



Friday June 21, 2019

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

**“Parenting teenagers is a bit like whitewater rafting-but I want you to have both sides of the picture. Scary, hectic, and uncomfortable-yes; but also thrilling, stimulating, challenging and ultimately very rewarding”. Ian Grant.**

**“Of all the natural events that occur in the family life cycle, the emergence of adolescence is the one most likely to test parental flexibility and tolerance.” Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg<sup>1</sup>**

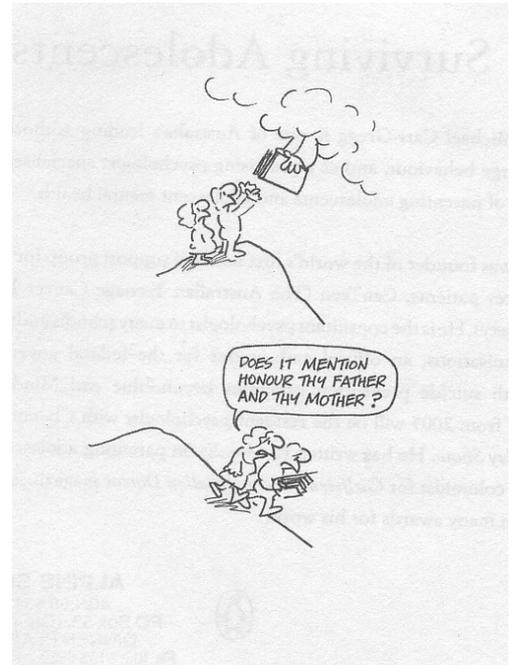
Dear Parents, guardians and families.

Hello again and for the last time this term. I am hoping this letter reaches you before your son/daughter has returned home.

Here we are at the start of our final week and I think that students see that their time at the Alpine School Campus is now definitely finite! Eight sleeps they keep telling me. Mind you, some students are ready to leave. There are still many important tasks for us all to attend to, and I welcome the greater independence and personal drive I witness in our students, your sons and daughters. It is a delight to work with young people in our environment and see them “doing”! They just get on with the job now, for the most part, and set their goals and review their outcomes. They are finalizing their CLP work for when they return home, and the presentation day today, when Principals, Liaison Teachers, representatives from the Department of Education and Training and other key stakeholders were here, was a triumph. I hope you can all cope with these skills and abilities upon their return, and that your sons and daughters use these skills appropriately?

Do you know about some of the Community Learning Projects that the teams have developed?

- **Warrnambool College** – Tea for the Sea (Pollution in the ocean awareness)
- **Williamstown High School** – 5 Short Stories (History of the Williamstown area)
- **Taylors Lakes SC** – Our Stand Against Domestic Violence.
- **Timboon P-12 School** - Work Hard! Play Hard! (Seating and games area in local area)
- **Tarneit P-9 College** – Homelessness awareness.
- **Terang College** - Colour Run (Fundraising for CFA)
- **Camperdown College** – Naroghid Block (Creating an outdoor learning area)
- **Western Heights College** – Watch Out for Drop Bears (Protecting Koala’s in the You Yangs)



<sup>1</sup> Dr Michael Carr – Greg. Surviving Adolescents. The must have guide for all parents. Illustrations by Ron Tanberg. Penguin Books Australia 2005.

We describe an Alpine School experience as having three phases, and you may have heard this mentioned before? Phase one is the preparation phase (long since over for us this term, but it is happening now for our Term 3 2019 families and students); phase two is the separation phase (this is just beginning to draw to a close for our current community, families at home included). The final, reintegration phase for the community of Term 2 2019 is just beginning. Make no mistake, the reintegration phase is the longest phase (it can go on for all our lives), and can be the most challenging. It may require some pre-planning on all your behalves, and I hope we can provide some ideas or thoughts to assist this phase. Your Easter holiday break may be a real challenge and yet may also be the most fantastic you have ever had together.



