

The Art of Nurturing - We All Have It!

Sister Fran Nolan sgs and Sister Jeanie Heiningergs (pictured below second and third from right) facilitate the Nurturing Independence group at Mater Dei. Fran and Jeanie worked together at Mater Dei in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then, it was a boarding school for 40 weeks of the year including weekends and they covered the gamut of nurturing from the students' self care, living skills, interpersonal skills as well as teaching from 9am – 3pm. "We were simultaneously classroom teachers, playmates, counsellors, supervisors of meals and all aspects of personal hygiene, advocates, disciplinarians, spiritual guides, cleaners, conflict mediators and entertainers!" says Fran. Here they write about (and advertise!) the groups that they are conducting at Mater Dei in the 2010s.



We all share in the art of nurturing because we are all human and here at Mater Dei, it is alive and well amongst staff and families. *Conversations for Nurturing Independence* is a program that takes the form of small groups of four or five parents who meet four times in a month. They take place each Term throughout the school year.

Topics covered in our program are human experiences such as negotiating change, strategies to minimize stress, stages of personal growth, grief and loss and the impact of parenting on the whole person. Also our conversations centre on experiences such as the adjustment of family members to the child with additional needs, the experiences of siblings, personal strengths and resilience.

We see the program as an unwavering support of the dreams, hopes and aspirations of parents and during the sessions we remind them of the portrait of competence that is theirs. They represent amazingly talented human beings who have overcome obstacles in their lives and are developing unique techniques of nurturing the independence of their Mater Dei child.

We strive to provide a welcoming and secure environment for our sessions. The last session focuses on their answers to two questions. The first question is, how will I as a parent nurture my Mater Dei child's independence appropriate to their abilities and age? The second question is, how will I nurture my own independence? These conversations are always enjoyable experiences where we all learn without realising it.