FROM THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dear Parents, Carers and Community Members,

Together in Family – Rural Connect
A bright, sunny but chilly day on Sunday provided a great atmosphere for a lovely St Rita’s Family Fun Day. A day that has become synonymous with the simple pleasures in life of spending time together enjoying good company with some traditional games – such as egg and spoon and sack races; a sausage sizzle; and a concert with our two choirs, rock band and some budding pianists. It was wonderful. It wouldn’t happen without our enthusiastic SPN and happily a total of $350 was raised to support a most worthy cause – Rural Connect. This is a project established by one of our sister schools – St Mary’s Laidley who raise funds and the means to transport goods and produce to our farming families dealing with the trauma of drought. A perfect connection in our year of being Together in Family.

School Parent Network – Parent Presentation by Michael Grose
Well known parenting expert, Michael Grose, from Parenting Ideas is coming to St Rita’s in June for an evening and morning session on contemporary topics facing parents in the 21st Century. Please mark your diary for these two opportunities. You are welcome to attend one or both sessions as they complement each other. A flyer goes home today and we hope to fill our Unitas Centre. In previous years, St Rita’s parents have been good supporters of such initiatives at our Redland Catholic schools. This year St Rita’s is taking the initiative to host and promote such an event with fantastic sponsorship from our School Parent Network and we are extending the invitation to our other local Catholic schools.

Mother’s Day Liturgy
Our Mini Vinnies team are excitedly preparing for our Mother’s Day Liturgy commencing at 7.45am this Friday morning in the Unitas Centre. This is the third year for this very special event and we hope to see many mothers, grandmothers and those who provide mothering care to join us.

Attached with the newsletter is a Parenting Ideas article about a mother’s influence.

Together in Family – School and Parish
Last Sunday many of our staff enjoyed being together with our parishioners to celebrate Sunday Mass. It was also the weekend whereby our children making their First Communion and Confirmation began their journey in the sacramental program towards receiving these two sacraments in July. As Fr Leo continues to provide pastoral leadership as he looks forward to his well-earned retirement, it is time for us to be prayerful and mindful of who our next Parish Priest may be.

IMPORTANT DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 7 May</td>
<td>School Photo Day – Yr 3 – 7 Formal Uniform Please, No Middle Yrs Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 9 May</td>
<td>Mother’s Day Liturgy 7.45am, Prep Mother’s Day Afternoon Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 12 May</td>
<td>No Whole School Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Next Week</td>
<td>Naplan Week</td>
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<td>Next Week</td>
<td>Naplan Week</td>
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All are welcome at a parish meeting this coming Thursday evening in the church at 7pm to meet with senior clergy from our Archdiocese to discuss and share our hopes and reflections on this important appointment process.

At Sunday’s mass we heard from the parish finance council. As a sign of our times, the planned giving funds to support our parish church are in serious need of a renewed commitment. Unlike our school that receives a degree of government funding, all expenditure for our church is reliant upon donation and commitment. At this point in time, less than 1% of our families contribute to the parish planned giving. Even a small commitment from our Catholic families could easily restore the income to a viable and sustainable level. We are a parish school and these funds help maintain our church – eg the rates and electricity – as well as the provision of pastoral service and spiritual nourishment to many. You may like to consider this by emailing finance.victoriapoint@bne.catholic.net.au.

May God’s peace and blessings be with you and your family in the coming week.

Anne

In light of Anne’s message above regarding Michael Grose’s upcoming visit to St Rita’s, I thought it would be fitting to share with you some of his recent thoughts about NAPLAN testing. This testing can cause angst around some households and below are some valuable strategies that may assist.

**Helping students get ready for the NAPLAN tests**

**WORDS Michael Grose**

During the second week of May Australian children in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will take part in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The stated purpose of this testing program is to gain an overall picture of educational attainment levels to assist education policy and decision-making.

