

Early in the term we had a Welcome Assembly for our new students, who also become *brothers and sisters* of Milpera. Julie Peel, our Principal, said that we had had a great start to the term and that she had visited classes and seen good language learning taking place where students were reading, writing and engaging with one another.

Julie encouraged students to think about what they did with their litter. She said we acknowledge the First Nations people, who for thousands of years cared for the land our school stands on and that we need to care for our environment. Julie reminded everyone that we live in a democracy and that over the weekend people over 18 were allowed to vote. She said Anthony Albanese, our new Prime Minister had spoken of the importance of showing kindness to each other and those in need. Students were reminded of the Ways of Working at Milpera, of being Kind, Respectful, Ready and Hard Working. Room 11 and Ms Kelly sang *Welcome to All People*.



Sam Dilly, our Deputy Principal, spoke about the peace awards and said that these are given to students who show kindness and respect to all and to those who can problem solve. He also reminded students about how to respond if a student was having difficulties. Firstly, to walk away, then to ask the student respectfully to stop the behaviour and if needed to find a teacher and ask for help. The student leaders spoke of their desire for everyone to work together to make Milpera a strong and happy high school.



Room 17 led our ANZAC Day ceremony this year. Fatimah did an acknowledgment to Country and the students spoke about the history of the ANZACS and said that we gathered to honour those who died, so that we can live in peace. The Ode of Remembrance was also read out.



Julie thanked Room 17 for their presentation which was relevant, respectful and moving. She reminded students of the gift of peace and asked them to reflect on how they could create peace in their classroom, and in their homes. She spoke of how people had died, so others were able to live in peace. She also stressed the need for friendship and kindness.

Milpera provides music in many settings for our students. There are many examples of this throughout the term. Every Monday Bidy has run a Ukulele Club. All have been made welcome and have enjoyed making music together. Another recent example was the Room 10 students singing Inanay, a traditional Indigenous children's song, using scarves with Ms Becky.





Students have also had a wonderful opportunity to participate in a circus workshop every Thursday during school hours. The trainers from Vulcana Circus, have taught students how to tumble, juggle, do aerial tricks and more. This has improved students' coordination, built their confidence, taught them to support each other and make new friends.



During the term Brett Shields, a teacher at Brisbane Boys' College brought a group of students to Milpera for the day. As well as learning about Milpera, the boys also learnt from our students and supported them.







We celebrated National Volunteer Week this term. On Monday Abdul Ibrahim and Zakya Fayazi spoke about the *Value of Connection with Each Other*. Abdul thanked volunteers for giving their time and discussed what a positive

impact it has on our students. He stated that connection is very important to people who are new to Australia, many of whom feel overwhelmed, especially if they have come from a marginalised community. He remembered arriving 22 years ago and being a student at Milpera. He spoke of how Peggie, a volunteer, gave him the gift of helping him learn to read in English and said that this connection was profoundly important to him.

Zakya said that she appreciated the beautiful, powerful work that volunteers do. She discussed that students who arrive here have huge challenges when they don't speak the language and are not familiar with the education system. She explained that the new culture and way of life can be overwhelming and that it takes students time to feel confident. Your friendly faces help students greatly. When you sit next to students in class and help them write a sentence or help them to organise ideas, you are a gentle support. Students then begin to believe in themselves. The support is not only seen in their language improvement, but also emotionally. Students begin to trust, hope and make social connections. This kindness can be life changing, students feel valued, respected and want to keep learning. Even when they have left, they love returning to Milpera. Your presence enables them to build a brighter future, not only for themselves, but also for their families and their community.



On Tuesday Sam Dilly spoke about *Building Student Stamina and Engagement, a Trauma Informed Approach*. We use this approach at Milpera as most refugee/refugee like students have experienced trauma. Certain ways of doing things help students to be engaged as well as building their stamina and a positive culture. An example of this could be working in a circle where students take part in activities such as greeting each other in turn. Another example is using a positive primer, looking for strengths and naming them in students, such as recognising kindness, persistence, creativity etc. This approach is also valuable as it aligns with HEAL (the Home of Expressive Arts and Learning)



Sam spoke of the importance of being able to regulate one's emotions, if students feel more positive, their ability to focus increases and they can make better decisions, whereas if they feel threatened, they tend to want to *fight, flight or freeze*, which can result in them becoming more isolated and possibly unavailable for learning. They are also more likely to react than to

respond. Neuroscience has recognised that a sense of belonging is one of the most important human needs and when this is fulfilled, students perform better. Volunteers have an incredibly positive impact in this space as they are present with students, listening to them read, write, do a science experiment etc.

