

ISSUE 14 - Semester 1, 2024

ourplace

WYCLIFFE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**LEARNING
ABOUT SCIENCE**
FROM KINDY TO YEAR 12

**PARENTING
AND AI**

**STUDENTS REFLECT ON
HOPE SCHOOL**



Sharing the stories of our school community

2024 Term Dates

TERM 3, 2024

Monday 22nd July
First Day of Term 3, Preschool

Monday 29th July
First Day of Term 3, K-12

Friday 27th September
Last Day of Term 3

TERM 4, 2024

Monday 14th October
First Day of Term 4, Preschool

Tuesday 15th October
First Day of Term 4, K-12

Thursday 12th December
Last Day of Term 4, K-12

Friday 13th December
Last Day of Term 4, Preschool

2025 Term Dates

TERM 1, 2025

Monday 3rd February
First Day of Term 1, Preschool and
Years 1-12

Tuesday 4th February
First Day of Term 1, Kindergarten

Friday 11th April
Last Day of Term 1

TERM 2, 2025

Monday 28th April
First Day of Term 2, Preschool

Tuesday 29th April
First Day of Term 2, K-12

Friday 4th July
Last Day of Term 2

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Art by Luca in Kindy



This edition of Our Place includes QR codes like this, which you can scan with your phone to watch related videos.

Called to community



Dave Johnston
Principal

Dear Wycliffe Families,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to another issue of *Our Place* where, once again, we share celebrations of beautiful learning and build genuine points of connection for our families. Our desire is for it to be a space of storytelling that captures moments of growing and flourishing across the school which, in turn, draw us back to deep gratitude to our good King.

My hope is that it consistently speaks to the truth of dignity and beauty that is found in a shared life of community. In our current cultural moment, we are surrounded by pressure to create our own identity. A space of hyperindividualism encourages us to carve out a unique personhood - comprised of goals, needs and desires - and to inhabit our world within this framework. In reality, these self-portraits, whether accurate or inaccurate, are predominantly self-focused, and can so easily miss one of God's greatest blessings: living in community. At Wycliffe we intentionally encourage our students to ponder important questions: how does my pursuit of outstanding learning complement the learning journey of others? How can we learn best together? Who is God calling us to be in His goodness? How can we show God's character to those around us?

As part of this cultural heartbeat, you will find woven through this edition of *Our Place* narratives celebrating the truth that being individually known and created by Him is immensely enriched when we do life together. We see this reflected in our Year 2 students getting a hands-on experience with God's amazing aquatic creatures, or Year 5 and 6s listening to our students through their mock referendum; from our Year 11s helping repair fire-affected property, to our English students reflecting on their lives and families. It is a great joy to see students involved and finding areas of passion in their learning.

We have also started to include content in *Our Place* that seeks to enrich and inform, to provide families with thought provoking information relevant to the privilege of parenting. In this edition, we are pleased to be sharing articles from Chris Parker on AI and relationships, and from Nicole Clark, our school counsellor, on the phenomenon of "school avoidance".

I trust that as you explore the stories in the pages ahead, you will join me in thankfulness for the many ways God is at work in our community.

Yours in Christ,
Dave Johnston





FROM OUR PRESCHOOL

There's always something happening at Preschool. The photos on these pages are a snapshot of the learning journey that has taken place through our play-based curriculum during the first half of 2024.

Julie Taylor
Preschool Teacher/Director

ABOVE AND RIGHT: In the indoor learning environment, children take part in a variety of activities, including craft, painting, and learning about cultures of the world.



LEFT AND ABOVE: Preschool students spend much of each day outside, where they build, dig, paint, and play.



LEFT AND ABOVE: Our group times include literacy, numeracy, music and movement.

BELOW: Some focus areas of learning - pedestrian road safety, social skills, reconciliation, Munch & Move key messages, and Easter.



Learning Snapshot
Singing with Preschool



CONNECTING AND GROWING

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Engaging with the wider school community and some visitors to Preschool. Activities in the library, being gifted bookbags by Mrs Plane's Textiles class, drawing and playing with friends from Mrs Goldsmith's Child Studies class, music time with parent visitors, and learning about animals with the Backyard Bloke.

BELOW: Having fun together - our growing friendships.



New Faces

Introducing the new staff members who have joined us at Wycliffe this year.



Lyndal Mitchell
Head of Junior School



Richard Newton
Head of Forming
Responsible Learners



Samantha Dawkins
Junior School Teacher



Giselle Field
Junior Learning
Enhancement Aide



Laura Fox
Junior School Teacher



Gemma Keast
Junior School Teacher



Shane Lowcock
Senior School Teacher



Peter Millburn
Senior School Teacher



Jordan Mills
Junior School Teacher



Lyndall Orr
Junior School Teacher



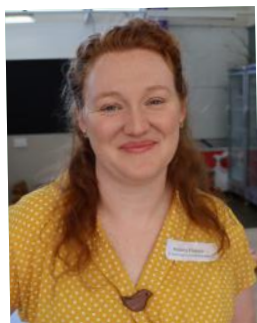
Rachel Smith
Senior School Teacher



Genelle Smith
Senior Learning
Enhancement Aide



Bethany Storm
Junior Learning
Enhancement Aide



Jessica Thorpe
Junior Learning
Enhancement Aide



Jerusha Thompson
Senior School Teacher



Belinda Valenti
Junior School Teacher



Melanie Wilkes
Hope School Teacher



The music of learning

“Hope School is like a musical. There is so much music. Everyone works together, it’s colourful and we really like it here.”

Is there any greater way of getting honest and true feedback than asking children their thoughts? Recently, our students were asked a few questions about their experiences and learning in Hope School. Hearing their thoughts, their reflections, their memories, giving such deep and profound insight into who we are and what we do, was a wonderful privilege.