The program first implemented in 2008 has drawn some criticism from a number of different quarters, particularly in regard to the use of the information gained through the NAPLAN tests. You’ve probably heard a number of different viewpoints expressed in the media over the last few weeks.

One view commonly put forward is that the NAPLAN tests put undue pressure on children to perform in test situations. If so, then perhaps the best approach for parents and teachers is to help them handle the pressure rather than avoid it.

The most resilient children and young people are those who rise to meet rather than retreat from the challenges presented to them. Perhaps it’s best to view the NAPLAN tests as good learning experiences rather than dreaded pressure tests. Children and young people take their cues from their parents about how to handle many situations.

American psychologist Martin Seligman discovered more than a decade ago, through his research into children’s thinking styles, how closely a child’s explanatory style mimics that of the parent they spend most time around. Optimistic parents beget optimistic kids, just as anxious parents can beget anxious kids.

The impact of a parent’s explanatory style seems to be magnified somehow in small families where there are fewer voices to be heard. As a parent it helps your child, if you take a positive view of the NAPLAN tests. It’s better to see them as learning opportunities for kids as well as opportunities to overcome any anxieties or nerves that these tests may bring on. It’s also worth remembering that many children don’t stress over these tests. The vast majority take them in their stride, wondering what all the fuss is about.

**Whether your child stresses or takes them in his stride here are some tips to help prepare for the NAPLAN tests:**

- **Take your cues from your child:** If your child doesn’t worry about them then neither should you. Be careful not to create a problem that doesn’t exist by incessantly talking about, or worse, worrying about the test.

- **Focus on doing their best and trying hard:** Choose your words carefully when you speak with your kids. As with all their learning activities place your focus squarely on effort rather than results. The only pressure on kids should be to try hard rather than to do well.

- **Listen to any concerns they have:** If your child confesses to some nerves then validate their feelings, rather than shut them down with a ‘get over it’ response. “Yes, sometimes tests can be a little scary, but they get easier every time you take them.” Use this as an opportunity to develop some emotional smarts, which starts with recognising how kids feel.
Give them some relaxation ideas:
Anxious or nervous kids will benefit from some simple relaxation strategies. Taking some deep breaths, changing their thinking and exercising the morning of the test are some simple ways to help kids get some feeling of control.

Help them retain their perspective:
One way to help children who become excessively anxious about an event is to ask what’s the worst thing that could happen? Okay, they may not do as well as they would like but the sun will still rise tomorrow, regardless of how well they do. Keeping perspective is a life skill that we all need to practise.

A positive, caring parent attitude is one of the best gifts you can give a child when they are apprehensive or nervous about approaching any different situation whether it’s going on school camp, joining a new club or sitting a NAPLAN test.

All the very best
Shane

Rosie’s and BABi Appeal
At Monday’s assembly, we welcomed Mr Troy Bailey from Rosie’s – Friends on the Street. Troy explained to the children how we as a community can support the homeless by donating food goods and money to provide bedding. A new initiative provided by Rosie’s is ‘bed packs’ that can be given to homeless to give them shelter and warmth. In June, the Mini Vinnie’s students will launch the Rosie’s and BABi appeal which will go a long way to supporting these great initiatives. As a leadership Team, we met with Troy afterwards and was pleased to hear they are looking at starting a Rosie’s Van in the Wynnum area later in the year. We would like to get some parent groups organised in preparation to support this – the commitment would be approximately 4hrs per Month. All groups are trained before they attend the Rosie’s Coffee Van’s. If you are interested in finding out more please email me k billion@bne.catholic.edu.au and we will organise a general information session.

Reflection
God’s dream is that you and I and all of us will realise that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion. Desmond Tutu

Enjoy your week
Kevin

SCHOOL PHOTOS

Students will be required to wear their dress uniforms on Wednesday 7 May for the photos.

