Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to this edition of the bulletin. Winter has truly started. It has been a cold and rainy first week of the winter season with lots of puddles to navigate or for the children to splash in!

It has been another busy week at school with the visit from Minister Martin Foley (Honorable Minister for Housing Disability and Ageing, Mental Health, Equality and Creative Industries) and Ben Carroll, MP for Niddrie. We toured some of the classrooms at the Niddrie campus. The children delighted the tour party with their greetings – lots of high five’s - and showed the visitors their many skills working at jigsaws, threading and constructions, using Smartboards, making requests at afternoon tea. The children don’t often see men in ties at the school and they were fascinated by their ties.

School staff, including Stephen Ahern from the Autism Teaching Institute, met with the politicians after the tour and discussed the implications of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for the schooling and training needs of our client group. Ben Carroll, the member for Niddrie, expressed his support for the future redevelopment of the Niddrie School.

Public Holiday

A reminder that Monday the 8th of June is the Queen’s Birthday Public Holiday and that the school will be closed for the day.

Group News

Excursions

Excursions in the community give the students an opportunity to develop and extend their communication, social, play and independent living skills. During excursions the students have an opportunity to generalise their skills and develop their learning goals in a variety of environments.

The photos from excursions can be utilised in the teaching program for reading and sharing activities, recall of the event and to meet the individual learning goals of the children.

Excursion Stories

5B - Niddrie

Students of 5B went on excursion to Kidzcity. They had the opportunity for the first time to travel on the school bus and go as a group to an indoor play centre. The class did excursion worksheets in the morning and this assisted them to be ready to go out. The students had a lot of fun on the jumping castle, the toy cars and the long slides. All students enjoyed their excursion to the local community play centre.

1.5 Laverton

On Thursday we had our first excursion to the new shopping plaza at William’s Landing. We decided it to be a great location for transitioning to the community, as it is quite small and there are not many shops opened there yet. We prepared the students for the excursion by reading a story about what to expect, as well as showing photos of the shopping centre, bus and teachers. At the shops the students purchased groceries for breakfast and afternoon tea. Then we had our lunch and had a play in the new playground. On the way back to school we had to fill up the bus with petrol and all of the students demonstrated flexibility in adapting to the unexpected change of plans. We are looking forward to planning more excursions soon for our class, as it was such a success!
**Autism Teaching Institute**

The ATI have had a rocky ride over the last year or so having been de-funded, partially re-funded but still with no promise of re-current funding. Nonetheless, in our 10th year of operation, we have battled on and currently have around 35 students enrolled in our post graduate courses. We are also rolling out an exciting new training model in the Early Childhood sector which is currently the subject of a research project in partnership with Deakin University.

We are working to expand our reach with a dedicated marketing and new product focus and are starting to see some positive signs from this. Our current students include teachers from both the Catholic and Independent sectors. This has led to discussions about how we can expand our service offerings into these areas and we are close to formalizing some agreements which will put us in a more stable financial position.

We are passionate about creating systemic change and disseminating knowledge of current best practice to improve the outcomes for students with an ASD. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our WAS/ATI staff for their forbearance, patience and flexibility during uncertain times.

**Parent Activities and Events**

**Parent Group Sessions**

Anger Workshops  
To be held at Niddrie  
on:  
June: 15th  

Mental Health and Wellbeing  
To be held at Laverton  
on:  
June: 23rd  

There is no cost to attend and childcare is available.

**Information Evening with Dietician Sally Girvan**

Parents are invited to attend an information evening presented by Sally Girvan, a paediatric dietician.

**When:** Wednesday 10th June, 2015  
**Time:** 7:00pm  
**Where:** Niddrie campus – Multi Purpose Room.

We ask that parents return the RSVP attached to this bulletin if they are coming to the parent information evening. Thank you. We look forward to seeing you then.

If you require any further information on these events please contact Margaret Itsines or Jacqueline Nixon on 9097 2000 or itsines.margaret.e@edumail.vic.gov.au

**Dog Program**

The dogs and trainer from the Dogs for Life program visit Laverton on a Friday. The children instigated the continuance of this program. The children get a lot of pleasure out of the interaction with the dogs. They learn how to give basic commands to the dogs. Working with the dogs helps them to learn to anticipate their needs and to cooperate with their peers and the trainer, Yariv.

The Niddrie children have their second visit from Yariv and the dogs this Friday afternoon.

Pictured is Charlie and Taj helping the younger children from Red Pod work with the dogs.

**Victorian State Disability Plan**

The Victorian State Disability Plan 2017-2020 is now being developed. Our government is seeking input from people with a disability to help shape its direction.

The new plan will be developed by the Office for Disability in partnership with:

- those who have a disability  
- their families  
- carers  
- the broader sector.

It will seek to respond to future challenges such as transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

If you are a Victorian over eighteen years of age and living with a disability this is a chance to have your say.

Any queries?

Contact Alastair Stewart from the Office for Disability via 03 9096 7127 or email alastair.stewart@dhhs.vic.gov.au