“Hope School is like a musical”. This is such an accurate and delightful representation of our community. Over this past

semester, we have had the joy of “making music” together in so many ways. Hope School students have enjoyed seeing Willy Wonka on stage, joining our friends in Wycliffe for camp, cooking in TAS lessons, serving our younger friends in Preschool, creating drum circles, and so many more wonderful learning experiences. When listening to students reflecting on their time in Hope School, many had wonderful memories of outings and excursions. However, the greatest theme to emerge from these answers was a profound and true reflection

of our culture. When asked how they would describe Hope in one word, they responded with “fun”, “welcoming”, “inclusive”, “happy”, “hopeful” and so many more.

Hope is a place for making friends, building relationships and engaging in our community. Enjoy reading the answers from Hope School students and seeing a part of the music!

Cat Price and Cass Katic
Senior Hope School Teachers



What is a fun memory of Hope School?

I had a lot of fun going to Willy Wonka with my friends. - **Ezra**

Talking about NRL with my friends. - **Tom**

Doing art and learning about artists. - **Ryker**

I enjoyed doing dancing in PDH.

Going on camp because there is a picture of us in the office. - **Eva**

My favourite memory since starting Hope School is mountain biking in Sport, and cooking in TAS. - **Jacob**

Food Tech and PDH/PE, camp and singing songs with each other during break time. Meeting all the teachers and making jokes with them and **how welcoming the class was.** - **Keira**

Woodworking. - **Jensen**

Building a sand sculpture and going to the museum, calling Mr Martyn funny names, going to the zoo and making a friend named Naomi. - **Callum**

History is fun because we learn about a lot of exciting things like dinosaurs, knights, ships, cavemen and pirates. - **Joe**

I have fun visiting the chickens and making music. - **Rocky**

Something fun that I have done at Hope School is running at the Athletics Carnival and also swimming at the Swimming Carnival.

My favourite memories at Hope School include History and Science. - **Daniel**

Having friends. Being with Jensen and doing cooking. - **Michael**

My favourite memory since I started at Hope is going to “Archie Brothers” for an excursion last year. Something I’ve enjoyed doing is going on body breaks. - **Chloe**

The Athletics Carnival, school camp and excursions. Meeting my friend Phoebe. - **Naomi**

What are some things that help you learn?



My friends help me learn. - **Ezra**

Being able to pace around my pace track during class. - **Tom**

Praying. - **Isla**

My teachers help me learn. - **Julian**

Figaro the weighted cat helps me sit and learn. - **Ryker**

We get to be Christian.

We get to go on excursions.

Having a body break. - **Eva**

Not having 20 people in a class. - **Jacob**

Body breaks, and having teachers like Mr Martyn. - **Joe**

Having help when I need it. - Tyler

Having friends to play with. - **Michael**

Kahoot quizzes. - **Callum**

Smaller classes, body breaks and workload made to fit the students’ ability of learning. - **Keira**

Lots. It is just a better environment for your learning. Meeting Bella - she was my first friend from Hope School. - **Zoey**

Learning while doing work.

I learn a lot of stuff at school. I enjoy learning about Maths. - **Joe**

Body breaks help me to learn. - **Naomi and Rocky**

The work at Hope School helps me to learn new things and helps me to read books. It also helps me to love God and to respect Him. - **Daniel**

I think having the Teacher’s Aides in the classroom is really helpful and also not having to move around each period. Also being allowed to draw while I’m listening to the teacher is a big help. - **Chloe**

How would you describe Hope School to someone who doesn’t know what it is?

Hope School is very great. - **Ezra**

Hope School is designed for people who have difficulty with learning. The classes are smaller and easier to learn in. The teachers adjust the work based on the level of the students’ learning ability. The teachers are really nice. - **Keira**

Relaxing. - **Isla**

Hope School is like a musical. There is so much music. Everyone works together, its colourful and we really like it here. - **Julian**

It’s exciting. - **Ryker**

You get body breaks with your friends and get to learn with your friends and teachers. - **Eva**

If you have a hard time learning, the teachers can help. - **Tyler**

I like school because it has familiar faces. Hope School is a great school. - **Callum**

If you are new, **you can make new friends** and start a new life. Hope School is a good school. Hope School is the best school of all. - **Joe**

Hope School is where I do good expected things. - **Rocky**

I would probably say something like “It’s a school for people that need extra help in school, because mainstream school might be a bit too hard for us to learn in”. - **Chloe**

Hope School is a support school where the teachers are Christians. - **Naomi**

Hope School is the most marvellous school in the world and you will love this school! - **Daniel**

Describe Hope School in one word.

Answers included: funny, chill, best, great, coolest, Godly, supportive, diverse, superb, fun, happy, helpful, inclusive, active, divine, comfy, welcoming, awesome, marvellous, nice, accepting, caring, loving, amazing, friendly - and, of course, **hopeful.**



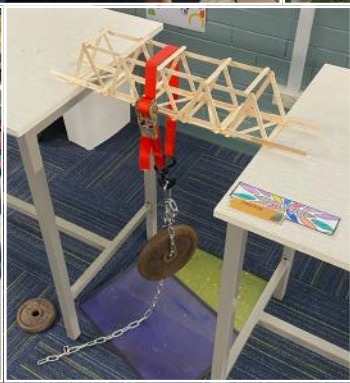
PIZZA PARTY

LEFT AND ABOVE: Hope Ruby celebrated the end of Term 1 by baking their own pizzas. The class had a great time mixing and kneading the dough, adding cheese toppings, and enjoying the delicious results together.

GOLDEN TICKETS

RIGHT AND BELOW: In Term 2, Junior Hope students had the privilege of watching a dress rehearsal of Penrith Anglican College's school musical, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.





HOPE HIGHLIGHTS

THIS PAGE: Some more of the learning and activities taking place in and around Hope School, including camps, cooking, art class, Medieval Day dressups, Junkcraft club, and sport.





Parenting and AI: Beware of artificial intimacy

The widespread integration of artificial intelligence is raising many questions for parents. Chris Parker explores these questions and encourages us to be discerning.

How should we respond to artificial intelligence as a family? How will we speak about this new technology to our children? Is limiting my child's access sufficient? Isn't it all okay as long as my child uses it safely? As a parent, what is the most concerning thing about AI?

