



Letter from The Alpine School Campus (Altitude 1600m).

Monday August 21st 2017.

Dear Parents, Guardians and Families.

Hello again from the community of the Alpine School Campus!

What a busy term we have had already. The 'Blizzard of Oz' has certainly set up the rest of the snow season, we should have no issues with a lack of snow for our ski days and expeditions. But with an Australian snow season, you never know what is around the corner. After the heavy snow we had beautiful sunshine for the first expeditions in week 3 and then rain for the groups in week 4. They donned backpacks and made their way out to make their way to a camping location known as JB Plain for a night of camping, before returning back to school. The students were well prepared and so full of excitement, apprehension, "coolness" and worry, all mixed into one! We know, however, that what they will learn through their undertaking will put them in great stead. One of the concepts we use in designing our type of educational experience is to move from the known to the unknown. In moving to, and living at, the Alpine School Campus, students initially are in an unknown environment (socially, physically, emotionally, geographically and so on), which they soon become comfortable and familiar with. It is a very deliberate part of the process of learning both leadership skills and to be enterprising.

Some of your emails or letters from your sons and daughters may indicate that, while things are different at the Alpine School Campus, it is still hard work and fun. If that is so, we are delighted! We believe learning is hard work and should still be enjoyable. Real learning challenges what we believe and know. It is not much use us re-learning what we already know! However, *how do we know what we don't know?* That is the hard part of what students learn here. To be able to unlock the potential of knowing what we don't know (we call it becoming *autonomous learners*) is an enormous skill! Students should approach this or indeed achieve this towards the end of their Alpine School experience and in their reintegration period when they are at home next term and during the year. This is what will set them ahead of their peers! Our research suggests this is one of the key things students of this age should be undertaking, more so than perhaps Maths or English (which they often do in the Learning Projects anyway). Past students are indicating to us that after a settling-in period at home and school and in friendship circles that, as well as everything else they have learnt here, their experience here has dramatically improved their academic ability. We do know that the period of readjustment is similar to the period of separation...so, the post Winter holiday period may be a challenge with light at the end of the tunnel.

The visiting weekend is this coming weekend by the time you receive this, and we look forward to seeing you again. Can we stress that it is a family occasion, for parents' benefit, and should be limited to immediate family members? Pick-up times are between **9.00am and midday on Saturday August 26th**, and join us for a cup of tea or coffee on **Sunday August 27th between 3pm and 4pm**. **We ask that you return with your son or daughter by 3pm and depart by 4pm.** Some families may wish to arrive and leave earlier due to the travel involved or family commitments. The school will be staffed from Midday on the Sunday. If any families are unable to attend, or wish to seek alternative arrangements, please let us know as soon as possible and we may be able to assist.

We are advocates of the use of email facilities, as long as they can positively add to the Alpine School Campus experience for your sons and daughters as well as parents, families and friends. Can we also add that it is pretty normal for students' emails to be increasingly brief, and that brevity will more than likely become more common; the letters will probably get shorter rather than longer! There is the risk of what we call the "tyranny of technology" and "cyber proximity"! When emailing, please be aware of the effect some comments and conversations can have on your son/daughter up here, and we message the same to your sons/daughters. It is difficult for parents when one receives an email extolling how terrible and homesick a son/daughter is when you are often so far away and most likely feeling helpless. Please try to avoid supporting "chat" about homesickness. Use terms like "we know you will do well" and "we know you can do it", or "it is only 2 days until we see you and they will fly". Also, perhaps avoid sharing too much of your own anxiety. Tell them "we look forward to sharing the stories in only two weeks" or "we now know how much work you do around home" (if that is the case!). Comments about how sad and distressed you are, even if it is the case, are sometimes unhelpful. I hope these are useful hints?

Visiting weekend can see a return of "separation anxiety" for both families and students. At times, students have indicated their reluctance or insecurity about the visiting weekend. They are not really saying they don't want to see you. Moreover, they are saying they can do it alone; they wanted to and have tried that independence they all strive for at this age. However, for some this may not be so! It is a critical component of our program, and they DO need you to support them in their considerable endeavor at the Alpine School Campus. The weekend will allow you as parents to have a better-shared understanding of the Alpine School Campus experience. This will help in the reintegration, when your son/daughter comes home, so you can perhaps better understand the people and places being spoken of and the experiences undertaken. It may also be the first time your son/daughter will show YOU around THEIR home! There are times when the whole building seems like one big adolescent bedroom, you know the place? Well, it is their home after all and no student in our 2000 or so who have been here suffered serious injury as a result of their bedroom being a mess. We try to remember to keep things in perspective and choose the battle when working with adolescents.

We will, however, place a bit of leverage on them to tidy the place for the visiting weekend!

Some behaviors we may see after the visiting weekend may include even fewer letters or correspondence home after the weekend and an anxiety of the experience finishing too soon, before students are ready for it to end! Sometimes there are just apparently irrational feelings that manifest themselves in all kinds of behaviors. As I have mentioned to you in the past, we are experienced at creating and dealing with these emotions and they are normal and individual. We also recognize that the manifestations of these emotions are different for every person and treat every issue individually; there is no book of cures at our disposal.

This term we will be providing a School for Student Leadership report as it relates to the Victorian F-10 Curriculum. Students will receive a report aligned with the F-10 Curriculum when they complete their Alpine School journey. In addition, students present their individual learning and growth and in the form of an electronic portfolio which they work on throughout the term. The key content from this gets published onto their own personal Weebly website page. Students also, learn through the development and completion of their CLP (Community Learning Project).

Their electronic Portfolio known as a Weebly, addresses the following areas:

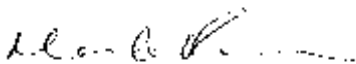
- **My Story** - The students describe their background and interests.
- **Goals and evidence** - Looks at establishing key goals relating to key experiences had throughout the term, like Bridge Building, Expo and Community Learning Project, for example.
- **Evidence and Personal Progress Interview** - examines the evidence gathered and identified as relevant to the students learning and is presented during a one to one progress interview before visiting weekend.
- **Refocus** – examines revisiting their initial goals and refocusing the students on their learning post visiting weekend

Personal learning project – Identifies specific areas for the students to develop over the final weeks of their experience. Again, looking for evidence to support their learning.

Going Home – examines goals and strategies for returning home and looking at short, medium and long-term goals

The Alpine School experience is ultimately a very personal one for parents and guardians, students and families and each experience is slightly different. We thank you for being a part of our community. We look forward to seeing you on the visiting weekend and remember to check the Alpine Weather forecast, drive safely and carry vehicle chains as you are required to do so during the declared Winter season.

With every good wish.



Mark Reeves, BA (Rec.), Grad Dip (OE & PE), Postgrad. Dip (Organizational Change), MACE.

Principal.

On behalf of the School Staff team.



David Chlebna

Campus Principal

Alpine School Campus