrina, Emma and Jarrod, to visit Port Arthur. The purpose of the trip was to learn more about the beginning of the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation who we worked with for the Better Buddies Program this year. Pathways students fundraised more than $6000 to pay for the trip, using the coffee sales, vegetable market, Bunnings BBQ and eBay sales to raise money. We visited Port Arthur Historic Site, did a ghost tour there at night and also visited the Cadbury chocolate factory.

**Retail Certificates**

This year at Pathways, a group of students have been doing their Certificates II and III in Retail. We have learnt heaps of skills such as minimising theft, personal hygiene, upselling and management skills. We use these skills when we are working at Cafeducation. The retail course, and our work on the coffee machine, are both parts of our school-based apprenticeships.

By Ebony Moore

**Swimming Bronze Medallion**

On Thursdays, the Warehouse group and Jarrod did training with Surf Lifesaving Victoria to get our swimming bronze medallions. We had to do freestyle, breaststroke, side stroke, survival stroke in a set amount of time and also be able to tread water. It was pretty hard but me and Murray Plain passed the tests and we both got our bronze medallions which is cool.

By Luke Hill
During term 3, on Tuesday afternoons we did a cooking elective at Pathways. Because we didn't have ovens, everything we made had to be recipes that would work without being cooked.

Ros and Catrina helped us make coconut ice, rum balls, chocolate spiders, chocolate crackles, apricot balls, decorated Marie biscuits, Nutella biscuits and chocolate ripple cake.

We put all the recipes in a cook book. My favourite recipes were the chocolate spiders, Nutella biscuits and chocolate ripple cake.

By MADDISON

Hi, my name is Aaron: “I’ve been at Berengarra for 3 years.

My best memory of Berengarra is finishing certificate 3 in retail.

My greatest achievement at Berengarra was completing a full day of school.

My favourite activity was probably art because I could do what I love.

Three words to sum up my time at Berengarra would be “time well spent”.

Before I started I never thought I would be able to socialise.

I’d like to be remembered for my artistic skill and commitment to going to school.”

In ten years time I’d like to be a 3D artist and animator for games.”
I am a therapy dog which means it is my job to make Berengarra students happy and relaxed and keep people entertained. I am very good at all these things. I am only young, just a year old so can get excited sometimes. My favourite things to do at Berengarra are have a back scratch or cuddle on someone’s lap, play tug-of-war with my toys and scavenge for scraps all around the place. I also like to join in PE classes sometimes. The Berengarra kids all love me and it is often that I have multiple sets of hands giving me a pat. I am everyone’s best friend and get so happy when someone new enters a room.

I did not have an easy start to life. I was born with a cleft palate meaning I had to be fed by hand with a syringe for the first few months. While this was hard, it means I am very used to being handled by people. I also got abandoned in a house for ten days before being rescued, but I survived. Now I live with the school counsellor Marianne and my new family and come to Berengarra as my day job. **Kirby, the “wonder dog”**

The Berengarra students were nice enough to make me my own special cushion in art class. A lot of work went into this and it made me feel very special. It is now my favourite place to have a sleep when I am at work. Thankyou to Gibson and Simpson home group students for making my very comfy cushion.
Girls’ Group

We are so lucky at Berengarra Box Hill to have 10 girls out of our 33 students. This is the highest proportion of girls we have had for a long time. Every Monday afternoon, the girls get together for some boy-free space to watch girlie movies and talk about things girls like to talk about. It has helped the Berengarra girls all get along with each other and eases the Monday blues, setting the week up for success.

Front row: Lucy, Morrin, Eliza

Back row: Soriya, Hayley, Leia, Chantelle, Alyssa
IN THE ART ROOM

TERM 4—With Anne and Fran

We have come to the end of another busy year in the art room with many experiences explored and developed. A huge project was undertaken by the Gibson and Simpson group art core. Both groups worked tirelessly and fondly to create a hand woven and knitted cushion for our new therapy dog called Kirby. So far it is still intact and a comfy spot for him to take a well earned rest.

The Tanami group worked well with wax, magic clay and chalk and we had one student decorate a horse's skull in sequins and glitter. It looks fantastic! I would also like to thank Fran once again for her kindness and genuine enthusiasm for our groups and look forward to working with her in 2014. Have a safe and happy holiday to everybody in the Berengarra community.

Cheers from Anne
MILL VALLEY CAMP
2013

During week seven of term four we all set out to Mill valley ranch for our yearly School Camp.

The students were amazed as they entered the Western Village. The accommodation was comfortable. Cabins had interesting names such as, Drapery Store, Grocery Store, Hardware Store and the Barber Shop. Each of the shops displayed elaborate windows full of interesting items of a bygone era.

The ranch is set on 150 acres of farming land close to forest and has a lot of animals specially horses. The students love this camp because they get to ride and work with the horses every day. During the three days students learn how to saddle the horse, horse care and grooming. But the biggest thing was that students got to ride the horses every day. Some students really enjoyed the Archery, others enjoyed a quiet time fishing and of course the rest of us had lots of fun on a biscuit behind a speed boat.

The food was great as this year Mill Valley had a new chef. Berengarra staff and students were very happy as we got to have seconds every night. Yummy yummy.

We hope that your child enjoyed the camp and we have already booked Mill Valley for next year. We wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and we will catch up in the new year.

Happy holidays from all of us at Berengarra School.

Julio Bustos
This has been a successful year for physical education. The students have been able to participate in basketball, soccer, cricket, dodgeball, t-ball, tennis, badminton, football, tenpin bowling and European handball. The Simpson home group were lucky enough to have a try at 'bubble soccer' at Action Indoor Sports which is something we would definitely like to try for the school next year.

During the Tuesday elective, in the first semester, students had the opportunity to take part in sports that were coached by the Box Hill SEDA school. These sports included, AFL, cricket, soccer and ultimate Frisbee. The students responded well to being coached by the SEDA students who were only 17 to 18 years of age.

The second semester elective was run by Proactivity which is an organisation that provides professional coaches for each activity. These activities were boxercise, ultimate Frisbee, soccer, pilates, yoga and European handball. Again, the students were responsive, respectful and cooperative with these coaches.

Berengarra embraced the AFL season with a 'footy colours day'. Students were able to wear their favourite sporting colours to school whether it be AFL, soccer, netball or rugby etc. After enjoying some delicious meat pies, sausage rolls and pasties they walked down to Springfield Park and participated in a whole school game of modified AFL.

I look forward to another action packed P.E year in 2014.

Bec

Eliza, Rachael, Bec, and Ewan (crt)
MILL VALLEY CAMP.
THE CLASS OF 2013........