

about catholic schools

Teaching and Learning

Move to high school made easy

Featured

Jade Wittmann November 5, 2015



Next step: St Luke's Catholic Primary Year 6 students Jake Angelis, Sarah Nicholas, Anna Gazzera, and Beau Bozinovski are ready to start high school in 2016. Photo: Kitty Beale

Year 6 students at St Luke's Catholic Primary Revesby had any worries about starting high school next year quashed with a workshop full of practical advice.

Time management, how to read a high school timetable and other helpful hints were part of the two hour transition workshops delivered by former primary school teacher and transition specialist Jenny Atkinson.

The program is based on research including surveys of more than 1600 students in Years 6 and 7 at Sydney Catholic schools, completed in 2012. Ten of the 29 survey questions were open-ended, allowing students to explain what they thought about everything from navigating a larger school to new teachers and friendships.

“I wanted to know what they were worried about before they got to high school, but was aware that once they got there it could be very different,” Ms Atkinson said.

“The main concern they had in Year 7 was coping with the amount of homework they were given. Only one third were struggling with the type of homework they were doing but two thirds were struggling with the amount at the end of Term 1.

“A lot of the comments were enlightening. I just thought there has got to be a way that we can help them bring a bit more balance and wellbeing into their lives.

“The Year 6’s were worried about getting lost, how to read a timetable and those types of things. Adults tell them ‘Don’t worry, you’ll be right when you get there’, but in the mean time they’ve worried about that for eight weeks. The workshops aim to bring the level of worry down for them so they are looking forward to going to high school, as well as preparing them for what they’re going to face when they get there.”

[They’re expected to be far more independent.](#)

– Jenny Atkinson

Among the advice was to participate, do boring or unpleasant tasks first to get them out of the way – described as ‘Eating the frog’ – and ask for help when needed.

Mrs Atkinson said her aim was to help 20,000 students to have a great transition to high school in the next five years. She said there was much more focus on students moving into kindergarten rather than from Year 6 to Year 7.

“I think there is this expectation that because they’ve been at school for seven years, school is already very familiar to them so it’s not that much of a jump,” she said. “It is actually a major jump. It’s a very different system, they’re expected to be far more independent, and they have a lot more expectations placed on them.”

It is the third year St Luke’s students have participated in the workshops, with St Christopher’s Catholic Primary Panania and St Therese Catholic Primary Padstow students also learning from them in years past.

Year 6 student Anna Gazzera will attend Mount St Joseph Milperra next year, while St Ursula’s College Kingsgrove is where Sarah Nicholas will begin her high school career. For one workshop activity, both drew on a paper map with coloured markers how they would get quickly from one class to another on an example timetabled day.

“There were a few hiccups on the paper but we just had to give it a go,” Sarah said. “I think what we learnt was a very substantial amount of information and it has helped us a lot. I put on the excited list that I’d like to meet new people, because don’t have a big group of friends going to St Ursula’s.”

Anna said she also found the workshop educational. “It was good since we’re all new to high school,” she said. “It taught us how to read timetables and a lot of what we needed to know. I’m looking forward to having different teachers for different subjects, instead of one teacher throughout the whole day. I was also excited to learn a new language because I know at MSJ they have Italian and French.”

Peers Beau Bozinovski and Jake Angelis will attend De La Salle Catholic College Revesby Heights next year.

Beau said he found the concept of eating the frog the best advice. "I'm looking forward to the sport, because you get to do a lot more activities and it's competitive this time, and making new friends," he said. "We get an opportunity to meet new people and personalities. I was also worried about the amount of homework we'll get in case I don't have it done when it's due."

Jake said the session also covered how to deal with bullying because "we're going back to being the small ones at school".

"I thought it was really valuable and helpful because she taught us how to manage our time well," he said. "The timetable was one of the most helpful things and colour-coding your books so that when you put them in your locker you know which ones you need and can get them out quickly."

Workshop details: sparkseducation.com.au.

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