On Friday 2nd December JMHS was visited by four guests from the AFL. Lewis Jetta and Mike Pike from the Sydney Swans were the guests of honour and were here with Corey Grech and Medika Thorpe to speak to a group of students from the AFL Indigenous Academy. A number of important issues were covered, including health, nutrition and exercise.

Our Principal Mrs Taylor made an appearance and the students and teachers took the opportunity to pose for photos with the guests.

It was great to see one of our parents Mrs Sperring and a representative from the AFL, Lyndsay Urquart also appear. Ms Urquart is the head of the AFL initiative known as the PACE program which seeks to increase the level of parental engagement in the education of our students. This is another great initiative in the long standing relationship our school has with the AFL.

School start dates 2012

School Development Day for staff:
Friday 27 January

Students return (Years 7, 11 & 12):
Monday 30 January

Students return (Years 8, 9 & 10):
Tuesday 31 January

Parents and Citizens Association News

The James Meehan High School P&C is dedicated to looking after the interests of the school and its students. New members are welcome and the annual fee is only $2!

Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month during school terms. Our next meeting is Thursday 16th February, commencing 6pm.

Please support our first fundraiser for 2012 — a barbecue at Bunnings Campbelltown on 11th February. Helpers are very welcome.

Our new office bearers are: Kathy Rymer (President), Lesley Forbes (Secretary) and Brenda Simpson (Treasurer).
Principal’s Report

Term 4 has again been a busy one with a wide range of activities taking place. We have had visits from Glenfield, Guise and Curran Public Schools to experience a day in the high school. Our staff and students have once again shown their talents in music, debating, dance, drama, sport and visual arts. Highlights have included Polyfest, a drumming performance at Macquarie Fields Public School, reaching the regional semi-finals in junior debating and Maria Autagava’s ‘Sporting Blue’ Award for Volleyball, the highest sporting award in the Sydney South Western Region. This is the second year in a row that a student from James Meehan High has won this award. Kylie Dennis, our Dance teacher, was awarded a regional Directors Choice for 2011, for her outstanding efforts as an Early Career teacher.

With the support of our students, staff and the local community we were able to raise $2,600 to buy much needed water tanks for our sister school, Nyamira Technical School in Kenya. Year 7 and 8 students were rewarded for raising the most money, $1100. They did this by bringing in their small change over three weeks. A fantastic effort for which they were rewarded.

Students have had many opportunities this term to learn skills and to experience first hand the world of work. Students in year 10 have been doing work placement for VET Retail and Hospitality. Seven students spent a week of work experience at MinterEllison and we thank them for their ongoing support. Through ‘The Horizon’ Program Shaine Faruk and Shabnum Farooq are undertaking 8 weeks of paid employment. Another two students will have this opportunity next year. Through the ongoing efforts of the Beacon Foundation, four year 10 students – Alicia Ellis, Tiffany Sutcliffe, Harry Levaa and Evelina Tuagalu have been offered School Based Traineeships starting in 2012. These students will combine school, TAFE and paid employment with Leightons.

The end of the year also brings with it sadness as we farewell staff who have made such a positive contribution to James Meehan High School. Dianne Brennan who has been the school counsellor since 2003 is retiring. Dianne has always been there to provide support to students, staff and parents. She has been a vital part of the Learning Support Team and worked hard to ensure that all students were provided with the support they needed. She has been involved in professional development activities for staff. She has run workshops to support Year 12 students. Dianne has been a source of strength in difficult times and was always just a phone call away. She provided additional support for Wingara and Djurali. We wish her well in her new life.

Mrs Rogers will also be leaving us to start a permanent teaching position. One that she has worked hard for and fully deserves. She has been an inspirational teacher. Our students were very fortunate to have such a skilled professional chef as their teacher. This was very evident in the many functions that were so expertly catered for by Leesa and her students. We will all miss the food that we got to sample when the students were learning new skills and trying out new recipes. She played a vital role in so many whole school activities. She will be sadly missed but we wish her well in her new school. Leesa is an ex student of James Meehan High School and a shining example of what can be achieved with hard work and dedication.

Ms Starr is leaving us to take up a position much closer to home. She has been a quiet but hard working teacher in Wingara. She has had a strong involvement in gardening projects with the students and is responsible for the healthy crop of produce that is used in the Special Education cooking programs. She has been involved in a wide range of activities with the students that have broadened their experiences and improved their skills. Teaching the students in Wingara takes patience and persistence, qualities that Cyndy has shown in the three years she has been at James Meehan High. She will be sadly missed and we wish her well in her new school. Leesa is an ex student of James Meehan High School and a shining example of what can be achieved with hard work and dedication.

