

Inclusive Education in 2023

2023 has been a year of wonderful expansive endeavours for Inclusive Education at Merici College. With the ever-growing team of professionals, we have seen The Hub, our central location, become a consistent hive of activity for students from across all year groups needing additional support. This space houses many varying aspects of improving learning for students.

WELCOME OUR NEW CLASSROOM SUPPORT TEACHERS

In Semester 2, the team welcomed 2 new support teachers to the team. Ms. Milanda Roxas and Ms. Emma Bishop work closely in support of Mrs. Karen Evans, as Coordinator, to further support teaching staff in planning rigorous programs for teaching and learning for students with additional needs. They assist in overseeing the development and implementation of Personalised Plans and gather content rich resources for use in classrooms.

CLASSROOM SUPPORT ASSISTANTS (CSAs) ROLE

Our CSAs work tirelessly to support our students both in the classrooms and across many aspects of the curriculum. They are present in the classrooms to work as facilitator to teacher lesson delivery and to provide support for all students based on individual need. The team, consisting of Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Rodden, Ms. Drummond, Mr. Martin, Ms. Johnstone and Mrs. Cruz have supported students through access to quality engagement and learning opportunities consistent with the school's Principals of Powerful Learning. The team has worked behind the scenes to ensure that necessary additional adjustments were included in every aspect of our girl's school life to ensure they felt supported and empowered in their learning.

This year, our team has expanded to include the expertise of Ms. Nicole Commins, Merici's new Literacy Coordinator. Ms. Commins brings with her a wide range of skills in embedding holistic literacy capabilities, using evidence-based practices, and works closely with teaching staff when planning and mapping learning for students. Ms. Commins has introduced several initiatives to support Literacy engagement at Merici in 2023. They include:

Spelling Mastery Program

Spelling Mastery was implemented in Term 1 at Merici with our Year 7 students who needed a bit of extra support with their spelling. It was facilitated by the wonderful Mrs. Mahony, who also works at Merici in the capacity of a relief teacher. Spelling Mastery uses an explicit, teacher-directed method of teaching called Direct Instruction. It is an effective, research-proven spelling program that teaches students the strategies they need to become successful, life-long spellers. Spelling Mastery helps students to understand the relationship between sounds, word parts and spelling patterns and encourages them to become proficient writers. Merici has seen some excellent results in students spelling capabilities to date, a testament to the diligence and hard work of our Spelling Masters and their teacher.

Literacy Intervention Program

This program was implemented at Merici in Semester 2 and designed for Year 8 students in order to close some of the learning gaps students have with their literacy skills. The sessions focus on developing students' spelling, vocabulary and comprehension skills, with a particular focus on using the reciprocal reading strategy which focuses on students predicting, clarifying, summarising, inferring and questioning skills.

Corrective Reading Tutor Program

The Corrective Reading Tutor program is a new 1-to-1 program at Merici where identified students work with a teacher or Learning Support Assistant to address the needs of students who may have some gaps with their reading decoding and comprehension, We have been lucky to be able to use the skills of Mrs. Williams, Ms. Johnstone, Mrs. Mahony and Miss. Drummond to assist with the facilitation of the program. Corrective Reading encourages students to use verbal reasoning, reciprocal reading strategies and inference skills whilst they engage with the various activities of the program. So far we have seen fantastic results from our participating girls.

MACQLIT TARGETED READING PROGRAM

The MacqLit program aims to provide targeted reading intervention for students at risk. MacqLit is a reading program for children who need some help with their reading. It usually takes place in groups of up to four students and takes up to an hour a day. It has been developed by MultiLit, a research-based initiative of Macquarie University.

Throughout the year, based on early interventions evidentiary data captured on students at Merici, Ms. Drummond worked with small groups for up to an hour a day, four times a week, using the carefully structured MacqLit materials. The program assisted teaching students how to read and spell words using appropriate strategies.

CROSS AGE TUTORING

Facilitated by Mrs. Williams, the Cross-Age Tutoring Program continues to run successfully bringing together Junior and Senior members of the Merici Community. The Program runs during lunchtimes and after school. Currently there are 22 teams of girls participating in this program and their enthusiasm is both visible and audible. The girls work together, with senior students, providing learning and insights to junior students, discussing ideas, giving explanations and finding solutions for those challenging problems across a range of subjects. The Program showcases examples of both cooperative learning and supportive learning applications.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT (EALD) SUPPORT

Mrs. Kate Jarvis attends the Hub during the week to work with and foster ongoing learning for students where English is their second language. Together with the classroom teachers, she aims to bridge the gap between the curriculum and language barriers to make learning more accessible.

ORGANISATION SUPPORT SESSIONS

Aside from these activities, the Hub is a space dedicated to students as a place to work and receive support. Merici teaching staff provide targeted workload management sessions to increase student understanding of assessment requirements with focused attention on assisting students to complete classwork.

The Merici community fosters a joy of learning and a shared mindset that inclusivity is more than just the acknowledgement of others. Our team aims to demonstrate, at all times, a sense of collaboration to foster belonging and acceptance for all.

Mrs. Karen Evans

Inclusive Education Coordinator

