Dear Families,

Welcome back to third Term. Hopefully everyone is well rested and looking forward to our premiership quarter of learning.

Margaret Cocks has returned from the International Thinking Conference in Spain with ideas and strategies to challenge and guide us. She will be taking over the Principal role of the school for the first three weeks of this Term. St Martin’s will be in the best hands with her clear thinking, ability to plan and her pastoral care shown to all members of the school community.

**School Improvement Surveys**

Each year, Year 5 and 6 students, whole school staff and 60 parents from St Martin’s school community are invited to complete surveys about a myriad of aspects of school.

These surveys will be live from **Monday 20 July** until **Friday 7 August 2015**.

This year will be the first year that our school’s report will include the Parent Engagement data (previously a supplementary report for schools involved in the Family School Partnership initiative). This data enables schools to identify parent engagement levels in 4 focus areas for improvement: Relationships, Learning, Leadership and Reflection. With this in mind I strongly encourage parents to complete these surveys.

Data from these surveys drives school improvement. Unlike the Enhancing Catholic Identity Survey the School Improvement Survey is completed each year.

Next year is school review year at St Martin’s and data from these surveys is a big factor in determining growth and areas of need. If you are one of the families randomly selected to participate in this survey please find time to complete it.

**International Thinking Conference in Bilbao, Spain**

Recently we completed the 5 day International Thinking Conference in Bilbao, Spain.

It was a wonderful opportunity to learn, be affirmed with our school’s practices and network with colleagues. Our school’s presentation was well received to a near capacity room of international leaders. We are proud of our achievements and believe that educators have a moral purpose to share for the common good of all. Through the journey of collaborating on our presentation we had the opportunity to embed our actions in research and to celebrate the successes from our changes of culture from cooperative thinking amongst teachers to collaborative.

As part of my enrichment leave I have been mentored by Michael Pohl, consultant in teaching thinking. In a nutshell, our conclusions show the need for further investigation into emotional thinking and teaching ideas to form concepts. I have made notes from the sessions and am happy to make them available to anyone interested. I attended three active workshops, one for music and the other two on art, the first was on modern art at the Guggenheim Museum and the second at the Fine Art Museum.
The music session was about identifying, explaining, justifying and being creative with limited resources. Both art museums focused on SLOW looking, to look beyond to see/think/wonder/connect. Slow looking to tell a story.

The guru of Thinking, Dr Edward De Bono gave this message to parents in the final keynote presentation: “teach children HOW to think and direct thinking to social values”.

On our walks to and from the conference centre we have had a chance to take in the people and culture of Bilbao. This region of Spain speaks Basque not Spanish. Their city is not dissimilar to Melbourne. Both have built their city on a river with beautiful parks. One of the parks reminds me of the Fitzroy gardens with the central fountain and a kiosk, café.

There is much night life around this city including children playing in parks at 8:30pm. Siesta between 2pm and 4pm is respected here, even buses stop running between these times. Churches are old with medieval architecture and Baroque Statues. They are locked most of the day.

Bilbao is a city of contrasts with the old town and the new, separated by the river. The old town with its medieval buildings is a maze with many interesting laneways and home to Europe’s largest undercover market. Pintxos are a popular form of eating and dining.

Seeing the children out and about enjoying their summer vacations, shows the promise of their future to preserve their interesting city.

Once we return to St Martin’s leadership members will continue to unpack the messages from the presentation and look to see what fits best for our school.

Have fun unpacking thinking by asking those what and how questions with your child.

Regards
Trish Stewart
Principal