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

We have been using digital technology to augment aspects of our thinking (intelligence) for quite some time - at the level of research as well as for many everyday tasks. I recently sent

an email to a class reminding them of set homework. I typed "Ethan" into the "to" line and although I have many Ethans in my contact list, the technology offered up the address for the Ethan most recently/frequently sent to. When I chose the Ethan offered, the tech then offered me every other student email address from Ethan's class, predicting, intelligently, my potential needs. We have been living with forms and levels of artificial intelligence for some time.

However, not all forms of artificial intelligence are this benign. Social media was humanity's first experiment with a widespread integration of relational artificial intelligence.

The technology was used to offer a networking connection and information sharing between our “friends”. Has this experiment with artificial intelligence been a success? Harris and Raskin (2023) conclude: “But that fairly simple technology [social media] was enough in the first contact with AI to break humanity with information overload, addiction, doom scrolling, sexualisation of kids, shortened attention spans, polarization, fake news and breakdown of democracy” (p. 3).

What is not mentioned in this quote is that this first dance with widespread integration was close to disastrous for child mental health (Haidt, 2024). This is now painfully and regretfully being realised by governments of developed countries. I note that Australia is now trialling technology to enforce an age restriction on social media to above the age of 16.

LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

We are now introducing to our children a second experiment with artificial intelligence - predictive large language models (e.g. ChatGPT). This time not via the promise of richer networking and relationships between people, but via a relational interface with the technology itself. This technology, and others like it, offer a threshold step up in capacity for disruption, not just of social structures, but at a level even closer to the core of what it is to be human.

In these forms of AI the data source becomes (ultimately) all the text/language that humans have ever produced, the aim becomes to reduce the need for human thinking, and perhaps of most concern is that the interface being developed to access the power of this new technology becomes a relational interactive dialogue tool, a robot we can chat with - a “chatbot”. This is why Perel (2023), when discussing her concerns for human relational flourishing in this new landscape, refers to AI as “artificial intimacy”.

Social media leveraged our desire to be connected to each other; this form of artificial intelligence is leaning into an artificial intimacy and a relational connection directly with the technology itself

This threshold advancement is going to need a threshold increase in discernment - from you as parent (and from your child’s teachers). If social media was a pioneering experiment with leveraging the relational nature of our humanness, with its race to the bottom of the brain stem to maximise profit, then the integration of relational language-based artificial intelligence will require a new level of discernment.

Social media leveraged our desire to be connected to each

other; this form of artificial intelligence is leaning into an artificial intimacy and a relational connection directly with the technology itself. This will be hyper-captivating for tech-connected young minds and souls, who are already experiencing record levels of loneliness and a craving for recognition.

As an example, I note the recent integration of ChatGPT into the Snapchat interface. This feature, known as “My AI”, allows the user (predominantly younger teenagers) to ask My AI anything via a relational interface (even when all other online friends have - ideally - gone offline for the night). Were questions asked about what is best for teenage flourishing at the designer meetings planning this integration?

PARENTING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Parenting is a call to walk beside our children and to highlight the beauty, richness, and cultural potential of God’s amazing world. But it’s also incumbent on us as parents to be modelling to them, and equipping in them, a discernment of all the places where the cracks of the fall impact - particularly when they come with captivating messages like an offer of 24/7 relational intimacy with a technology that is not, at all, guided by their best interest and flourishing, and is in fact driven by corporate profit for corporations that do not have a track record of serving children well.

We are in a cultural moment where this call to discipling in discernment is particularly crucial for the wellbeing of our children. Let’s invite our children to embrace a 24/7 prayerful relationship with the ultimate intelligence - the creator of ourselves and the cosmos via the word incarnate (Jesus Christ), and to know that He is passionately driven by their best interest.

Chris Parker serves on the leadership team as our Christian Foundations Leader. He also teaches VET Construction in the Senior School. Chris is an author (*The Frog and the Fish*, and various books on Christian education) and regularly speaks to parent, teacher and student groups addressing technology and its shaping influence.

A form of this article originally appeared in *Nurture* magazine.

References

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- Harris, T. & Raskin, A. (Hosts). (2023, August 17). *Esther Perel on Artificial Intimacy* (No. 74) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Your Undivided Attention*. Centre for Humane Technology. <https://www.humanetech.com/podcast/esther-perel-on-artificial-intimacy>



Rocket science in Kindy

In Term 2, Kindergarten students took part in an interactive workshop run by Mad About Science, which introduced the children to forces and chemical reactions. They learned that there are many different forces at work in the world, and that they can use science to understand how they operate.

The first experiment saw students using toy cars on a variety of surfaces to observe first-hand how friction works. The cars were rolled down slopes of sandpaper, carpet, cardboard, and foil, and students watched how far they travelled to gauge the friction of each material. They also explored inertia using spinning toys.

Students then turned their attention to buoyancy, which they demonstrated by dropping materials of different densities into water. Then, by mixing in spoonfuls of salt, they were able to see which objects rose to the top of the water as its density changed, and which stayed on the bottom.

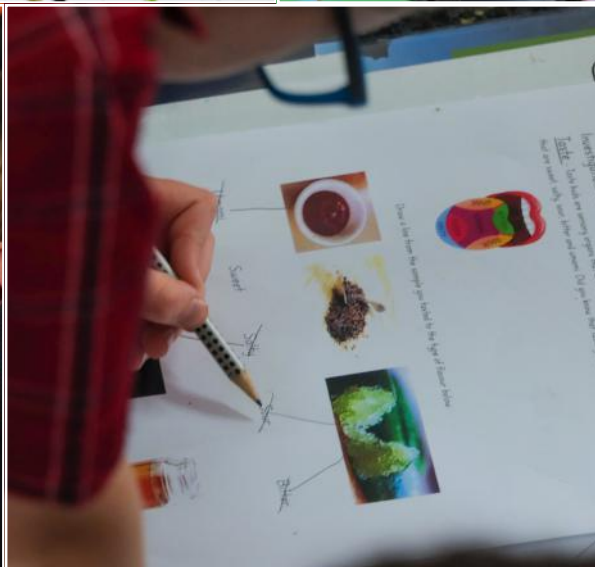
In the final experiment, students mixed “rocket fuel” with water in a test tube, before putting in the cork and standing back! The chemical reaction increased pressure inside the test tubes until the cork was forced out at high speed. The students’ delighted reactions to these miniature rockets capped off a fun and fascinating morning.