If students develop emotional intelligence and become aware of how they feel and others feel they are better able to self-regulate. They can learn skills to help themselves to become more emotionally intelligent, such as singing, drawing, talking to someone etc. Mind hooks which have negative mind sets, such as *I can't do this, I can't do anything right. / I am never going to get a job*, can become pervasive and undermine their resilience. Students can be taught defusion strategies, such as naming the thought.

If students get *In Flow*, which is when they are immersed in what they are doing, it is hugely beneficial and helps to build their academic stamina. It is valuable if a student receives immediate, ongoing and meaningful feedback from the teacher, their peers or through the task itself. *Process Versus Person Praise* has been found to be constructive, for example, saying *"I've seen a real improvement in the way that you are using descriptive language – it has really made a difference in your writing"* rather than *"Good job. You are smart."*

Sam thanked all volunteers for the amazing contribution that they make to our students. He stated "Milpera would not be the same without you."

On Wednesday Jacki Howlett spoke about *Settlement Support*. She started by acknowledging the huge difference that volunteers make to our students. She said that she came from a teaching background and volunteered at Milpera when she moved to Brisbane. She then worked in the classroom and in the HOW program. Her favourite quote is "There is no such thing as other people's children."

Jacki now heads up the team in Student Services and works full time. Dr Miriam Wellauer is part of the team and sees students every Tuesday. She is very thorough and can spend more time with students if needed. She can also write referrals for students to access other health providers, if required.

Olena McInnes helps students when they exit Milpera. She works closely with the Community Liaison Officers, who speak different languages and arranges for home visits. Jenny Tang who is a speech therapist sees students who need speech or language/literacy support. Sam Kimanuka is the Youth Support Coordinator who engages students in after school activities, work experience and care classes.

Sonia Adolphs is our Wellbeing Officer works with students from non-refugee backgrounds, who are experiencing challenges. Service Australia also visits Milpera fortnightly to help students in different ways, such as getting them a Medicare card, if they don't have one.

On enrolment students from a refugee/ refugee like background are screened by HEAL (Home of Expressive Arts and Learning) to see if it would be beneficial for them to see an Art therapist or the Music therapist. Teachers can also refer students to HEAL as well, or students can refer themselves.

Brad Milford, our Guidance Officer supports our students with pathway/career counselling and wellbeing activities.



Multicultural Australia is also a link between the students, their family and Milpera. They provide case workers who help families when they arrive in Australia and they refer students to Milpera. Some state schools send students to Milpera if they still need more English. When all students arrive at Milpera their English is assessed and they go into classes according to their age and ability. (Beginner, Post Beginner, Year Level 1.) When students exit from Prep Level 2 they usually access the closest catchment High School in their area. If they are older they go on to TAFE.



We also work closely with QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma.) If for example, Jacki becomes aware of a mother who is struggling, she can fill out a referral for QPASTT. If a student has been seeing one of our therapists and is exiting, Jacki can also do a referral to QPASTT for them, so that they can continue to get support when they leave Milpera. This term Youth workers from QPASTT have been doing drumming with some of our students, encouraging them to build resilience. Using the drum students learn about what they can have control over.

AMPARO, who stand up for vulnerable people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds with disability, also provides assistance to some of our students.

Mater Multicultural Health Co-ordination Program send a nurse to Milpera once a week. She helps to navigate complex cases where students or families need more help. She supports students with any visa category.

Milpera also works with Reconnect (NAYS). One of our volunteers, Anne Weir works for Reconnect, helping newly arrived youth, who for example, may need crisis accommodation. Anne will also accompany students leaving Milpera and enrol them at their new school, ensuring they get adequate supplies.

