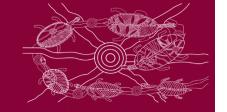


Hawkesbury High School

Caring Learning Connecting



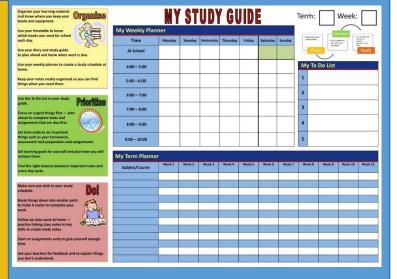
Principal's Update

3 February 2020

Our mission - building a caring and safe learning environment where great teaching supports and inspires all students to grow, develop and succeed.

Prepared to Learn

Prepared to Learn is one of the focus initiatives for our school in 2020. Prepared to Learn focuses on the development of students' organisation, time management and study skills. While we often talk about what students are learning and how they are learning, the missing piece in the puzzle that makes students successful is their readiness, or preparedness to learn. Centered around the catch phrase "Organise, Prioritise, Do", Prepared to Learn will explicitly teach students how to organise their learning resources, including books and handouts, digital files, learning spaces and Google Drive notes. Prepared to Learn will also teach students time management skills - one of the most sought-after "soft" skills by employers and a valuable life skill – including prioritising urgent and important tasks and reducing stress levels by planning ahead. Finally, students will also be taught how to transform class notes into study notes and how to use teacher feedback effectively to set learning goals. Prepared to Learn will see all students go through targeted workshops that will teach them how to use their study guides (wall manage time and create study schedules, and make effective study notes that can be used in assignments, essays and exams. These workshops will be supplemented by consistent and explicit student and teacher expectations, information nights for parents, and support materials published on the school's website. While the Prepared to Learn initiative will be gradually phased in over the course of this year, our Year 11 and 12 students have already received their study guides during their initial Prepared to Learn Workshop. This will be followed by similar workshops this semester for all other year groups.



BYOD News

The BYOD page on the school's website has many useful resources to help students get started, including device specifications, instructions on how to download a free copy of Office 365, how to log onto the school network, among others. All students should have received a copy of the BYOD Student Agreement last week. This form must be signed by students and parents and returned to the school before students can connect to the school's filtered network and start using their devices at school. We are also in the process of setting up a "Knowledge Bar" in the library - staffed by student IT Mentors – who will assist students with trouble shooting during recess and lunch. Year 7 and 8 classes will also have in-class IT Helpers who will receive training in the coming weeks so they can assist their peers should they experience any connectivity issues with their laptops. Also, 25 additional computers are being installed in the library, bringing the total to 50, in addition to 2 banks of loan devices available for teacher bookings for use in classrooms. These devices will supplement the two existing computer labs and the laptops in the Emily Reinhardt Learning Centre which were donated by the P&C last year.



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Wednesday Adjusted Bell Times

As you may already be aware, the school will finish earlier on Wednesdays this year – at 1:50 pm. This is one hour earlier than last year. While the new bell times may appear at first significantly shorter, they are in line with many other high schools which finish earlier on Sport days. The school continues being NESA compliant in curriculum delivery and face to face teaching hours for all courses and all years 7-12.

The adjustment was made at Hawkesbury High to ensure a smooth operation of the timetable and a better alignment of existing resources with curriculum demands. This change also gave us an opportunity to provide a dedicated scripture time which does not clash with regular lessons. In addition, the adjusted bell time has allowed for dedicated meeting times when teachers can plan together, discuss teaching strategies and develop support programs for students. The change has also resulted in a significant reduction in split classes (same class taught by more than one teacher) and the introduction of a Homework Club with tutor support on Wednesdays. Wednesday bell times will also support the Prepared to Learn initiative by providing students with time and a place to study after school hours. Rosie and Daniel, our university student tutors, should also continue being available (depending on their university timetables) on Wednesdays.

All students who catch buses will be supervised in the playground and the library from 1:50 pm until buses depart. I recommend that students make the most of this time and use it to complete homework, work on assignments and access tutoring support.

A letter was sent home last week to give a small number of students permission to leave school grounds at 1:50. This only applies to students who make their own way home (walk or ride a bike), or are normally picked up by a parent or carer. Students who catch buses will not be allowed to leave school grounds. Permission notes must be returned to the front office before students are allowed to leave school grounds at 1:50 pm on Wednesdays.

Hawkesbury High School's Therapy Dog

We have welcomed Icon, our school's therapy dog, as a new staff member in 2020. Icon was enthusiastically welcomed by students and staff alike, and he has already been hard at work helping students make the transition to a new school year. Icon's work is even more relevant this year due to the stresses experienced by many in our community due to the impact of bush fires. I have personally observed the significant calming effect a therapy dog has on our students, including Icon's uncanny ability to put people at ease.

I have posted on the school's website and on Facebook some general rules on how to interact with Icon. While he is an exceptionally well trained and good-natured dog, it is important to follow these rules to ensure everyone is safe. I also urge parents to contact me if their child has a known allergy to, or a fear of dogs. We can often make very small adjustments to ensure that everyone is happy and safe in the school environment.



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