Mrs Barrett will finish teaching at the end of this year but won’t officially retire until the end of first term 2012. I will leave our goodbyes and best wishes until term one next year.

On behalf of the staff I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Mrs Gail Taylor, Principal
Buddhist monk visits

An old friend of James Meehan High, Buddhist monk Phra Mick has been in Thailand for the last two years. He recently visited our school again to help students with meditation techniques aimed at calming the mind in order to cultivate happiness and kindness towards others.

He is pictured here chatting with Lyndsay Urquart from the AFL PACE program.

Our Year 10 students recently experienced the next phase of their preparation for employment as they participated in mock interviews with managers and executives from the corporate world, organised through the Beacon Foundation.

The interviewers were impressed with the preparation and commitment of our students, and many said they would be happy to employ students on the basis of their presentation at the interviews. Congratulations, Year 10!

7/8X experience a taste of Thailand in Bundanoon

On Thursday 1 December, 7/8X went to Sunnatarum Forest Monastery at Bundanoon. We travelled for two hours in two minibuses driven by Mrs Dirgham and Ms Clancy.

Upon arrival we were shocked to see the beautiful temples and Thai architecture in the Australian bush.

We meditated with a monk who taught us that ‘the cat is like the mind’. We then served lunch to the monks and sat down all together in the courtyard and enjoyed a lunch of beautiful Asian food.

We were taken for a tour around the monastery, chased the amazing peacocks and enjoyed ourselves even though it rained the whole time.

All in all it was a spiritual experience.
Visiting wheelchair athletes confronted Year 11 students with some of the challenges of life in a wheelchair as part of the Crossroads program, organised by the PDHPE Faculty. The Crossroads program builds awareness and helps students make responsible choices in a wide variety of health and lifestyle issues.
Polyfest!

Congratulations to all the performers from James Meehan High, as well as Guise, Curran and Macquarie Fields Public Schools for a great showcase of Pacific culture at our recent Polyfest concert. There were also performances from cultural community groups, and a Polynesian feast.

Ms Lefu and Mr Fou Atonio prepared our performers and co-ordinated the whole concert. Many months of rehearsal and preparation was evident in the high standard of performances.

Primary school students prepare for high school

James Meehan High recently hosted students in Years 5-6 from our local primary schools, to assist their transition into secondary school. Students from Glenfield, Curran and Guise Public Schools enjoyed a day of lessons in a variety of subjects with high school teachers.

James Meehan students were outstanding in making the visitors welcome, and including them in games of touch footy and volleyball during recess and lunch.
2011 Debating

2011 was a very successful year for debating at James Meehan High School. Our squad grew to three teams, and two of these teams became Zone Champions in the NSW Premier’s Debating Challenge. One of our teams, the Year 7-8 JMHS “Blues” went on to the Regional Semi Finals and were narrowly defeated by the highly selective Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Out of 58 teams in the Southwest Sydney Region, our debaters reached the final four.

This year our debating teams also visited local primary schools to put on demonstration debates for the Year 5-6 students. The aim of these visits was to entertain the primary students, and to show them what debating is all about.

Debating coordinators, Ms Blanch and Mr Wawszkowicz, were very impressed with the commitment of all students involved in debating throughout the year. This level of commitment was largely the reason for their success in 2011.

Mr Wawszkowicz, Ms Blanch and all the debating team members would like to thank Minter Ellison Lawyers and our Principal Mrs Taylor for funding the provision of uniforms and blazers this year.

We all look forward to further success in 2012. Well done!

Maths News

Calculators

All students need a calculator! They use these every day in their Mathematics lessons. They are also often needed in Geography and Science.

The preferred calculator is the CASIO FX 82AU PLUS, which you can purchase from Officeworks, Kmart or Big W. Some newsagents also carry this model.

The school also sells this calculator AT COST. It is $20.80, and can be paid for at the front office. Students then bring the receipt to the Maths faculty to collect the calculator, and have their name engraved on it.

Thank you to all the parents who have already organised this for their child.

Mathletics

All year 7 to 10 have been provided with a Mathletics account. Mathletics is an excellent tool to help your child to improve their Mathematics learning. The program will be extended into 2012. We hope that you will encourage your child to access their Mathletics account at home as often as possible. All that is required is an internet connection. The web address is www.mathletics.com.au.

School bell times

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