ONLINE: Orders can be placed via their website www.studiokirby.com.au where you can receive special offers. Simply click on the ‘School Order Form’ circle in the top right hand corner or the screen. When you arrive at the next screen click on ‘Studio Kirby School Photography Order Form’ on the left hand side of the screen which will then take you to a page where you can select your packages, type in your details and pay online.

PRE-PAID SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHY ENVELOPES:
Orders can be placed via the Pre-Paid School Photography envelope, which outlines the ordering process and contains information about the different packages available for purchase. Any parents wishing to purchase class photographs are asked to determine the package that best suits their requirements, complete the front of this envelope by clearly printing their child’s full name and class, marking the box for their desired package and completing the payment section either by filling in the credit card details or by enclosing cash or a cheque (payable to Studio Kirby Pty Ltd). Once completed, the students are asked to bring the envelope on photo day, for collection by the photographers.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Individual photos will be taken straight after the student’s class photos. If you wish to have any sibling photos will be taken, they will be taken between 7.45am and 8.30am on Wednesday 7 May. Please ensure your children are ready on time for sibling photos. All photos will be taken in the Unitas Hall. Group photos, such as choir, drama etc will be taken between 2pm and 3pm on Wednesday 7 May.
**School Parent Network**

**Mother’s Day Liturgy & Morning Tea**
This Friday the SPN will be providing a morning tea after the Mother’s Day Liturgy. We are calling for some Dads to help serve the tea and coffee so that mothers and grandmothers can enjoy the morning. If you can help please contact Shannon Edwards 0401 690 485.

**Together in Family Day**
Thank you to everyone who came along to the Together in Family day on Sunday. It was a great day of activities and the choir and music students were fantastic. We also raised $350 for Rural Connect, helping struggling Queensland Farming families. Thank you to all who helped make the day a success.

**Next SPN Meeting**
The next SPN meeting will be on Wednesday 14th May. We are always open to new ideas about making our children’s school experience better. If you have something to share then we invite you to come along to the Staff room in the Administration building at 7pm. We look forward to seeing you there!

Agenda items can also be emailed to StRitasSPN@gmail.com.

**SPEAK**

**SPEAK Out** session, now at Victoria Point library for your convenience. Join Gus for an afternoon of books, activities and chatter. Improve your child’s oral language skills by making the most of these free speaking and listening opportunities. Suitable for children from Prep to Year Three. Wednesday 14th May 3:30 - 4:15.

**Assembly Awards**

PK - Joshua, Stella, Lainey, Jade.
PT - Laurel, Charlotte, Baxter, Nate, Lincoln.
PL - Arabella, Beau, Blake, Cate, Levi, Oscar, Roman, Annabel, Isla, Maya, Nicholas S, Nicholas T, Zenobia.
1K - Kiarna, Pery, Sophie, Baye.
1T - Zane Jones.
2K - Matilda, Talitha, Brea, Taylor, Naite.
2L - Jamie, Hannah, Manveer, Sam, Madi, Georgia, Mikayla, Jack.

**Music News**

Congratulations to all students who performed at the Family Fun Day Concert on Sunday 4th May. It was great to showcase the fantastic array of talent we have at St Rita’s. Well done!!

Could you please note that on Wednesday 7th May, all music and drama students (including creative kids students) will be having group photos. Could you please ensure that students of senior choir are in formal dress for their photo. If they have sports uniform that day, could you please ensure that they bring their formal dress in a bag to change into.

Thankyou for your support - Paul Tyrrell
SPORTS NEWS

Quote of the week
A trophy carries dust. Memories last forever. Mary Lou Retton

Cross Country Training
Training will continue until Wednesday 21st May for those students involved in the St Anthony’s Invitational Cross Country Carnival. Training will be on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 7.50 – 8.25am. Students are asked to meet Mr Kenyon under the covered area outside the tuckshop prior to 7.50am.

St Rita’s Touch Football
Touch football training for U/12s will be on Monday afternoons from 3.15pm – 4pm. u/10s will be during school on Wednesday/Thursday/Friday.