The return is often a period fraught with challenges, but there are many possible solutions. Let's put things in context. We describe our approach to education as "Leadership & Experiential Education", and research shows that this is the most successful way to engage people of this age in learning<sup>2</sup>. The key competencies in this approach we call "Leadership Capabilities" and our students address these in their iLead, Progress Interviews, and Presentations of Learning and through their reflections on their Websites. I have of course written to you about the need to follow-up these aspects of the program at home, as they are your insight

and "report" (as well as their Safe Food Handling and First Aid certificates). The OECD quote (below) also identifies these as significant attributes our future generation will require to succeed. These young people have had a taste of relative independence and interdependence on a scale they have never known before. They have developed skills for self-management and self-directing their learning. They worked on a curriculum that placed some real responsibility on them and often they had a real audience for their work, that being their home communities and families. They have had and managed access to, and research through the Internet, with their own Laptop, and will go through withdrawals in having to hand it back and maybe being thus "cut-off". They will have developed new friendships and have many shared experiences and feelings with those new friends. With those friends they have walked to the top of Victoria on some of the longest and highest ridges and mountains in the state. They have done so with large and heavy rucksacks, in at times wild weather, and overcome group and team tensions. They have played amongst the majesty of the mountains and experienced many wintry days in the Alps when they could not have imagined how extreme the weather can be here! They have slept in the mountains, amongst the snowgums, in tents and cooked out in the evening chill in the rain and snow and Huts. They have undertaken food handling and first-aid courses and helped with managing a commercial kitchen, including running a commercial dishwasher. They have developed friendships with adults and teachers; people who they may never have thought it possible to befriend nor even wanted to know, who are now 'significant adults' in their lives. They have done their own washing and maintained their personal hygiene in some trying situations, such as on three-day overnight expeditions. They have shared a room and had long late night chats with that roommate, and may never have that opportunity with him or her again. These are all real achievements, and they will justifiably be proud. But for how long can you hear the stories, or how long will your son or daughter tolerate being asked "how was it?" and replying civilly after the 16<sup>th</sup> time in the last hour? And how will your son or daughter grieve and mourn the end of these things and times?

Some of the potential issues we can perhaps preempt may include wanting more freedom when they get home, to go out, be with friends, travel. It may be in how they express and dress themselves or do their hair. It may also be in wanting to be more involved in the management of their own lives at home. They may have a new,



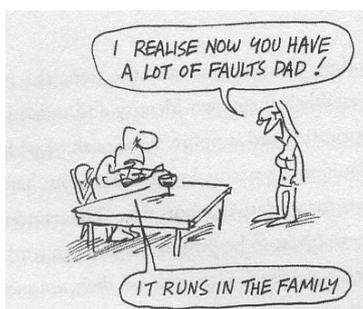
<sup>2</sup>“Students will be entering a workforce in which more and more jobs will be in small business, more jobs will be part time or casual and self employment will grow as more companies contract out work rather than take on permanent employees. This trend may result in periods of unemployment and frequent changes of job. Young people will therefore need to be flexible and creative, manage change and resources, take advantage of opportunities and recognise the need for ongoing learning and training. In short people will need to be creative, rather than passive; capable of self initiated action rather than expect to be taught; they will need to be enterprising in their outlook. It is therefore essential that we offer our students creative ways to learn these skills through innovative and meaningful teaching practices. (Towards an Enterprising Culture, OECD Paris 1998).

distant (or nearby) girl or boyfriend they want you to meet, and have all the teenage clumsiness about relating to them and show in introducing you to them. They may be depressed about returning to normal school and the confines or periods and bells, and fall into a pit of unhappiness and loneliness. It may be worth talking these things through at home or in letters, and some of you may have done this on email BEFORE he or she returns. Ask them how they may be different and what you can do at home to make their coming home easier and better. Ask them to show you his or her iLead and to explain it. You will have hopefully had a glimpse through their SWAY. I have heard of the email “relationship” between parents and sons/daughters being maintained even after they have returned home – it is just another perhaps easier way to communicate. Moreover, remind them of their responsibilities to you, family and school, and about completing their Community Learning Project.

Your son/daughter will also receive a report from their Alpine School teacher which will be presented to each student on departure day. We are hoping that you will benefit from these reports through gaining an understanding of what your son / daughter has achieved and what our recommendations are for them on return to their home community and through this, they will hopefully aid your assistance in your son / daughters reintegration.

