

Mount Waverley North Primary School



Student Welfare Handbook
2009 – 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Mount Waverley North Primary School is a caring Learning Community.

Mount Waverley North Primary School aims to provide a comprehensive and quality education in a positive and supportive learning environment, which enables all students to access and maximise their learning and take on a variety of challenges in diverse and stimulating ways.

We believe student welfare cannot be separated from student learning and is the responsibility of all staff working in a whole school context. The most significant amount of students' time, apart from family, is spent with teachers who are often the important adult connection. Our school sets out to provide a strong foundation for student welfare and well-being; consequently student support is a high priority.

We have a whole-school approach to student welfare and well-being and this is based on the needs of the students and the whole school community. Our students bring with them a range of experiences from home and the community and these impact upon their potential to learn. All staff members are aware of their responsibilities to respond when students experience difficulties and we see prevention and early intervention as the key to addressing these.

We have in place a number of programs and special initiatives, which are proactive and preventative. These include:

- Our Learning Communities initiative
- Drug Education Plan
- Tribes (supported by resources from The Healthy Relationships Program, "You Can Do It" and Wilson McCaskill)
- Kid's Hope
- A well developed Health and Physical Education Program
- Student Services Support – the weekly visit of a Guidance Officer and Speech Pathologist
- School Chaplain
- Special needs social skills programs for small groups of students
- The services of the Monash School Focused Youth Service.



MOUNT WAVERLEY NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL IS A LEARNING COMMUNITY.

As we have a genuine and ongoing commitment at Mount Waverley North PS as a Learning Community we believe:

- All members of our school community should be committed to learning, to understanding young people and encouraging their individual growth
- Learners should be empowered and engaged in their own learning
- The learning environment should be a place of mutual respect
- The learning environment should be a safe place in which to take risks
- The learning community should have a sense of good humour in order to give all members a greater enjoyment of each other and more zest for the tasks at hand
- There should be time for reflection and planning, to celebrate and savour what has been achieved before another challenge is faced.

As a learning community we believe we must prepare young people for living and thriving in the world of tomorrow, enabling them to:

- Grow and develop as whole human beings
- Live by ethical/moral values
- Maximise their talents to achieve their personal best
- Become responsible, contributing members of society
- Play an active part in shaping a better world for all

We foster proactive social and ethical development within our students by co-creating norms that encourage them to:

- Care about others
- Resolve conflict non-violently
- Solve problems co-operatively
- Value diversity
- Make responsible decisions
- Confront prejudice and/or discrimination
- Take positive meaningful action
- Respect others points of view
- Respect others

These outcomes can be best realised through membership of a caring, learning community where the spirit of support and challenge work in harmony.

DRUG EDUCATION PLANNING PROCESS

Mount Waverley North Primary School has developed its own Drug Education Plan, which is an integral part of our curriculum. Just as other components of our curriculum prepare our students for living and working in the world of the future, so too does drug education.

Our drug education is based on “**harm minimisation**” principles which are as follows:

- A recognition that non-drug using students are subject to potentially harmful situations by the behaviour of those who use drugs
- A recognition that there are varying degrees of drug use
- An understanding that many students have used, currently use and will use drugs
- A recognition of the rights of students not to use drugs
- Acceptance that drug use by young people is a personal choice that may not be within the control of the teacher or the school.

As such our ISDES has been developed to ensure we:

- Implement relevant, comprehensive and sequential drug education P-6
- Provide each student with appropriate drug education and intervention strategies
- Develop and review drug- related school based policies
- Provide a supportive environment that involves parents and the wider school community in drug related curriculum and welfare issues.



THE TRIBES PROCESS

Mount Waverley North Primary School is a Tribes Learning Community

'Tribes' is a democratic group process, not just a curriculum or set of cooperative activities.

The intended outcome of the Tribes process is to develop a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning. Staff and students learn how to build community using five agreements:

- **Attentive Listening**
- **Appreciation / No Put Downs**
- **The Right to Pass – the right to participate**
- **Mutual Respect**
- **Personal Best**

Throughout the process staff and students learn to use specific collaborative skills, and to reflect both on the interaction and the learning that is taking place. The Tribes process not only establishes a caring environment, but provides structure for positive interaction both in and out of the classroom.

The mission of Tribes is to ensure the healthy and whole development of every child so that each has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world.

Our goal as a Tribes school is to engage all staff, students and families in working together as a learning community that is dedicated to caring and supporting, active participation and positive expectations of all students.

A Tribes school is a learning community where staff, students and parents all enjoy the mutual respect and care essential for growth and learning.

A Tribes Learning Community is one where:

- The classroom is child-centred
- The teacher is the facilitator, using the proven group development process
- Everyone belongs to a long-term group and feels included and valued for their unique contribution
- Students themselves are involved in the classroom management (defining agreements, problem-solving, choosing tasks and sustaining a positive learning environment)
- Teachers use multiple strategies to reach and teach students of multiple cultures, intelligences and abilities
- Students learn both critical thinking and collaborative social skills along with academic content as appropriate
- Individual and group accountability is assessed jointly by students and teacher
- There are protective factors that foster resiliency, caring / sharing, active participation and positive expectations

We believe that the Tribes process supports our educational philosophy and student welfare policy and provides our students with a learning environment that maximises their potential for success.

More information is available at: <http://www.tribes.com/index.html>

At Mount Waverley North Primary School we use resources from a variety of student welfare programs to provide a well rounded and effective program for our students. Resources are used from The Healthy Relationships Program, "You Can Do It" and Wilson McCaskill; all of these programs support the Tribes Process.