Swimming Age Champion and Runner-Up Awards
Congratulations to the following students who were awarded Swimming Age Champion and Runner-Up Medallions.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Division</th>
<th>Age Champions</th>
<th>Runner-Ups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Owen Loft&lt;br&gt;Abby Goworek</td>
<td>Jeremy Trappett&lt;br&gt;Amber Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kayne Saverin&lt;br&gt;Jessica Pardo</td>
<td>Kyle Steenooon&lt;br&gt;Cassie Conlon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kaed Anderson&lt;br&gt;Veronica Saleh</td>
<td>Caleb Kerr&lt;br&gt;Julia Ricca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jaiden Maslowskyj&lt;br&gt;Jade Bradley</td>
<td>Connor Duffy&lt;br&gt;Eden Gorrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jack Loft&lt;br&gt;Emily Tonge</td>
<td>James Cooper&lt;br&gt;Erin Baker-Fogels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District/Regional Representation
Basketball - Congratulations to Ky (Y7) who was successful at the recent Regional Basketball Trials and has secured a spot in the Met-East team. Ky will now represent the Region at the upcoming State Championship trials.

Rugby League - Congratulations to William (Y7) who was successful at the recent Regional Rugby League Trials and has secured a spot in the Met-East team. William will now represent the Region at the upcoming State Championship trials.

Joey H of 6T competed at the GKR regional Tournament and received a GOLD Medal for his efforts.

Perceptual Motor Program
Perceptual Motor Program has now ended and will be re-visited in Term 4. Students will now be preparing for activities for ‘St Rita’s Sports Day’. A ‘BIG’ thankyou to all those parents who volunteered their time to assist in the running of activities.

LEARNING SUPPORT

What is giftedness?
When should a gifted child be told they are gifted, or better still should they be told at all? This week will focus on this very question as we explore Carol Bainbridge’s article, ‘Should gifted children be told they are gifted?’ Keep in mind that this is only one person’s response to a very tender and important subject. However, it is worth noting that it is a commonly shared view from leading educators in this field.

‘Many people believe that it is not good to tell children they are gifted because it will cause the children to get an inflated ego. The children could become arrogant and intolerant of others. These people also believe that children who are told they are gifted can develop socialization problems and become isolated from others.

Some of these people even disapprove of the term gifted since they feel it implies a child has a “gift,” something that other children do not have. This feeling stems from a belief that all children are equal and is the same feeling that leads some people to believe that all children are gifted.

The truth is that gifted children sense at a very young age that they are not like other children. They can easily misinterpret their feelings of being different as something negative, often seeing themselves as flawed in some way, as having something wrong with them. It can come as a great relief to gifted children to learn that they are not flawed and that there is a reason they feel different.

Gifted children can often feel quite isolated and alone and develop social problems because of their being different. They may have a hard time making friends or they may feel misunderstood and disliked. In most cases, gifted children have these problems only in school settings where they are forced to create friendships with their age mates. Children who have problems socializing with other children in school...
generally have no trouble making and maintaining friendships with older children or with other gifted children.

Telling a child he or she is gifted will not make a child feel different; chances are that child is already feeling different, and discussing giftedness will help that child understand those feelings. Pretending it doesn’t exist will not make it go away any more than pretending a disability doesn’t exist will make that disability go away.’

For further information on this topic please see Draper Kauffman’s article, ‘Should we tell them they’re gifted? Should we tell them how gifted?’ Draper is a Doctor of Education and parent of a gifted child.

Happy reading!

MOTHER’S DAY LITURGY

The St Rita’s Mini Vinnies and School Parent Network invite all grandmothers, mothers, and students to attend the Mother’s Day Liturgy on Friday 9th May at 7:45am in the Unitas Centre. The liturgy will be followed by a morning tea for the adults.

