

Dear Volunteers

The ABC filmed students from different schools including Milpera, on the first day of school this year. They also interviewed Rosie who highlighted that good settlement leads to good citizenship.



At the Welcome Assembly Julie Peel, our Principal, extended her appreciation to the staff for their outstanding efforts in enrolling 88 new students. This reflects the strong teamwork and commitment within our school community.

Julie also commended our students for the way they support and help one another. Their kindness, cooperation, and encouragement continue to make the school a welcoming and positive place for all.

She encouraged all students to keep working together, remain positive, and to strive to grow their English. At the same time, she reminded students to be proud of who they are, to respect their family values, and to continue practising and strengthening their home language, while learning English.

Early in the term we had a Bunyaville incursion where students were encouraged to make the connection to the land that they are on, using First Nations knowledge. They started by sitting in a circle, noticing where they were, being still and listening. (Dadirri meaning “inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness”.)

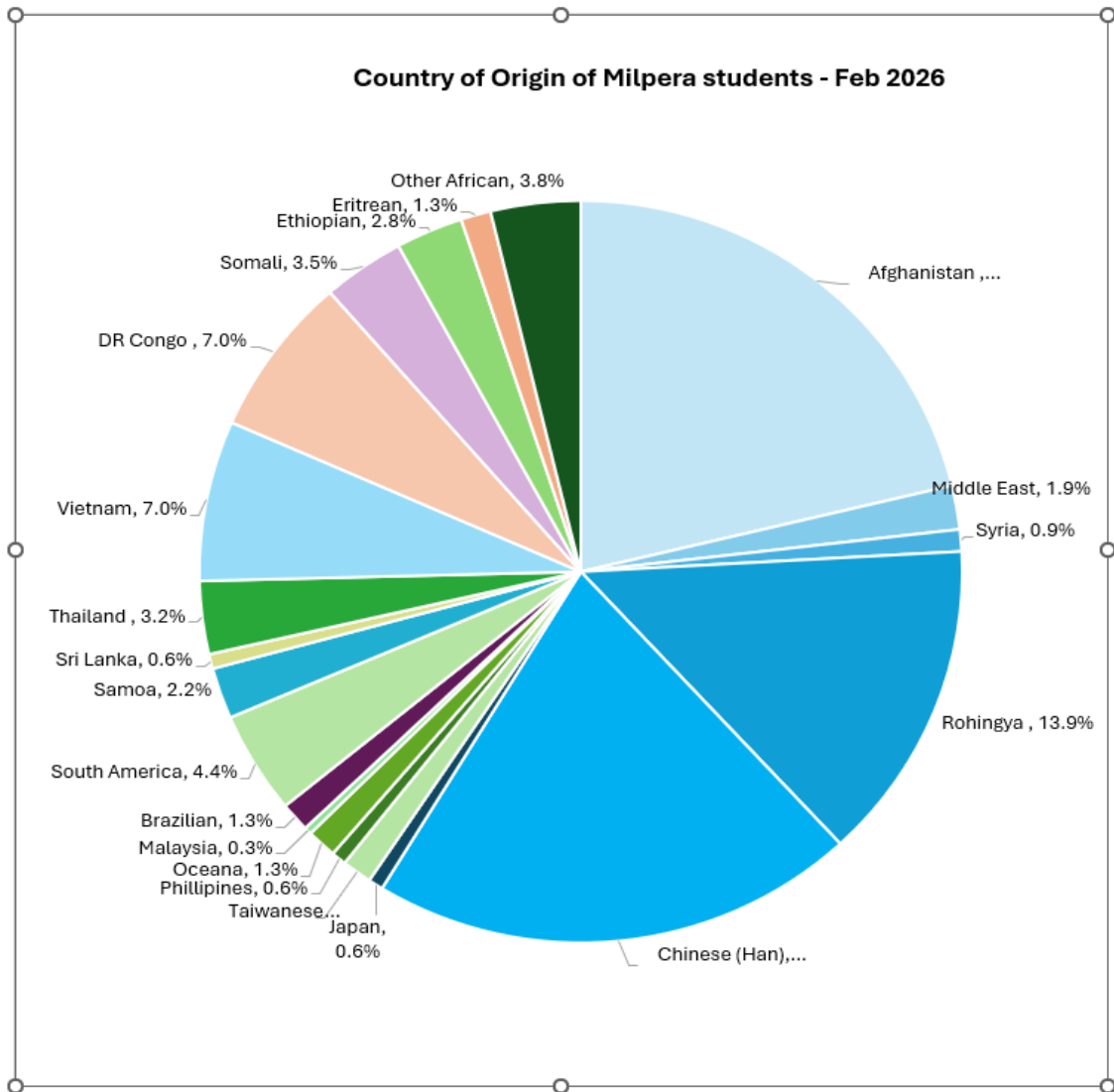


Later they did some nature journaling and painting of things that they had seen.