UNDER THE SEA

Year 2 enjoyed a trip to the Sea Life Sydney Aquarium as part of their Term 2 Science unit. They all had a wonderful time marvelling at God's many aquatic creations, touring the displays, and playing with the rock pools.





Investigating the senses

Year 2 have been learning about our senses. In this PDH lesson, we investigated some of them with a fun activity. In groups, we took turns feeling, smelling, and tasting, and tried to figure out what we were “sensing”.

We were feeling objects and textures without looking at them: the silicone whisk was soft, the cricket ball was smooth and the pineapple top was spiky! Some of us had very strong reactions

to the aromas we were smelling... especially the eucalyptus, cumin and garlic! When we tasted dark chocolate, finger lime, tomato sauce, honey and salt, we categorised them into sweet, salty, bitter, sour and the trickiest one - umami! What a fun, loud and crazy lesson we had!

Rachel Gasser
Primary Teacher



The Penguin Project

As part of their learning about sea life, Year 3 made their own penguins! They took fibreboard cutouts, painted them, and added glitter, tissue paper, sequins, pipe cleaners, and feathers. The result was a whole colony of colourful penguins nesting in our Junior classrooms!

This project ties into the biennial Australian Antarctic Festival, hosted in Hobart, Tasmania. Hobart is one of the world's key destinations for access to Antarctica, and this festival

celebrates its geography, ecology, tourism, and the history of human exploration. Amongst the many exhibitions is the Penguin Project, which includes over 8000 decorative penguins created by primary students across Australia.

When Wycliffe's Year 3 students finished decorating their penguins, they were carefully packaged up and "migrated" southward in anticipation of the festival in August, when they will be on display for thousands of visitors to see.



CLASS COLOURS

ABOVE: Early in the year, the Junior School celebrated Class Colours Day, to learn this year's class names and have some colourful fun together!



MUSICAVIVA

LEFT AND BELOW: Students in Kindy to Year 7 attended a music incursion run by MusicaViva. The performing group, "Wyniss", presented a program of Torres Strait songs and dances. Our students loved learning about Torres Strait music and culture and taking part in the activities.



Exploring Canberra

In the last week of Term 1, Years 5 and 6 travelled to Canberra for their annual camp. Amongst the many highlights were New Parliament House, Canberra Zoo and Aquarium, and Questacon. At each of the locations, students were engaged with numerous learning opportunities as part of their studies of government and democracy in Australia.

The camp was also a wonderful bonding experience for students among themselves and their teachers, driven by characterful bus drivers and accommodated for by the wonderful Leumeah Lodge. Students had the amazing privilege of being cared for by wonderful teachers including the amazing Mrs Sheerman. Mrs Dillen provided sensational devotions while Mr Powell executed a challenging and

entertaining quiz on the first night.

The camp was a lot of fun! There was improvised singing on the bus; passing a mock bill in Parliament House, in which students would need to participate in 3 hours of team sport each week; self portraits of students in their happiest places at the National Gallery; discussing the future of coins at the Royal Australian Mint; and learning about the reality of Artificial Intelligence at Questacon. It was a really great experience!

Jeff Brown
Primary Teacher





Learning Snapshot
The Pineapple Referendum



SWIMMING CARNIVAL

ABOVE AND RIGHT: As always, the 2024 sporting calendar began with the Swimming Carnival. It was perfect swimming weather, and our students loved the chance to cool off and enjoy some friendly competition.



CROSS COUNTRY

LEFT AND BELOW: Lots of parents and friends stopped by to cheer on the runners at our Cross Country Carnival. It was great to see nearly everyone running enthusiastically off the oval and then gathering around to cheer on their friends as they finally crossed the line at the other end. Mr Stewart called it the best in his 29 years at Wycliffe!





PRIMARY ATHLETICS

LEFT AND ABOVE: It was a beautiful, sunny day for our carnival at Faulconbridge. We loved seeing our Year 3 to 6 athletes having a go and running, jumping, and throwing in some friendly competition.



SECONDARY ATHLETICS

LEFT AND ABOVE: Our Year 7-12 students gave their very best effort at their Athletics Carnival. Student leaders ran a bake sale and BBQ to keep the athletes nourished and raise money for our house charities. A special mention to Alistair, who set an all-time Wycliffe high jump record, with an unbelievable 1.85m!



THE NEXT LEVEL

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Many Wycliffe students have gone on to compete at Zone, State, and even National levels for their sport.



GO TEAM!

LEFT AND BELOW: Wycliffe teams have already had a fantastic year. Our Primary AFL team went undefeated at the local round of the Paul Kelly Cup, and our basketball teams won 3 of 4 finals, amongst many other achievements.





YEAR 7 AND 8 CAMP

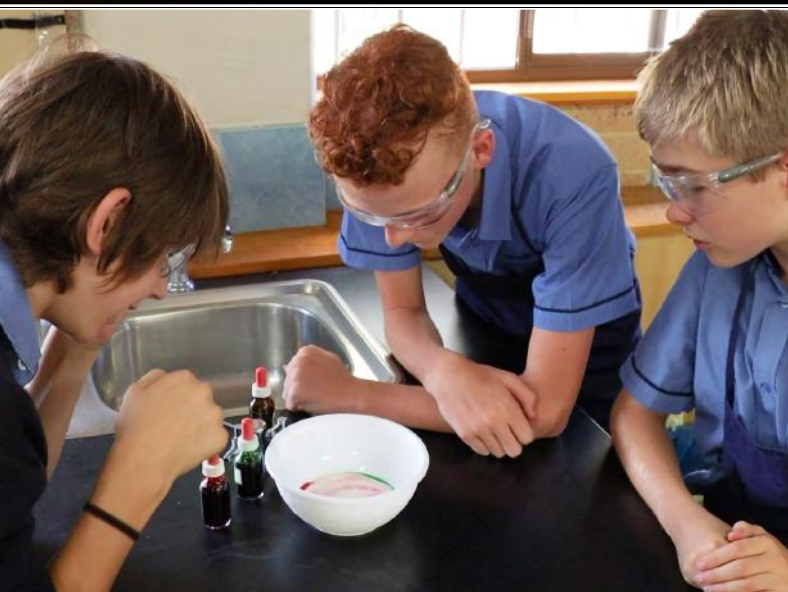
Year 7 and 8 began the year with a camp at Lake Macquarie. Over three days, they took part in various activities including archery, rock climbing, sailing, fishing, and much more. Students participated in Christian Discovery sessions, which included interactive Bible talks and discussions with the wonderful CRU leaders.