During the liturgy, a slide show of photos will be shown. The Mini Vinnies are seeking digital photos of our St Rita’s students with their mothers/grandmothers/aunties to use for a reflection. If you have a suitable digital photo that you would like to share with our community, please email it to: stritasmothersday@hotmail.com by Wednesday 7th May 2014. The photos will only be used for this purpose, and then deleted by the school.

NIHONGO NOTES

みなさん、こんにちは(Minasan, Kon-nichi-wa) Best wishes to all the Mums for Mothers’ Day. In Japanese, the word for mother is ‘okaasan’ so let’s say thanks to our mothers for all they do for us. In Japanese, this is ‘okaasan, arigato’

SCHOOL BANKING

Congratulations Bankers of the Week
This week’s Banker of the week is Jemma S 4L. Congratulations Jemma we have deposited $2 into your account for you.

Don’t forget to bring your bank book in to be in the running for the weekly winner, and remember for every new school banking account to ask for your own BOQ Piggie Bank.

We’re open 9am Mon – Sat, Closing times Mon – Thur 4.30pm, Fri 5pm & Sat 12noon.
Pop in and see the friendly team, we’re always happy to have a chat and help with any of your banking needs.

BOQ, Victoria Point, Shop 23 Victoria Point Shopping Centre
Ph 3207 6133

TUCKSHOP NEWS

Wednesday 7th May
Veronica Dunn
Leila Winterburn

Thursday 8th May
Cilla Mihajlovic
Wendy Bevis

Friday 9th May
Brenda Owbridge
Louise Lowcock
HELP NEEDED????
HELP NEEDED????
2ND Break
Louise Lowcock
Tania Digby

Term 2&3 Special -
Fried Rice, Drink (Crazy Lemon or Peach Iced Tea) $5.00

We are in desperate need of Volunteers for Fridays. If you can spare 3 hours a month your children would really appreciate it and so would we.

For all inquiries - Renee Saleh 0411 523 969 email - rsaleh@bne.catholic.edu.au
Enrolment ceremony for Sacraments of Confirmation and 1st Holy Communion

Congratulations to all the children who were in enrolled in the Sacramental program this weekend. May God bless you with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit as you prepare for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. The parishioners of St Rita’s parish will be praying that you will come to know Jesus in a deeper and more personal way.

Confirmation lessons:
6pm Sat 10th/9am Sun 11th May
6pm Sat 17th/9am Sun 18th May
6pm Sat 24th/9am Sun 25th May
6pm Sat 31st/9am Sun 1st June
6pm Sat 7th/9am Sun 8th June

So what occurs during a Catholic Confirmation?
The Holy Spirit is first introduced to a Catholic the day they are baptized, because the entire Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — are invoked at the ceremony. During Confirmation, God the Holy Spirit comes upon the person, accompanied by God the Father and God the Son, just as He did at Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth upon the 12 apostles and the Virgin Mary, occurring 50 days after Easter and 10 days after Jesus’ Ascension (Acts 2:1–4). This sacrament is called Confirmation because the faith given in Baptism is now confirmed and made strong. Confirmation means accepting responsibility for your faith and destiny. Childhood is a time when you're told what to do, and you react positively to reward and negatively to punishment. Adulthood, even young adulthood, means that you must do what's right on your own, not for the recognition or reward but merely because it's the right thing to do. The focus is on the Holy Spirit, who confirmed the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4) and gave them courage to practice their faith. Catholics believe that the same Holy Spirit confirms Catholics during the Sacrament of Confirmation and gives them the same gifts and fruits.

St Rita’s Parish Family Dance/DISCO
Please come and join us for a fun night out of dancing and socializing (bringing the community together)
Date: Saturday 24th May at 6pm or join us after mass, at the Unitas Centre.