BULLYING

Bullying involves the emotional, social or physical harassment by one person to another. It includes behaviours and actions that are verbal, physical and/or antisocial such as exclusion, gossip, aggressive body language and sexual harassment.

Our school culture does not tolerate bullying. We expect all members of our Learning Community to behave in accordance with our norms. Our curriculum incorporates social skills development, both incidentally and formally, and assists all students in the development of positive interpersonal relationships.

Issues of concern with bullies, victims and on-lookers are addressed in a preventative manner. Furthermore all school personnel model attitudes, routines and behaviours, which do much to prevent inappropriate actions and contribute towards the development of pro-social behaviour.

The nature and extent of the bullying can vary from direct to indirect harassment, from minor irritation to major assault, from “just having a bit of fun” to breaking the law. It can happen sporadically or over a long period of time. Bullying can be seen on a continuum and includes:

Social banter
Hurtful teasing
Nasty body language
Pushing and shoving
Malicious gossip
Racist comments
Exclusion
Extortion
Phone and Internet abuse
Sexual harassment
Damage to property
Physical violence
Use of weapons
Criminal acts

We acknowledge bullying is a subjective concept, however the crucial feature is that the victims feel powerless and perceive themselves as being bullied. The critical issue is the extent of the physical, psychological and other damage the victim incurs. The fear or threat of future attacks further exacerbates the impact of bullying on the victim.

A whole school approach has been adopted which includes relevant policies (Sexual Harassment, Equal Opportunity and Anti-bullying) and a set of procedures and strategies.

As a group, staff:

- Never ignore the issue
- Employ constructive and supportive rather than punitive methods, i.e. “The No Blame Approach” when dealing with the bully and victim
- Involve parents and support staff when necessary
- Document incidents for future reference

The No Blame Approach is characterised by the following procedure:

1. Interview the alleged perpetrator
2. Interview the bullied student about feelings
3. Arrange a meeting for all involved students
4. Explain the problem in terms of feelings – not blame
5. Share responsibility – teacher to state clearly that they know the group can solve this problem
6. Identify solutions – ask each student for suggestions
7. Let students take the action themselves
8. Meet students again and review progress.

Should the problem continue further strategies aimed at both the victim and bully may be employed.

Through the Tribes Process, Healthy Relationships, Wilson McCaskill and ‘You Can Do It’ all students are taught strategies to use in attempting to resolve conflict peacefully.

RESOLVING CONFLICT IN THE PLAYGROUND.

(A guide for parents and children)

Disagreements and conflicts may happen between people in almost any environment - school included. We have many choices as to how we handle these. We could respond by fighting or screaming and yelling. Sometimes it is appropriate to ignore the situation. A more positive way to settle a conflict is to talk it out.

Here are a few ideas you might want to try when you talk things out:

COOL OFF:

When we're angry it's not easy to think clearly. It's a good idea to take a deep breath and try to calm down. Some people find it helpful to count to ten or even twenty.

MOVE AWAY FROM THE CROWD:

Sometimes groups encourage us to push and shove to resolve our differences. If you and the other person can move away from the crowd it will be a lot easier to work things out.

LISTEN CAREFULLY:

It is important to listen carefully to what the other person has to say. You can show the other person that you're listening by paying attention to what he or she is saying.

BE STRONG, NOT MEAN:

When we're angry we often say mean things to one another. Try to say how you feel without putting the other person down or hurting the other person's feelings.

ASK FOR HELP:

Sometimes disagreements can be hard to resolve by yourselves. It's okay to ask for help. Find a teacher or another student who is helpful and won't take sides.



FURTHER ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENT WELFARE AND WELL-BEING

At Mount Waverley North Primary School we believe all students can learn better and that the more we use our mind and enhance the functioning of our brain the greater its capacity becomes.

MUSIC

At Mount Waverley North Primary School we use music to enhance learning. Research shows that when we relax and listen to one-beat per-second music, brains can go into a type of resonance and emit a greater proportion of alpha and theta brainwaves. Students can therefore become more receptive to learning whilst in this state of calm alertness. Teaching staff at our school uses the works of numerous Baroque, Classical and Romantic composers to help maximise learning. Other music designed for relaxation or stress relief may be played before a learning session.

WATER.

Brains dehydrate rapidly, leading to concentration lapses, boredom and drowsiness. Students at our school are expected to bring a full water bottle each day, all year round, for sipping on during class time.

BRAIN FOOD.

Students need to eat at least every 80-90 minutes to keep blood sugar levels high and to energise their brains for thinking and learning. There are definite links between effective learning and good nutrition, hence we encourage students to bring “brain food” to eat in class during our two hour learning session each morning.

We specifically request the foods be alkaline in nature, as these are believed to be ideal for a high energy, low anxiety lifestyle that enables calm and confident learning to occur. These include:

Fresh vegetables - carrots, celery, cucumber, zucchini, lettuce, tomatoes

Fresh fruits - including grapes, apple, watermelon, peaches, and pineapple

Dried fruit – figs, dates, raisins, apricots

ENERGISERS

As part of the **Tribes Process** we use **energizers** to counteract periods when students experience lower energy. At these times concentration is difficult and students become bored and sleepy, which is not ideal in a learning environment. The energizers are designed to engage a number of multiple intelligences, energise the students, redirect attention, renew concentration, redevelop connections with peers, add an element of fun and provide a bridge for learning activities.