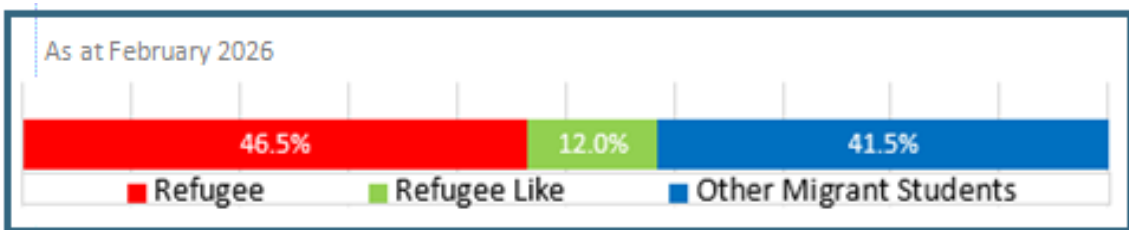


Julie Peel, our Principal, spoke at the Volunteer Morning Tea. She spoke about the countries of origin of our current students and said that all the languages of our students, bar one (Afar), were represented by our teacher aides. She said that teacher aides are invaluable as

they help us to deliver culturally, responsive teaching. She also said that our percentage of refugee and refugee like students, are back to our pre-Covid levels.



Breakup – Migrant and Refugee Background students



Milpera assesses students using Bandscales (the measure of a student's language acquisition). Ninety six percent of students move up two bandscales before they leave Milpera. They need to learn social and academic language and to be able to write using both present and past tense.

Milpera has good data on belonging which is a great positive as it is a predictor for engagement and achievement.

Julie said that the P and C at Milpera is largely made up of staff. Volunteers also contribute greatly and more volunteers are welcome to join the P and C.

Literacy routines have been run in Beginner classes in half hourly slots this term. They have focussed on letter-sound knowledge, word building and sound swapping. Both pre and post testing were implemented.

Students who live in the Kingston area and surrounds were able to do Level 2 at Kingston State College and some of our older students did an extra 6 months at Yeronga State High School.

Milpera Live is working with 26 schools in Queensland at present. This initiative started with one program called *Blue Water* with students from Goodna State School and has grown immensely. Students who have had access to this program have had great success, as before this there was no EAL/D program for them. Our teachers go online and have reached 118 students this term. Each student receives 2 hours of tuition weekly.

Jared Stegman and Stephanie McKenna introduced the idea of developing a whole school approach to digital learning. They gathered ideas from the staff about what students needed and put together a four-year road map.

Julie also spoke about current changes at school, such as parents using AI in a positive way when communicating with the school. Students having their phones off and away during school hours has helped them in many ways.

Julie thanked all volunteers and said that Milpera could not achieve what we do without you.



Two trainers from Vulcana Circus ran a program for students every Monday. Students learnt how to juggle, trampoline, acro balance, use hula hoops and to spin plates. It was a great way to improve co-ordination, balance, concentration, inspire creativity and build confidence. It also encouraged our students to work together in a fun way and improve their language skills.



Eddie Nsanzimana, from QPASTT (Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma) with help from Ehsanullah Hassanzada came to Milpera on Tuesdays to run drumming classes. During the class students were encouraged to listen and observe. In the drumming circle they were in control of their drum. They were shown that just as they were in control of their drum, they could be in control of their decisions. Playing together, listening to others and realizing when it was their turn to play built class cohesion and helped them to realize that their actions could impact others.



On Friday the 6th March we celebrated International Women's Day. The Theme *Balance the Scales* was put up by staff and students.



Inalaiah Conlon did a Welcome to Country. She also spoke of the love, support and guidance that she had received from her mother, grandmothers and sisters. She remembers her great grandmother, who showed great courage and resilience at a time when there was much inequality. Inalaiah said that she had suffered domestic violence and made the decision for herself and her child to walk away. The women in her life helped her to choose a better pathway. She said we need to continue to fight for equality for all women.

Our Principal, Julie Peel, welcomed all to our special place of brothers and sisters and spoke with gratitude about this sacred land of our First Nations People.

She spoke about three women who have worked towards *Balancing the Scales*.

Julie visited the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, where she saw works by Atong Atem, a celebrated Ethiopian-born, South Sudanese Australian photographic artist, who uses elements of Australia and other countries to show her identity. Her work often speaks to her sense of belonging and connection to her community in Australia and beyond.

