January 27th, 2015

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Welcome to the 2015 school year at Lalor Secondary College. I trust that the holiday season was an enjoyable one for your family. We hope that the school reports your child brought home at the end of 2014 show your child’s successes and provide advice for an even more successful year in 2015. I welcome to our school community our new parents and families of Year 7 students and students who are joining us in Years 8 – 12. I know that your experiences at Lalor Secondary College will be positive ones.

2014 was an extremely busy one at the school with the department’s mandated whole school review, which as you know takes place every four years, allows us to review our achievements, outcomes and our shortfalls and therefore plan for the next four years with a new School Strategic Plan, that will encompass 2015 – 2018. We had mixed results over the course of 2011 – 2014 with our VCE results being at an all-time high for our school at the end of 2013. While they dipped at the end of 2014, I am confident that we will be able to regain our momentum and have our students achieve the excellent results they are capable of. Our Senior VCAL program continues to provide a successful pathway for over 95% of the students enrolled and our VET students are continuing to experience success in the courses studied outside of our school.

What is clear is that we need to continue to work on our Literacy and Numeracy outcomes for our students in the Junior and Middle years. While the timetable structure for Maths classes in Years 7 – 10 have begun to reap rewards for our students, we are committed to continuing to investigate and implement pedagogies that will further improve Numeracy overall at Lalor. In the area of Literacy, this year we are once again taking on a whole school approach, across all areas of the curriculum, to ensure our students are fully literate in all aspects of the education in preparation for their future. As a result of our curriculum review in 2014, this year our Year 7 students will all experience a ‘master class’ each fortnight in areas of literacy where they are either deemed to be requiring focussed support or further challenge. This will occur in one of the 10 periods a fortnight of the English classes. Last year Lalor Secondary College also became one of approximately 50 schools in Victoria and a number of schools internationally to participate in ‘New Pedagogies for Deep Learning’ project. The project allows us to access the support of Professors Michael Fullan, John Hatty as well as the DEECD Digital Branch, through Gary Stager. All our teaching staff will be participating in the project as it is ‘rolled out’ over the course of the next two years. We believe it is imperative that teachers continue to add to their repertoire of strategies and teaching practice each year in order to address the challenges that come with engaging students in a world where technology occupies a large part of their lives as well better preparing our students for an increasingly competitive workforce.

This year we have initiated the ‘Personal Digital Device Policy’ which will see a further increase of the use of information technology in various forms in the school. It is extremely important that parents access this policy and become familiar with the expectations we have of our students as we bring in further technologies to support student learning. The policy can be accessed on the school’s website or may be requested in hard copy from the school’s general office. It is important that parents and students area aware that we are hoping to open up the access that students have to their own devices for school use, this will be a process that requires students adhere to the current Audio and Digital Device Policy, also available on our website. Students will be informed about the implications and the expectations of this policy in the first term of the school year. We expect parents to support the school’s expectations with regards this policy to ensure the responsible use of their child’s personal devices. Our Year 7 students this year have been required to purchase, via Centre Com (accessed via our website), a personal computer that they will be using in classes and at home, that will allow them to access the school’s intranet and network and ensure that they become confident, digitally literate young adults.

This year we are confident, finally, that we will start the first stage of the school’s Master Plan. While we had hoped that we would have ‘broken ground’ last year, the plans needed to be refined to ensure we met DEECD guidelines and expectations. Having said this, it is hoped that we are able to raise funds at the local level (as at this stage we do not have access capital works funding from the department), and therefore we are strongly urging any parent or community members who would like to support or become a member of the Building Fund Committee to let me or Mr Peter James know so that we can strengthen the financial base to ensure Stage Two of the Master Plan is not far behind Stage One.

Lalor Secondary College
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In 2014 our School Council continued to work diligently at reviewing important policies that ensure our school maintains the core values and standards as well as meeting department guidelines and expectations. All policies are available on our school website. The following policies were reviewed during the course of 2014: Anaphylaxis Policy, CCTV Policy, Communication Policy, Duty of Care Policy, Learning, Assessment & Reporting Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy, Medication Policy, On-Site Supervision Policy, Parent Payments Policy, Privacy Policy, Promotion Policy, Raising Concerns & Complaints Policy, Student Code of Behaviour, VCE Policy Student Handbook. Should you require hard copies of the above policies or any other policy, please do not hesitate to contact the school and we will provide you with the relevant information.

It is extremely important that parents access these policies if unsure of responsibilities and expectations with regards certain areas within the school. Our Communication Policy is a valuable document as it allows parents an understanding of how best to communicate questions and concerns to relevant staff members within the school. The Communication Policy contains a ‘Who to Contact About...’ for 2015, which is a worthwhile resource for all parents when wanting to communicate directly with a staff member related to your child. ‘Who to Contact About...’ is included with this letter for your reference.

As many parents are aware, this year the government is no longer providing EMA to families. We sent information to parents via the newsletters in Term Four of organisations and support that parents experiencing financial hardship could contact. Should parents have lost this information, you will find the newsletters to which I refer on the school’s website. Of course the school may be able to organise payment plans for parents however, you will need to contact our Business Manager to make these arrangements. If you are experiencing extreme hardship, I ask that you contact me to discuss the matter.

As you are aware, in 2014 we rolled out the Parent Portal for parents to access information regarding their child’s schooling. Unfortunately, this was not as successful as we would have hoped and during the course of last year, we investigated programs that were more accessible and comprehensive for staff and parents. Hence we have moved to a software developed by Compass that will provide more comprehensive online information for parents. As you can appreciate however, our staff have yet to become accustomed to the new software, hence the rollout of the Compass tool will occur as the year progresses. Some parents may already be familiar with this software as some primary schools are using this as a source of information about school programs and student progress.

I and my staff look forward to working with you this year to ensure your children achieve the best results they possibly can. We look forward to seeing you during the course of the year at the relevant information evenings and conferences.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school and relevant personnel should you have any questions or concerns during the course of 2015. We want to ensure success for your child, and we are confident we will be able to do this when we work together towards this goal.

Regards,

[Signature]

Silvana Sena
Principal