Milpera receives food donations from Food Bank, Second Bite and Eat Up. Free breakfast is available every morning. Volunteers help a few days a week to prepare and serve breakfast.

Milpera partnerships with UQ physio and auditory screening. QUT provides visual screening and free glasses to our students.

Jacki arranges many community events, which help families and students to connect with one another and to feel a sense of belonging. This term Rohingya families spent a day at Milpera learning about our education system, parenting challenges, settlement support, health information, cyber safety etc.



Some students, who have difficulty regulating their emotions take part in an Equine Therapy Program called Thrive where students learn to care for and build a relationship with a horse. They learn to observe and read the behaviour of the horse, which in turn helps them.

Milpera partnerships with the Queensland Department of Health. The program is called *Good Start*. A group of adults come in and work with students from the Pacific Islands and do a six-week cooking course using healthy ingredients, such as brown rice and lots of vegetables. Our students love the classes and take the food they have made home for dinner.

The Queensland African Communities Council encourages our students to form connections out of Milpera, which will make it easier when students leave.

Jacki also explores leadership opportunities for our students such as *The Bunya to the Bay* Adventure.

Every term Jacki organises a destination lunch where students meet people from the school they will attend. She also visits students in their mainstream school.

Jacki thanked the volunteers for caring about our students and for making them feel valued.





On Thursday and Friday Bethany Mahadeo spoke on Creative Therapies at Milpera (HEAL). The team is made up of art therapists and a music therapist. Their overall aim is to help students from a refugee/refugee like background feel safe, connected and to be available for learning. Supporting students to re-experience relationships differently is the key to trauma recovery and change.

When these students arrive at Milpera they often feel unsafe and disconnected. They may have physical symptoms, be confused, lack concentration, be withdrawn or have big reactions to small things. All these symptoms are a result of their experiences. This trauma could also be further fuelled by intergenerational trauma, thereby giving students an even higher level of stress. These students are referred to HEAL upon arrival and may continue to see a therapist for months. Visa categories also give us clues as to what students and their families may have experienced and even though families and their children are here, they may continue to be traumatised when they hear news of loved ones from home. This is also often made worse from social media when students see graphic images from home. Notwithstanding all this, young people are resilient and make huge strides once they learn to regulate their emotions, to trust and practise skills which help them to heal.

Bethany said that HEAL is not seen as a mental health service, but rather as a space where students can go, spend time and come away feeling heard and supported. HEAL is also effective as students can be seen immediately on site. Techniques used in creative therapies enable students to create new pathways. Many students have never had the opportunity to play. They are now given this opportunity, and it helps them to regulate their emotions. Students need the opportunity too to coregulate. This is a process where they learn to manage their emotions and behaviours through interactions with a calm, responsive and supportive person. Volunteers help greatly in this space.

The links between neurobiology and trauma are now clear. Dan Hughes' (clinical psychologist and author) model of enriched care, which is seen below, is wonderful for Milpera.

P.A.C.E.  
Playfulness  
Acceptance  
Curiosity  
Empathy

Art therapists use many techniques such as sand play, visual journalling, breathing exercises, yoga, mindful meditation practices and more. Often art is the vehicle of the therapy, and there are very few words. Students learn that they can intervene and change an outcome and move forward.



Bethany thanked all volunteers for the valuable part they play in helping our students to progress and live fuller lives.



On Sorry Day and during Reconciliation Week students took part in various activities. Before Sorry Day students made hands which were added to the "Sea of Hands" installation as part of Benarrawa's Sorry Day Ceremony. These were returned and were hung on our large tree near the fire. At Milpera classes remembered First Nation people who were taken from their families. Students gathered round the fire at various times during the day and were encouraged to listen carefully to a Dreaming Story as there were messages in the story for them.

The story was about two brothers who explored the skies and how Wugun, the crow came to be black and Wilbung, the magpie came to be black and white. They each believed that they were the best warrior and had a fight. The other animals just watched. When they were locked in battle, they didn't realise they were so close to the fire, and they fell in Wilbung, the magpie, managed to get out of the embers sooner and that is why he is black and white. Wugun, the crow is black to this day, as he was tired and got more burnt. Wugun's call is still sad and mournful as he remembers the terrible fight. The brothers are still friends, but are not as close as they used





to be, they still share the sky. The story teaches us that you should be the best that you can be, that you should respect the differences of those around you and share your knowledge and ability with others.