Cost: Gold coin donation per person
BYO drinks and food. Children must be accompanied by an adult. This is not a supervised event, but a family affair, so come and enjoy.
Any questions, call Martina on 38208141

We need your help!!
Due to parishioners moving on, vacancies have appeared in our monthly rosters at the church. We really could do with more Communion Ministers, Ministers to the Word (Readers), Data Projector operators and Altar servers (boys and girls) to fill the spaces that have appeared. If you feel that you can share your time and talent with the Church community, please contact the Parish Office on 3207 9177 for any information that could help us. Many thanks to you all.
After School Kayaking
Meet you on the water after school for some serious paddling fun. Our after-school kayak sessions will run for one hour, one day a week for 4 weeks. You will learn how to kayak, see various waterways of the Redlands and get up close and personal with the wildlife. Thursday afternoons, either 3.30pm or 4.30pm. Children aged 8yrs and older. Cost $20.00 per child per week or $70.00 for 4 week block. (includes full use of kayak gear and safety equipment) For more information please contact Katrina Beutel at Redlands Kayak Tours 1300 529 258.
This is the 4th year the St Rita’s Parent Network have coordinated Walk Safely to School Day and we are fortunate to have such a supportive parent community involved in the morning. It is a really easy event to help out with and each year it grows in numbers.

It is a great day to be involved with and the event is all over by about 9.15am. If you would like to be a part of the team organising the day, these are some of the tasks that are involved.

PARENTS/CARERS – WHAT ARE YOU GOOD AT?

Please see below a list of how you are able to contribute to the organisation of the day. Please indicate your interest below and return the form to School by Friday 16/5/14.

If you would like to get involved, please complete the form below and return to school or contact Debbie Stone, 0402 102 987 or donought83@hotmail.com.

More information about walking start locations will be sent out closer to the date.

2014 WALK SAFELY TO SCHOOL DAY – CONTRIBUTION OF SUPPORT

NAME: ____________________________ CONTACT NO: ________________

EMAIL ADDRESS: ____________________________

☐ Requesting donations from local suppliers – if you have a contact at a fruit shop or local supermarket, please talk to Debbie about the food we would like donated.

☐ Cutting up fruit and cheese the day or night before (Thu 22/5/14) – 2-4 people

☐ Setting up at school on the deck for breakfast at around 7am. (3 people)

☐ Supervisor to give out streamers/balloons at walking locations (arrive 7.15am - 2-3 people at each location)

☐ Serving out the food on the deck from around 7.50 (will need 6 people)

☐ Giving out stickers (2 people)

☐ Cleaning up after breakfast (4 people, at around 8.45-9.15am)

RETURN BY FRIDAY 16TH MAY 2014
Michael Grose Parenting Presentations
(Sponsored by St Rita’s School Parent Network)

Michael Grose is Australia’s No. 1 Parenting and Education Presenter.

A former primary teacher and experienced presenter, Michael has been entertaining, informing and inspiring audiences around Australia, in Singapore and the UK for over twenty years.

Currently, he supports over 1,500 schools in Australia and internationally to build strong partnerships with their parent communities.

Tuesday, 3 June 2014 – 7 pm
Parent Evening 1: “Raising Kids to Thrive!”
✔ How to develop real independence in kids so that they are equipped to look after themselves.
✔ The most effective parenting style for raising today’s kids.
✔ The secrets to building strong families and how you can apply these principles to your own family.
✔ Why disappointment, struggle and failure are good for kids and how you can help them grow from these experiences.
✔ Great ways to get cooperation from your kids without nagging, shaming or raising your voice.

Wednesday, 4 June 2014 – 9 am
Parent Morning 1: “How to get your kids to listen”

A different presentation that complements the previous evening –
✔ How to develop effective communication skills.
✔ How to choose appropriate consequences.
✔ How to help parents to feel confident enough to set limits and boundaries.
✔ Let parents know it is ok to “be the parent”.

It is possible to attend either or both presentations. The two sessions will be held in the Unitas Centre, St Rita’s Primary School, 39 Benfer Road, Victoria Point.

Any further enquiries, please email pvictoriapoint@bne.catholic.edu.au

A gold coin donation will be welcome at the sessions.