Set some boundaries prior to the homecoming. The last thing most families will want is to billet 20 Alpine School graduates for the school holidays, (although one or two might be terrific)! They may find the structures of their home school constraining, and yet they may love the security it also brings. They will have to reacquaint themselves with their friends who did not come to the Alpine School, and who may feel abandoned. As a family, it may be that your “house-man or woman” has returned, and those jobs which had been shared around could be redistributed. The favorite mum’s home cooked meal, the lasagna or roast, which has been so missed, may be not quite what was required and it may be impossible for them to actually identify what really is “missing” or “wrong”. For the little brother or sister, their competitor for your attention is just about to burst back on the scene! And “burst” they will! But I wonder how easily your son/daughter will fall back into those roles? For some very easily, I am sure. It may be hard for others.

A good and accessible book regarding adolescence is called The Whitewater Rafting Years (Ian Grant and John Cowan, Pa’s Publishing, 1999).<sup>3</sup> It is not so much because of what one does as a recreation, (but it has other more educational needs as well, although some might find bits of the book a bit “preachy”), but because of the analogy as to how young people behave. Young adults’ emotions are sometimes like a wild river; The Mitta Mitta River is a good one, flowing through gorges and down rapids. Sometimes they are like the serene pools, reflective and calm, deep and full of life. Sometimes, they are like the wild rapids, tumbling apparently out of control, foaming and full of hidden or not so hidden dangers with whirlpools and “hydraulics” waiting to catch you out! Negotiating a wild river, one has little control in the wild and tumbling sections, one is swept away in the current. One can be “drowned” in the emotion of it all.



I use this analogy, as there will be lots of “deep pools of thought” with your son or daughter when he or she returns home. There may also be “wild rapids” in their behaviour and emotions, as they cope and deal with the issues of possibly having the time of their life conclude, and possibly their relative more mundane, normal life return. School will likely not be the same for them in the future. I am sure that you will hear many comparisons (good and bad) being made with the Alpine School. This is because their base level of experience has been dramatically altered. We all, consciously or unconsciously, compare things outside our experience to those inside our experience as a way of determining whether we can

cope, or need more information or skills or whatever. Your sons or daughters may do the same, and it may make you feel terrific to hear how good it is to be home (or the food at home is, or the nightlife etc.) compared with the Alpine School. It may drive you crazy if the comparisons turn out to be the other way. Try not to take them personally, as it is a way the students are processing their experience and putting it into a context.

<sup>3</sup> Some may be also interested in another book by the same author, “Fathers Who Dare. Win: Strategies for Effective Fatherhood”. Pa’s Publishing, 1999.

The best and most recent book I have on my shelves and that is compulsory staff reading here is Dr. Michael Carr – Gregg’s book as footnoted earlier. All images in this letter are in that book.

At the end of this letter is a two-page document detailing the learning areas undertaken by your son or daughter, and their relationship with other curriculum areas. We trust this document also provides another way for you to understand the complexity and depth of learning undertaken in this unique educational program and location.

I wish you all the best for the forthcoming holiday period and for the future. Enjoy the return of your wonderful sons, daughters or siblings who HAVE grown so much! Be immersed in and enjoy the “whitewater rafting years” ahead with them. I also highly recommend Michael Carr–Gregg’s book, Surviving Adolescents. I can also recommend another of Michael’s books, The Princess Bitchface Syndrome, details and brief synopsis provided below. If this is your daughter, and our teenage girls all display some of these characteristics, you must read this book!

Thank you for contributing to another successful term of the Alpine School. The “Separation Phase” of the Alpine School Experience concludes for the community of Term 2, 2019 on **Saturday, June 29th**, signaling the beginning of the “Reintegration Phase”!

You can meet your son or daughter at any time **after 9.30am** on Saturday.

**9.30am – 10.00am**

School doors open for parents to arrive and reacquaint with their children

**10.00am – 11.00am**

All parents and students meet into dining room for student presentations.

Student Presentations will involve a summary of their CLP as a group (1 minute), then each individual student will talk about their most important learning from the program that they can use in the future.

Show the end of term movie.

Staff to read a ‘farewell story’

**11.00am**

All parents and students depart.