Materials

- Metals to be tested
1 M solutions of the fo
- Strontium Chloride
- Potassium "
- Sodium "
- Lithium "



Explosions, emissions, and elasticity

There's always something new going on in the handful of B Block classrooms that house Wycliffe's Senior Science department. From early forays into chemical reactions in Year 7, through to studying the behaviour of light in Year 12, students are encouraged to interrogate the world around them, and learn how science can help us to understand every part of God's astounding creation.

In Year 7, students are introduced to the scientific method. This year, their first experiments saw them observing the interaction of different fluids in a mixing bowl, and recording their findings as a class. In another lesson, the class used recycled materials to construct their own measuring tools. There were rulers, seesaws, scales, and a few projects that were a little harder to classify!

As students progress through the grades, they build on existing knowledge and expand their investigations. Science

encompasses a rich variety of topics, and students cover the microscopic building blocks of life all the way to the movement of planets. They also continue to strengthen their understanding of experiments, and learn to devise their own and evaluate the results against a hypothesis. Year 10 enjoyed a recent demonstration to determine the gas produced in an acid-metal reaction - with explosive results! Mr Millburn mixed hydrochloric acid and zinc metal granules in a conical flask, and captured the gas given off with a balloon around the neck of the flask. The class then took the balloons of gas outside and ignited them with a match on a long stick. The gas was hydrogen, and so when ignited it reacted rapidly with the oxygen in the air and made a small explosion.

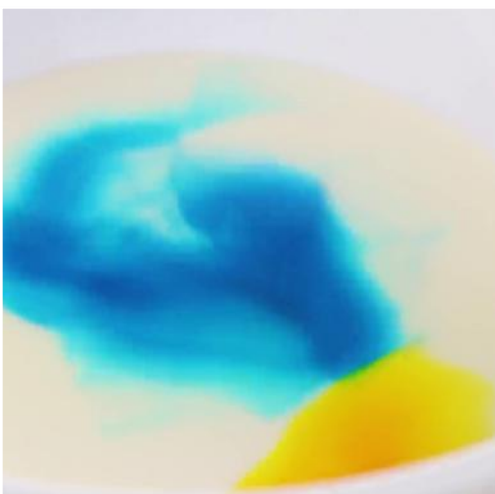
HSC students can pick from several science subjects as they narrow their focus and consider potential career paths. Recently, in Mrs Hare's Chemistry class, students created a ball out of polymer, and played a game of handball with it!

Part of the study of organic chemistry, this is an example of polymerisation, a reaction between two liquids to form a solid but elastic plastic that is then shaped into a ball.

Meanwhile, our Year 12 Physics students have been looking at the nature of light using atomic emission spectroscopy. In this investigation, the class put some common metals such as copper and lithium to the test. They used a Bunsen burner to heat these metals to very high temperatures. The heat energy excites the electrons, and when they return to their non-excited state, they release energy in the form of light. This emitted light has specific wavelengths (colours) that are unique to each element. Students used a device called a spectroscope, which acts kind of like a prism, separating the emitted light into its component wavelengths. When looking through it, students were able to see

a series of bright lines on the spectroscope's viewfinder which show the wavelengths of light being emitted by the heated element. Each element has its own unique pattern of lines, almost like a barcode. By using atomic emission spectroscopy, scientists can identify the elements present in stars, distant galaxies, and even unknown materials. It's a powerful tool that helps us understand the very composition of our universe!

We are thrilled to watch our Senior students interact with new equipment, consider new ideas and observe phenomena they haven't yet seen. The foundation of our science curriculum is to instil in students a love of asking questions and exploring God's magnificent creation, and it is our deep desire that a love of science in school will help them to grow into inquisitive lifelong learners.



Learning Snapshot
The Nature of Light

The Navigate program

Year 9 and 10 are pivotal years for our students as they move from childhood into greater capacity and independence. To equip our students for this change, Wycliffe has been working on the Navigate program. The aim of this program is to tie together personal growth, empowerment and responsibility, ensuring each child understands who they are created to be and their identity as a child of God. Navigate consists of several fun and challenging excursions and a dedicated class, in which teachers support students in pursuing their personal goals.

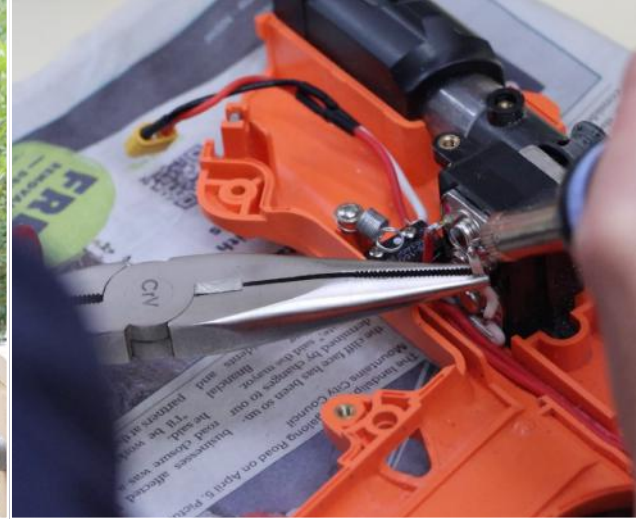
This is our first year trialling the Navigate system and it has already seen some wonderful results. The first excursion of the year was a journey into Glenbrook Gorge for a challenging bushwalk and some swimming in the creek under the summer sunshine. This was followed up by the Year 9 Urban Challenge Camp, which was 4 days away where students formed teams and completed activities across the city. Our Year 10 students participated in this last year as their camp. Each student had a role in their group; these included jobs like treasurer, caterer, navigator, welfare officer and photographer, and alongside each role came set responsibilities. Some of the tasks challenged

the students' critical thinking, like planning a route through the city's many train lines or budgeting for food. Others gave them opportunities to serve, like preparing meals at the local food bank. The Urban Challenge was an exciting opportunity for students to work together and demonstrate their initiative.