(Please return attendance slip below to your School Office by Friday, 30 May)

ATTENDANCE SLIP – MICHAEL GROSE PARENTING PRESENTATIONS

Names: __________________________________________

Session/s attending: Parent Evening 1 □ Parent Morning 1 □ Both Sessions □

Thank you for your interest. St Rita’s School Parent Network
Helping students get ready for the NAPLAN tests

The most resilient children and young people are those who rise to meet rather than retreat from the challenges presented to them. Perhaps it’s best to view the NAPLAN tests as good learning experiences rather than dreaded pressure tests.

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Whether your child stresses or takes them in his stride here are some tips to help prepare for the NAPLAN tests:

1. Take your cues from your child:
   If your child doesn’t worry about them then neither should you. Be careful not to create a problem that doesn’t exist by incessantly talking about, or worse, worrying about the test.

2. Focus on doing their best and trying hard:
   Choose your words carefully when you speak with your kids. As with all their learning activities place your focus squarely on effort rather than results. The only pressure on kids should be to try hard rather than to do well.

3. Listen to any concerns they have:
   If your child confesses to some nerves then validate their feelings, rather than shut them down with a ‘get over it’ response. “Yes, sometimes tests can be a little scary, but they get easier every time you take them.” Use this as an opportunity to develop some emotional smarts, which starts with recognising how kids feel.

4. Give them some relaxation ideas:
   Anxious or nervous kids will benefit from some simple relaxation strategies. Taking some deep breaths, changing their thinking and exercising the morning of the test are some simple ways to help kids get some feeling of control.

5. Help them retain their perspective:
   One way to help children who become excessively anxious about an event is to ask what’s the worst thing that could happen? Okay, they may not do as well as they would like but the sun will still rise tomorrow, regardless of how well they do. Keeping perspective is a life skill that we all need to practise.

A positive, caring parent attitude is one of the best gifts you can give a child when they are apprehensive or nervous about approaching any different situation whether it’s going on school camp, joining a new club or sitting a NAPLAN test.
I grew up as one of five kids in a close-knit family, and from an early age I wanted nothing more than to be a stay-at-home mum. I’d met Robert when I was almost 16 and, after nine years together, starting a family seemed as natural as night following day.

I gave birth to Jonathan two days before Christmas in 1984. He was an adorable baby and as a toddler he was boisterous and creative. I enjoyed every minute of those years at home with him and Chris.

Becoming a mother defined me. How can you not change when suddenly there exists something that is more precious than your own life? I discovered new things about, and deeper levels within, myself – because I held so much more in my arms. Of course the boys took my time, my space, even my patience – but they gave it all back with a smile.

Now that my boys are men, it’s not the fancy holidays or big events that are my most golden memories. It’s the ordinary, everyday things. Bedtime stories were a special time because they opened up their imaginations. Music: playing their favourite songs and dancing crazily with them. Dinner times: every night, without fail, we ate at the dining table together – the same meal for everyone, too. This was, and is, an important ritual in the milieu of our family life. It’s where we partake in each other’s day, share thoughts and exchange memories. I often call the dinner table ‘my altar table’ – it’s like a religious conviction, I guess, where I get to nurture and nourish my family.

On Sunday, May 18, 1997, I was cooking one such dinner for us when everything changed. Jonathan was 12 and I was 37. He’d been playing outside with the boy from next door and I was making nachos. Just after 5 pm I called Jon inside, and minutes later I heard a huge bang.

Jonathan didn’t see the car coming. The car took him out and sent him flying for 20 metres. I found Jonathan lying on the street, his leg all twisted, with a horrible amount of dark-red blood coming out of his mouth and nose. There were two voices in my head – one telling me to scream hysterically and the other telling me to stay calm because my baby needed me calm. That was the voice I chose to listen to.

At the hospital I didn’t cry; I just felt numb. A doctor told us a CT scan indicated a brain injury; that Jonathan’s clinical signs weren’t good, and he couldn’t tell us if he’d make it. I thought, ‘You don’t know Jonathan’.

