

## Term 3 Senior News

The senior class has grown to 17! A warm welcome to our two newest students Isla and Nazar.

While Covid, the flu, head colds and stomach aches continue to plague us, the new term has started well, with students settling back into our class routines, catching up with friends, and bringing their very best selves to most of what they do.

As is very normal at this age, I have noticed some heightened emotions in the playground recently. The onset of puberty triggers major changes in the area of the brain that controls these emotions. Unfortunately, the prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain involved in decision-making, planning and self-control), is not developing at the same pace and will be the last part of the brain to fully mature. To help students navigate their way through these difficult times, we are talking regularly in class about some of the common social and online situations students can find themselves facing, using scenario cards as discussion prompts. The big ideas we keep coming back to are: "How can we ensure our choices are kind?" and "How we can keep ourselves safe?" (in both the real world and online).

Concurrently, our class novel is the story of two 11 year olds who spend much of their out of school time involved in an online multiplayer video game ("Raider's Peril"). This is also providing rich opportunities for discussions around our big ideas.

As you may know, every senior child has just begun an inquiry into a topic of interest to them. In addition to building their knowledge of the world and developing stronger literacy skills, students will be encouraged to think deeply about issues related to their topic (such as *animal rights*, *environmental impacts*, etc). All students will be expected to synthesize information from three or more sources, including one printed [book] and one online source. A class trip to the Featherston library has been planned as part of this inquiry. A notice will come out about this shortly, and a request for a parent - or grandparent - volunteer if someone is available to help out

A big "thank you" to all of the parents who met with me at the end of last term to discuss your child's progress at school. It was wonderful to catch up with you at last!

Julie Small