Meanwhile, in class, students have been working on their own personal projects. In conversation, and sometimes collaboration, with their peers, students have been pursuing a personal goal. These include getting a puppy, looking for employment, learning how to make coffee, sewing a dress, hosting an event, learning to solder, gaining some household skills and making an entertaining and instructional video. Each student had their own goal and mapped out the steps to success. Over the course of several weeks, students would share their progress with their class. You can view a Learning Snapshot of these projects using the QR code.

We are very excited to see what these incredible young men and women will accomplish, and hope that these adventures equip them with a desire to be life long learners and with an understanding of who they are called to be in Christ.





OPPOSITE PAGE: The Glenbrook Gorge excursion.

LEFT AND ABOVE: Some of our students' personal projects.

BELOW: On the Urban Challenge camp, teams raced around the city completing various activities.



Learning Snapshot
Navigate Challenges

Keira Stanley - Pictorial Narrative



STORY OF YOUR LIFE

My Year 11 Advanced English students were given the task of creating a photo or pictorial narrative of their lives. Some used their own photos, some used pictures from the internet of events they had experienced, and some chose drawings as their medium.

Vicki Williams
Senior Teacher



6.12.2007

1



As a toddler, I was very difficult.

2



I eventually got a younger brother & little sister

3

I started to get into drawing. It is now my biggest passion



4

My brother



5 First day of primary school at Blackland Public

5

6



2020 I came to Wychiffe in year 7 and discovered God for the first time.



7

Pictorial Narrative of my life

Me today in year 11. I am now a Christian and have discovered more passions and talents. God has given me such as music, and I am now aiming for a career in the art industry.

Eli Phiyasirikul



Showing love through service

On Tuesday 2nd April, we began our long drive out to Ridgecrest in Mumbil, 70km north of Orange. Ridgecrest Christian Convention Centre is a long-term project of the Western District Baptist Association to fill the need for a site for Christian camps and retreats for all of western NSW. Our Year 11 camp is designed as a service camp, and we spent 3 days helping the site managers to complete much needed maintenance in preparation for their other upcoming camps.

After the devastating fires of March 2023, our main tasks involved repairing fence lines on the property that had been

destroyed in the fires. We also helped with some painting and scrub clearing. On the 4th day we went into Dubbo to visit the Royal Flying Doctor's Service Visitors Centre, and Dubbo Western Plains Zoo. Our evenings were spent hearing from various speakers talking about the value of service and God's plans to use us to be His hands and feet in the world, to show His love through actions of service.

Natalie Maddock
Senior Teacher

Our careers program

Wycliffe and Hope's career program is designed to equip students with practical experience and valuable insights into their future career paths. We do this in two ways.

For Year 10 students, we make available a hands-on work experience opportunity, allowing them to explore various professions and develop essential workplace skills.

Students and families in Years 10, 11, and 12 benefit from comprehensive information about diverse career pathways and options, ensuring they are well-informed and prepared for their post-school journeys. These take the form of lunch time sessions and information through a Google classroom. Parents receive a weekly career bulletin with opportunities that may benefit their student.

There are many pathways available to students when they finish school. Through this program, we hope to grow in students a confidence of their God-given skills and talents and how these

can be used to care for their community and creation.

Debra Hare

Careers and Pathways Leader

In March I had the opportunity to complete a week of work experience at Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. I was able to work in five different sections and with a variety of animals. The biggest highlight of the week was being able to watch the elephants up close, clean up their paddocks and make enrichment puzzles for them. Working with the meerkats was very cute but I had to be a lot more cautious about where I put my feet as they run around everywhere! Working at the zoo has shown me how much I enjoy being near animals, working outside, and moving around instead of at a desk.

Aravis Tyrrell

Year 10



ABOVE: Aravis with one of the meerkats at the zoo.

LEFT: Students have opportunities throughout the year to hear from guest speakers about potential career paths.



I don't want to go!

Wycliffe School Counsellor Nicole Clark shares some thoughts about understanding and supporting school avoidance concerns in children.

As a school counsellor, I've seen how challenging it can be for both children and parents to navigate school avoidance, also known as "school refusal" or "school can't". Much like adults sometimes dread going to work, children can feel similarly about school. However, when this reluctance turns into emotional distress and consistently missing days at school, it requires our attention, support and care. It's a clear communication from your child that they are finding something hard, and we as parents and school staff can stop and try and understand what is going on for them, and how we can best care and support them where they are.

Having a child who struggles to attend school is not uncommon, but it can significantly impact a child's academic progress and emotional wellbeing. There is no single reason why a young person finds it challenging to get to school, and there is often more than one contributing factor. It might be the stress of transitioning from primary to high school, feeling anxious about learning, not fitting in with their peers or struggling to connect with their teacher.

IDENTIFYING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Early identification of school avoidance is crucial. Look out for signs such as frequent complaints of physical ailments (like headaches or stomach aches) that dissipate when staying home is an option, persistent anxiety about school, or difficulty with schoolwork. Recognising these signs early can make a significant difference in addressing the issue before it becomes more entrenched.

Understanding why a child is finding school hard is the first step towards helping them. When the stress of the school morning routine is absent, sit down with your child and gently explore their feelings about school. Questions like, "If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?" can open up meaningful conversations.