On Thursday during Reconciliation Week the school gathered to share food at lunch time.



Throughout the term we have encouraged our students to be aware of their surroundings at school - the plants, birds animals and insects and to respect the First Nations People who cared for this land. Part of this caring for the land is making sure our grounds are clean. Students have spent time picking up litter this term.

Julie visited Singapore on a Teaching Fellowship with Schools Plus and said it was a real privilege. David Gonski established Schools Plus as a charity with particular focus on schools with disadvantage and low ICSEA. Julie said it is an amazing organisation with teachers and schools at the forefront of its work. She said that Milpera had benefitted greatly from Schools Plus in terms of funding for Milpera Live, Flood recovery, swimming and now our Literacy project. They are keen to work with us in the future on projects that can be scaled up with measurable student impact.

Julie said “The trip to Singapore began with the Education Heritage Centre and the opportunity to develop an education system shaped by political leaders after World War 11. We visited the teacher training institute (NIE), the Academy of Teachers (PD Centre for experienced teachers), a number of schools and the Australian High Commission.

The Pathlight School for students with ASD was an absolute stand out. The programs are highly tailored, and the students achieve amazing things. The school had a palpable culture of care and there was a wonderful moment when a student ran to the Deputy Principal kissed her and said “good morning my queen!” Teachers the world over are truly special people and really do change the lives of the students they teach.”

At the Academy of Teachers Julie gave a presentation about our PD Structure and program. It was here that she met a wonderful teacher, Edwin who presented his work using a gardening metaphor, which was very beautiful. He is pictured with her below.

“I am not here to  
harvest greatness.

I am here to sow  
seeds –

Of courage, of  
compassion, of  
curiosity –

and trust that one  
day

in places I may  
never see, they will  
bloom.”



Experienced teachers from Taiwan chose to spend their school holidays travelling to Australia to perform school visits. Backed by the Taiwanese government, these teachers were informed about the Milpera way and by the graciousness of Milpera teachers were able to observe a variety of subjects. Mr Stegman simulated a lesson with the Taiwanese teachers acting as EAL/D students.

The day ended with presentations about Transitions, SAR/HOW and HEAL with many questions being asked along the way. (Jared Stegman)





This term Emerald Surrao arranged for farm animals, as well as guinea pigs to come to school. The aim was to increase student wellbeing as well as extending students' vocabulary and empathy. Some students loved feeding and patting the animals, while others preferred to observe them.



“Back to Milpera Day” was held on a Saturday this term. It was a joyful event for past and current students. Milpera’s history was on display and there was A Happy Friends gallery where you could have a cup of tea and catch up with past friends and teachers.



Outside there was rock climbing, face painting and other activities. Volunteers from the Archerfield Rotary Club manned the BBQ and the P and C had a stall. Amara made Eritrean coffee, which was strong and hot. A bit later Adele Rice, the founder of Milpera spoke about



how Milpera is a place of welcome and hope. Julie Peel also welcomed all and said it was a day of celebration, belonging and sharing.



After this the talent show began. Individuals sang, played musical instruments and groups of students danced and sang. The audiences' joy was palpable, especially when students joined in the singing and dances.







During week 7, 8 and 9, 6 classes learnt to cook a simple breakfast, lunch and dinner. The students enjoyed their time in the kitchen and savoured the results.





This term our percentage of refugee students has increased from 40-45% of the school to 55-60% of the school, with many students having limited prior formal schooling. Fortunately, our sizes are smaller than mainstream schools and we are supplied with significantly more teacher aides. Added to this, volunteers contribute greatly to students' success, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

Another group of Prep 1 Milpera students transitioned to Kingston at the end of the term. They received uniforms for their new school at the Exit Parade.

All at Milpera thank you for being part of our community and for sharing your talents, your time and your care with our students. It makes for good settlement and good citizens.