NOTE: If you arrive after 10.00am, please enter the school building quietly as presentations will be in progress OR If you are running very late (after 11.00am), please call. It can be a source of concern for the ‘last’ students to see all their friends leave and have no idea why mum/dad is late.

If you intend your son or daughter having any other travel arrangements not with you, and have not already done so, please contact us regarding travel permission forms or other details.

Lastly, please drive carefully.

With every good wish on behalf of the Alpine School Team,

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

## **THE ALPINE SCHOOL TERM 2 2019**

### **BACKGROUND**

*This term, the Alpine School program has been a nine-week residential program for year nine students from Victorian DEECD Schools. Teams of up to six students from approximately eight different country and city schools attend each term. The program focuses on leadership, teamwork, and personal development and aims to develop students' personal, practical knowledge in these areas. It has practical and theoretical components and incorporates outdoor- and enterprise education principles.*

### **Links to the Victorian Curriculum F – 10 capabilities**

*The program focuses on six strands within the F-10 capabilities:*

- *Self-Awareness and Management*
- *Social Awareness and Management*
- *Meta-cognition*
- *Questions and Possibilities*
- *Decision Making and Actions*
- *Cultural Diversity*

*The six Strands and F-10 Capabilities of the Victorian Curriculum are integrated into the program in various ways.*

Formal classes explore:

- the principles of teamwork,
- leadership concepts
- cultural diversity (related to beliefs and values, thinking preferences, learning styles, and individual strengths)
- skills of leadership including: communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, self evaluation, goal-setting, managing difficult emotions, project implementation and managing self
- environmental awareness
- community living

### **PROJECT BASED WORK: The LLP & CLP**

In small groups, students undertake research on an aspect of the Alpine environment and are required to present their knowledge in a workshop format to the community. They are given written feedback on this.

Students also work on a Community Learning Project based in their home communities. Their time at the Alpine School is used to explore & develop their project, plan its implementation and seek support (financial and otherwise) from the wider community. There is an expectation that students will implement their project on returning home. They are also required to present their project to a diverse audience from their school communities at a formal presentation evening prior to concluding the program. They receive written feedback on this.

### **CERTIFICATES**

Students complete two certificated programs. These are:

- Level 1 First Aid (Royal Life Saving)
- Safe Food Handlers (TAFE)
- Alpine School Campus Attendance and Completion Certificate

### **CHALLENGES**

The challenges come not only from formal program components but also from the learning which happens because students are away from home, in an unfamiliar environment, living with people they have just met, doing many unfamiliar and challenging activities, having to manage many aspects of their own learning, managing their day to day living needs, and being responsible for establishing and maintaining a happy, healthy & thriving community.

## **ASSESSMENT & REPORTING**

### **DEARR REFLECTION (SWAY) & iLead**

Students are required to regularly evaluate their learning both in formal evaluation sessions and informally in their daily 30-minute reflection sessions. Based on this reflection students are required to complete their iLead, a digital document known as their SWAY. They create a webpage which comprises of the details their personal learning over the 9 weeks. The format of the iLead assists students to reflect on their learning in all aspects of the program. Staff and other community members provide both verbal and written feedback throughout the term, which students are encouraged to include in their iLead.

### **GOAL SUMMARY REVIEW & PRESENTATIONS OF LEARNING**

Students are required to complete 2 oral Presentations for which they receive written feedback from staff and peers.

### **STUDENT REPORTS**

Students will receive a report based around Victorian Curriculum F-10 Capabilities. These reports are to assist in gaining an understanding of what your son / daughter has achieved whilst at the Alpine School Campus.

#### **Their iLead, address 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.
- 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

### **REINTEGRATION OBLIGATIONS**

The onus for promoting their experience lies with the students when they return home. They are encouraged to share their SWAY & iLead, do their Presentations of Learning and their CLP presentations and to share their reference letters with their families and key people within their schools. Students are also expected to implement their Community Learning Projects on their return. The Alpine School views assessment and reporting as part of the student's learning process and focuses on assisting students to do this for themselves and seek feedback from those around them.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the integrated nature of our assessment and reporting process which requires students to actively share their learning with those around them.