If your child is reluctant to talk, consider alternative approaches. Encourage them to rate different parts of their school day or use a timeline with emotion faces to map out their

feelings throughout the day. You could role model this activity throughout your day, making it enjoyable while showing your child that it's normal to experience different emotions. Share about how you managed to cope and, when you didn't, what you might do next time ("Next time, it might be helpful if I take a mindful breath"). Ask them what they think would help you in this situation.

SUPPORT AT HOME

If a child has stayed at home on a school day, then maintaining a structured routine at home that mirrors the school day can help. During school hours, focus on schoolwork they can catch up on, with breaks at regular intervals, and even recess and lunch breaks outside in the backyard. Limiting access to rewards like technology or outings can also reduce the attractiveness of staying home.

Collaboratively brainstorming solutions with your child can empower them. Address specific challenges such as getting out of bed or managing schoolwork with creative strategies.

MANAGING TRICKY EMOTIONS

Helping children manage their emotions starts with parents managing their own. When a parent stays calm, it models effective emotional regulation for the child. Techniques like taking mindful breaths, using a soothing tone, and acknowledging your child's feelings can create a supportive environment for them to express and manage their emotions.

Regulate your own emotions first. We have all heard the expression "parents, put your oxygen mask on first". It's the same with helping support a young person to regulate when they feel emotional distress at the thought of attending school. When a parent calms down their own nervous system first, it helps their child regulate their emotions. Pause and take some mindful breaths, have a cold glass of water, or splash your face with cold water and try to move your body to help get rid of the physical symptoms of stress. Use a soothing, low voice and limit your language. Try not to reason (e.g. "Why don't you want to go?"); instead, give your child space and time to regulate their emotions. Then relate. Acknowledge how your child is feeling (e.g. "I can see you were stressed", "That must have been hard for you").

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- Use strength-based questions. That is, ask *how* questions, not *why* questions. "How did you manage to...?"
- Ask other families for ideas of what worked for them.
- Changing the morning routine can be helpful, e.g. walking your child to school instead of driving. Consider switching which parent does the drop-off, or have someone else take your child to school, such as another family.

- Plan for calm starts to the day. Get everything ready the night before, or get up 15 minutes earlier, so there is less pressure to be ready on time.

- Focus on helpful thinking. A young person struggling to attend school will often focus on its negative aspects. It's beneficial to use strategies that support them to reflect on the positives.

- It can be helpful to use the unfortunately/fortunately strategy. For example: "Unfortunately, it's tiring starting a new term. Fortunately, I get to be with my friends."

- Play the coin toss game. Toss a coin. If it lands on heads, say something hard about school, and tails, say something good about school (Walker, 2023).

HANDLING SETBACKS

Collaborate and build relationships with your child's teachers at school. It's beneficial to communicate regularly with your child's teacher so that together, you can plan to put appropriate supports in place and problem-solve as issues arise. If you are determining whom to talk to at school, start with their classroom teacher if your child is in Junior School, and for Senior School children, begin with their Growth Group teacher or their Pastoral Care and Learning Leader.

Setbacks are a normal part of the process. It's important to view them as temporary challenges rather than failures. Using language like "This is just a bump in the road" and revisiting the plan with your child can help maintain progress.

Professional support from counsellors or psychologists or other specialists may be necessary for some children. These professionals can provide targeted strategies and interventions to address the underlying issues contributing to school avoidance.

[A compassionate, collaborative approach that involves understanding the child's perspective]

Lastly, caring for a child struggling with school avoidance can be taxing. It's crucial for parents to prioritise their own well-being too. Finding self-care activities that provide joy and relaxation, and seeking support from professionals or parent groups, can make a significant difference.

Addressing school avoidance requires a compassionate, collaborative approach that involves understanding the child's perspective, creating supportive routines, and seeking professional help when needed. By working together, we can help children overcome their challenges and thrive at school.

Nicole Clark
Counsellor

Walker, K. (2023, September 11). *How to tackle School Avoidance (aka "School Refusal")*. The Young Mind Clinic.



MOTHER'S DAY

Students loved perusing our Mother's Day gift stall, run by some dedicated parent volunteers. Our annual breakfast saw a record-breaking turnout, and families were generously served by our student volunteers as we took the time to celebrate mothers together.



Life after school

Recently, we caught up with Wycliffe alumni Beth Curran (née Mitchell) to see where her path has taken her since leaving school.

When did you attend Wycliffe?

I attended Wycliffe from 2010 (Year 6) to 2016 (Year 12) which means I graduated almost 8 years ago. That makes me feel old!

Do you have some favourite memories of school?

So many! I was lucky enough to be part of a great home class in Years 7 and 8 (Explorers with Mr Cooney) and made many wonderful friendships there. I entered high school quite shy and unsure of myself but being in that class gave me a place to build my confidence and flourish - both personally and academically. I also had many other great teachers, particularly in Maths and Science, who helped me realise my passion and ability for those areas of study. I was also involved in lots of extracurricular activities - particularly music groups. I did Choir, String Ensemble and Festival Orchestra. Rehearsing, performing and competing with those groups are some of my best memories from school. Those activities gave me time to pursue passions outside of my area of study and were super helpful as a time for expression and enjoyment during the more intense periods of study in my senior years.

What have you been up to since leaving school?

My original plan on graduating school was to pursue a career in medicine - but upon starting a degree in medical science at Western Sydney Uni I found that I didn't have that much of a passion for it. I took the rest of the year off to try and figure out what I really wanted to do and realised that the thing I was always most excited about at school was Physics (particularly when we looked at Astrophysics) and Maths. I applied to Macquarie University and was accepted into a Bachelor of Advanced Science in Astronomy and Astrophysics which I started in 2018. It was a super challenging degree but also super rewarding. I got to do lots of amazing space observations and experiments, studied advanced mathematics and cosmology and learnt to code. In 2021 I married my wonderful husband James and then in 2022, I completed my degree. Since then I have been working full-time at a data consultancy firm using my skills in mathematics, coding and problem-solving to build systems for a variety of different clients while James is studying a Master of Divinity at Morling College. We also both serve at our church (Springwood Baptist Church) on the youth group team and in music.

How have your experiences at school impacted your life?