Julie spoke too about Professor Davis who has fought and continues to fight for the rights of First Nations people to be heard. She is well known for the work that she did on the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Julie spoke too about Anjelina Akuac, who works at Milpera as a Teacher Aide. Last year Anjelina was honoured by the Queensland Human Rights Commission for her dedication to human rights and social justice. She has empowered young people, especially girls, for the past 26 years and will continue to do so.



Julie asked how we could learn from these women, feel safe, share our culture and our stories. She thanked all the women and girls for making a difference in their classes, in their homes and in the community.

Riyan Kadir who works at Milpera as a Teacher Aide spoke next. She was born in Kenya and her background is Somali and Ethiopian. She said that when she received the news that they were coming to Australia her family and her were excited, but also overwhelmed. She said that the UN gave them information about Australia over 2 days. She was not a confident person and found so many changes confronting. For example, in Africa the boys and girls were separated and their food needed to be Halal.

Initially they lived in Townsville and Riyan found language learning difficult. She completed Grade 11 and 12 at Sunnybank and then went on to study Early Childhood. She came to Milpera in 2023 and grew in confidence and felt as though she belonged here. She is now working part time at Milpera, as well as studying to become a teacher.

Julie said that Riyan brings amazing energy and a sense of fun to Milpera.

Summer Hu, a past Milpera student, acknowledged the custodians of the land and spoke about her experiences. She attended Milpera in 2002 when she was 15 years old and said how shocked she was when she arrived. She said that she is proud of her Chinese heritage, her first home and that she really values the freedom of speech, religion and association in Australia, her second home.

She studied hard and practised very successfully as an actuary in Sydney. She changed course and today she is an anthropologist (Psychological Anthropological PhD Researcher), a job about which she is passionate.

She shared her vulnerabilities with us and said that she has come from a place of pain. She wanted us to see her as she is without all her armour/ her academic prowess/achievements. She said that people should not define us and that we should tell our own stories. She told the students that while they are Australian, they must never doubt their heritage, as it will keep them grounded. Summer said she is cheering our students on and that they should live in the uncomfortable edge of their potential and grow and therein lies their future.

The student leaders gave a vote of thanks and said that Milpera gives one a strong feeling of belonging. They thanked all girls and women and the boys were asked to thank their mothers, sisters and aunties for all that they do.



Afterwards the girls and boys took part in different activities such as rock climbing, soccer, fencing. STEM, quilting and movie making.



The girls from Rooms 18 and 20 celebrated International Women's Day with the Benarrawa community. Girls selected skirts and scarves to wear, danced, shared food and did various activities, one being writing or responding in art on a puzzle piece about what makes them strong. One of our volunteers Suse said "All nationalities were represented as we explored our power and freedom as girls and women to come together, to move, to feel joy, to take up space and express ourselves."



In March Rooms 15 and 21 went on camp to Stanley River. Before leaving for camp the students and staff gathered in a circle behind the bus shed. Danny Parker said that Milpera is the meeting place of brothers and sisters and that this place has been used for ceremonies for thousands of years. He said that we all stand in a circle regardless of where you are from and

that we stand as one. He then asked everyone to say how they felt about going on camp. Many students said they were excited and happy to be going to camp, while others said they were scared, as it was their first time doing something like this. Some were looking forward to seeing the land outside Brisbane as well as being grateful to staff for this opportunity.

Danny then drew the students' attention to the wooden crocodile and the kangaroo skin that were in the circle. He said that the crocodile has some fear, but that the opposite of this was courage. He said that everyone gets scared at times but that we must support each other and work together in unity. The kangaroo was to remind everyone to move forwards as kangaroos can't move backwards. Danny hoped that students would form deeper connections to country and each other.



Nicolas has written a reflection about camp.

Last Wednesday, I went on an amazing camping trip in Stanley river. It was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I went there with my friends and we spent three days surrounded by nature.

Every night, we sat around the campfire talking, laughing, and enjoying the peaceful atmosphere. We even saw possums every night, which was really exciting and a bit funny too. They were always curious and came close to our campsite.

During the day, we did many fun activities. One of my favourite activities was canoeing on the river. The water was calm, and it was very relaxing. We also spent time stargazing at night. The sky was so clear, and we could see so many stars. It was beautiful and unforgettable.



Another highlight of the trip was making damper over the fire. It was delicious, and we all enjoyed cooking together. Every morning, we woke up early and saw kangaroos nearby. It was incredible to see them in their natural habitat.

We slept in tents, which made the experience even more special, even though it was a bit cold at night. It was still very fun and different from our normal routine.