Jonathan was in an induced coma for the first month and for four more months I didn’t leave his side. Some deep reserve of energy kicked in and I knew I was making a difference to his recovery. All day long I told him how much we loved him; that he was going to be all right. But Jonathan got worse before he got better and each day felt like a ghastly repeat of the one before.

Jonathan was in intensive care for three weeks and then his eyes started to open. From early on, I knew he knew me. I’d lie on his bed and cuddle him and tell him about his life and read him stories. I was completely driven in my mission to restore what little semblance was left of my family. I saw signs of positivity everywhere.

Around the two-month mark I knew I had something to work with. I wheeled Jonathan to a piano in the hospital music room. He had no neck control, he was still dribbling and not talking, but he was just starting movement in his right arm. He’d begun to reach up and touch my face and take my rings off and do little things he’d done as a toddler. At the piano he reached out and started playing ‘Chariots Of Fire’, which he’d been learning at the time of the accident.

 Seventeen years ago, Cheryl Koenig was a typical young Sydney mum celebrating Mother’s Day with her husband Robert and their two sons, Jonathan, 12, and Chris, 10. One week later, Jonathan was involved in a car accident that left him with a severe traumatic brain injury. Since that day, Cheryl has worked tirelessly to help not only Jonathan but also other sufferers of brain injury. Here, New South Wales’ ‘Woman Of The Year’ for 2009 – and the recipient this year of a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to people with disabilities, their families and carers – shares her extraordinary story.

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more on page 2
There were no doctors around but the teachers saw it and everyone was crying – me hardest of all. That’s his theme song now, and he played it at the launch of my book.

Jono had post-traumatic amnesia for about 10 months, which indicates the worst kind of brain injury and the unlikeliness that memory will be regained. But we didn’t listen to the doctors. I see his memory improving all the time and that’s because he has a full and active life.

It’s been a long, hard journey. At three months he started making moaning sounds. I saw that as positive – he was trying to communicate. And then he started making ‘mmm’ sounds. I literally pulled apart his lips to get his mouth moving but I closed the curtains around us because people thought I was crazy. But then one day he looked at me and said ‘Mum’. I can’t describe the joy I felt.

The first day I left him, to go to the hairdresser because I was a mess, my sister stayed with him and gave him a drink of grape juice that hadn’t been diluted. He gagged and blurted out: ‘I want my Mum!’ I’d cried all the way through getting my hair done but I walked back into his room and he was talking! We called Robert and I said ‘Someone here wants to speak to you’. Without any prompting, Jonathan said in the softest voice: ‘Hi…Dad…I…Love…You…Dad’. We were all in floods of tears.

Jono’s accident not only changed who I was, it also changed the complete dynamic of our family. I had to wear so many different hats in my new role as mother to Jono. I was – and, to varying degrees, still am – his carer, his rehabilitation case manager, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, tutor, social secretary, counsellor for depression, and by and large his navigator through life.

My mothering of Chris did a complete 360, too. Chris was only 10 at the time of Jonathan’s accident and I had to neglect him and his needs for the best part of five to 10 years because my entire energy was driven towards getting Jonathan better. To this day, I feel an enormous amount of ‘mother-guilt’ about not being there throughout probably the most crucial years of a boy’s life: adolescence.

I was also guilty of being overprotective because I was terrified something bad would happen to Chris too. But I learnt, with time, to let him find his own way and I’m so glad I did, because he has become the most extraordinary young man, with the right blend of compassion and empathy, integrity and humility. He’s a civil engineer and he married his girlfriend Danielle last year, with Jono as his best man. It was an incredibly happy day for our family. Jono made a five-minute speech he’d memorised, jokes and all, which brought the house down.

I’m enormously proud of both of my boys although Chris is probably my proudest achievement, because he’s done it all by himself. But our kids learn through watching us, in ways we don’t even realise at the time.