My time at Wycliffe has impacted my life in so many ways. It was a place that helped me find confidence and discover my passions. Without the encouragement I received at school, I may never have realised or believed that I was capable of pursuing a career in STEM. Many of my teachers taught me the

importance of good Christian role models which is something I hope I can be for the young people I now lead at Youth Group.

Could you talk about your faith journey?

I grew up as a pastor's kid so I was around church and faith my whole life. I always knew about God and Jesus and could tell you lots of Bible stories from when I was little. I first realised the personal nature of God and the weight of Jesus' love and sacrifice for me when I was around 12 at a Christian summer camp, which is when I would say I first gave my life to Jesus on my own. I continued attending church and youth groups through high school, however when I was around 15 I began to seriously question my faith. It was around that time that I started getting more into science and was suddenly faced with the question of how science and God can fit together. I did a lot of reading and thinking around that time about whether being a scientist and a Christian could be philosophically consistent. I thankfully had a great science teacher at that time (shout out to Mrs Dove) who modelled a life of deep faith and a passion for science. A quote of hers I will always remember is "Science can tell us the 'how' but God can tell us the 'why'". I came to the conclusion that not only can faith in God and a scientific worldview coexist but they can actually enhance each other. My awe of God makes me more excited to learn about how His world works and my knowledge of science makes me appreciate the goodness and incredible logic that is baked into the universe. I still have lots of questions but I can rest in the knowledge of God's love and that He understands how the world works better than I ever could.



Our school board

Our board work tirelessly behind the scenes, helping to guide Wycliffe according to our mission, and making the workings of our school possible. We have had the privilege of welcoming several new board members over the course of the last few years. We caught up with two members, Russell and Vania, to learn a bit more about themselves and their roles on the board.

RUSSELL COOKE

How long have you been on the board at Wycliffe?

I first joined the Wycliffe Board after being elected at the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your family?

I grew up in San Francisco and Oakland, California until age 19, and then moved to San Diego (on the border of Mexico) to complete my Psychology degrees while working in the Navy. In the late 90s I was saved/born again in a Wesleyan Church in San Diego after a long period of searching, and in 1998 I met my wife Marita, who grew up in Western Sydney, while traveling on holiday through Greece and Turkey. Marita and I developed a long-distance relationship over the next 3+ years, I moved to Australia and in 2002 we got married (my brother Mike also married Marita's sister Corina).

Since moving to Australia, Marita and I have made our home in the Blue Mountains and have served in leadership, ministry and worship roles, first at Glenbrook Baptist Church and now at Foothills Church in Regentville/South Penrith. I worked for over 30 years as an industrial psychologist (involving roles as a research scientist, organisational consultation and change manager) until 2021, at which point I started working full-time in clinical psychology (my true passion/calling). My wife Marita went to Tyndale and Sydney Uni to study pharmacy and has been working as a lead pharmacist for the past 20 years. It's helpful to have a "head shrinker" and a "drug dealer" in the same family.

Marita and I have been blessed with 2 amazing boys, Samuel (who graduated from Wycliffe 3 years ago) and Sebastian (who is currently in his HSC year at Wycliffe). Sammy is studying paramedicine at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst and Sebastian is planning to go into mission work next year with Youth With A Mission before entering uni (currently thinking about studying psychology or history).

What do you enjoy about your role on the board?

I very much enjoy how much our Lord Jesus is clearly involved in our considerations and discussions, and clearly in the heart of all those serving on the board. We often have lively and courageous debates and it is a safe place that is marked by the

unity and love for each other and for the Wycliffe we serve in Christ. I deeply admire all the members of the board and feel very blessed to be a part of this group.

What excites you about the future for Wycliffe?

It is super exciting to see that Wycliffe is growing in its impact and influence on our local community and in the lives of the children we are here to serve. In the midst of this growth, it is evident to me that the board and staff are working hard to continue to ensure that Christ stays as the central focus in all we do. Wycliffe is blessed to be in a good position to teach, guide and care for so many students in a time of growth and provision from God, and one of the amazing challenges and opportunities we face is to stay true to God's calling while faithfully responding to the pressures of having more families wanting to join the Wycliffe community than we can currently accommodate. How blessed are we to serve in such a time as this! I know that by relying on drawing closer to God each day individually and together, by His Holy Spirit we will be able to discern the right way forward and continue to faithfully serve and love our community in ways that bring our Lord Jesus glory and expand His kingdom!

VANIA DICKENS

How long have you been on the board at Wycliffe?

I have been on the board for 4 years now.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your family?

My husband John and I live in the lower mountains and have 4 kids here at Wycliffe (Years 9, 7, 4 and 2). Other than our unpaid work at home, I get paid to work part-time as an occupational therapist with people with dementia and John is a teacher at a Christian school.

What do you enjoy about your role on the board?

I enjoy working closely with the other members of the board, trusting Jesus to work his will through our school. So many times we wrestled with difficult decisions, and to see how God has chosen to use these choices has been so exciting, while sometimes challenging. I love hearing about how God is working in and through our community. Working as just one part of the team at Wycliffe is fabulous and it is such a privilege to be involved in this way in the ministry of Christian education at Wycliffe.

What excites you about the future for Wycliffe?

I spoke to someone recently whose hope was that education at Wycliffe remains distinctly Christian. The legacy of Christian education is evident in the lives of so many people in our community, including mine and my family's, and I'm excited to be a small part of that as it continues into the future.

Our board members



Carrie Baines



Russell Cooke



David Croft



Vania Dickens



Ian Fryer



Bob Johnston



Catherine Osborne



Luke Pereira

The Wycliffe School Board is voted in by, and comprised of, Association members. Parents who are interested in joining the Association can speak to a board member, or email companysecretary@wycliffe.nsw.edu.au.

The Board President is Ian Fryer.



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

ABOVE AND LEFT: Our much-anticipated building project has now begun. We are eagerly looking forward to the new opportunities that the completed project will create for our community, and thank all our families for your partnership in this season. In the meantime, enjoy this “sneak peek” at the plans for the finished product!

Find your place, find your purpose

Wycliffe Christian School and Wycliffe Hope School