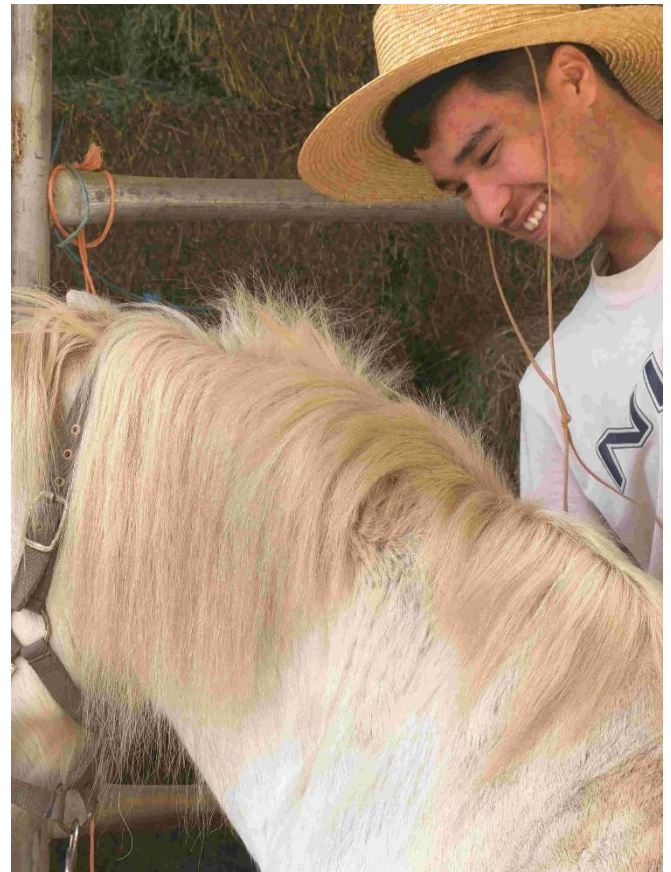


After camp Julie Peel received an email from the Stanley River Principal: *“I just wanted to acknowledge the positive way students and staff engaged with and cared for Stanley River Environmental Education Centre this week.”*

This term swimming staff and 2 volunteers supported 14 classes to become safer in the water. It is an essential part of our curriculum at Milpera as many students do not know how to swim. The program emphasises water familiarisation, buoyancy and mobility skills, as well as teaching water safety and survival skills. At the completion of the program all students should be able to enter the water safely, breathe properly (blowing bubbles in the water, not breathing in) and know how to float.



This term five Milpera students have taken part in an Equine Program called “Reason to Thrive.” The students interact with the horses and care for them. The program supports students’ well-being by building empathy, a sense of belonging, giving them the opportunity to engage with others, as well as a love of horses.



Students and staff were encouraged to wear orange or their traditional dress for Harmony Day which recognises our diversity and brings people together from different backgrounds. Some classes did activities which emphasised inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging, all of which are valued at Milpera



In March some senior students attended our *Next Steps Careers* sessions. The goals of this program are for students to begin to see a way to plan for the future. Key themes like building a network, future study, questions to staff and listening to school and community are starting to take shape and will enable students to think more about a possible career.

In the first session some students learnt about the work of a person working in the Skin and Beauty Industry from visiting presenters. This was followed up by a 15-minute session from Brad Milford, our Guidance Officer, to support the students to understand how the pathway to Beauty Therapy could be undertaken.

The following Friday, hospitality teacher Louise Pope and Brad Milford gave a session on *The Pathway to Hospitality*. Brad spoke about how students could do a school-based traineeship in mainstream schools where they would be in paid employment during Years 11 or 12 and where they would gain skills in hospitality. Another option for gaining a hospitality qualification is with “TAFE in Schools” where students attend TAFE for one day a week during Years 11 or 12. Students may be funded for these programs.

During the presentation Louise Pope spoke about what hospitality means and where it is found in everyday life such as in food services, accommodation and at events. She gave the students a taste of what they might do if they chose a career in hospitality. During the lesson they made a variety of pastry squares, chocolate chip cupcakes and mocktails. The students thoroughly enjoyed the presentation, and it has given them food for thought about a possible career.



For the final session a group of students went to Yeronga State High School where they have a Trade Training Centre. Our students observed some of their students doing vocational training in construction and an introduction into the automotive industry. Yeronga staff spoke to our students about the pathways into these respective industries.

Refugee/refugee like students received bursaries from the money that you have so generously donated this term. The money will be used for education purposes.

Thank you for empowering our students by your patience, kindness and generosity of spirit and simply by being present when they need assistance. Emerging research suggests that empathy in leaders, teachers, volunteers and students is so important for 21st century learning skills. You have empathy for our students and this will enable them to travel far.

“If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far, go together.” African Proverb

