



The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN

→ Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs

PRODUCED BY BOYS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM OF THE FAMILY ACTION CENTRE



In this issue

The Road Less Travelled

Combating homophobia

Virtue Is Its Own Reward

Going Beyond Academic Outcomes

Peaceful Parenting/Peaceful School

To the Lighthouse

The Boys in Schools BULLETIN

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The Boys in Schools Bulletin

- Focuses on practical initiatives in schools
- Puts teachers in touch with others who are trialing new approaches to boys' education
- Supports and encourages a constructive debate on boys' education issues
- Develops materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys
- Provides information on new resources directed at boys

Guidelines for contributors

The *Boys in Schools Bulletin* is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content should motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including, of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- Say a bit about your school: What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?
- What happened?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at previous issues of the *Bulletin*. Or contact us and talk about it:

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Editorial



Welcome to the first edition of the *Boys in Schools Bulletin* for 2004 — and what a bumper edition it is. I hope you enjoy our new 'user-friendly' format, combining the primary and secondary sections into one 'practice' section. We took account of your feedback when you let us know that many boys' issues were relevant to

both primary and secondary teachers.

Parents feature strongly in this edition with our research article on boys' literacy highlighting the important role of parents in keeping a reading relationship with boys who are reluctant readers. This theme is continued in the article on engaging fathers in literacy at home. As well, Kahibah Public School and Windale Public School are both involving parents in different projects that work on harmonious social relationships for boys in the school and in their wider lives.

Prompted by self-reflection and student feedback, staff at St Joseph's College in Geelong are proactively tackling the difficult issue of homophobia. This is a moving article about much needed leadership to address this neglected aspect of boys' social relationships. At the Slade Campus of the Church of England Grammar School in Warwick, Queensland, staff are implementing programs to enable and challenge boys to take leadership in all aspects of their lives.

The first phase of the Commonwealth Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme is complete. The project has come up with some important principles for action in educating boys. We feature these and a case study of a successful project from the West Wallsend cluster of schools in NSW.

Our Bulletin Board features some great tips and success stories from teachers around Australia developing and adapting excellent programs like Rock and Water and others to ensure the best behaviour from all our boys. And, of course, the big news on the back cover is that our fabulous conference 'Working with Boys: Building Fine Men' is on again in April 2005. Get in early with your expressions of interest to make sure you don't miss out on this important event and to get our early bird rates.

Have a great 2004. Primary and secondary, single-sex and co-ed schools are really moving forward in educating boys. We'd love to hear about your school projects. Don't forget to contact us with your stories and good luck with your groundbreaking work.

Deborah Hartman

For the editorial committee

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Article, 'Meeting the Challenge', p 33, reproduced with permission from *Meeting The Challenge: Summary Report: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme Stage One 2003*, © Commonwealth of Australia 2003, published by Australian Department of Education, Science and Training.
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practice



The road less travelled

A proactive approach to combat homophobia and bullying at St Joseph's College, Geelong

Principal Paul Tobias and Deputy Claire Brown have undertaken a wide range of initiatives to encourage a shift in culture from macho, homophobic attitudes to embrace difference and diversity, and to take pride in academic and creative excellence. Years of experimentation and perseverance are beginning to pay off.

St Joseph's College (SJC) is an all-boys, Christian Brothers' school for Years 5 to 12 in Geelong, a city in semi-rural Victoria outside Melbourne. We are the only all-boys school in the area and currently have 1284 students. We are predominantly an Anglo school, although there are some pockets in North Geelong of people from the Balkans. We also have quite a significant Croatian group at the school, and second and third generation Italian students.

When were you first aware that homophobia was an issue in your school?

Paul: I arrived here as deputy in 1995 and, although I had spent most of my life in all-boys schools, my previous four years had been in co-ed. It took my breath away coming back to all boys, because this was a fairly macho kind of place when I arrived. There were only about 750 boys at that time but the school had gone through some pretty awful press in relation to pedophilia. Boys from outside the school taunted our boys with insults

like 'You are all poofters there'. Reports from senior kids and from student leaders showed that our boys copped abuse on buses we shared with students from other schools. The boys were acting out to ensure their masculinity wasn't open to question. The more macho you could be as a boy, the safer your identity was.

By 1998 we had set up a Homophobia Task Force. This was a group of eight to 10 interested staff, which met for breakfast. For the first 12 months we just talked about the issues at the school and shared resources that we might have gleaned from the newspapers or journals or whatever. At that point the boys all knew about the school's past problems with pedophilia, and there seemed to be a lot of homophobia within the community.

The letter

In May 1998, the then principal received a letter from a student outlining his experiences at SJC as a 'gay' student in the 1970s (see excerpt page 6). He had a pretty unpleasant time here and he was

challenging us, asking us what we were doing to ensure that that sort of treatment of students didn't happen now.

The principal was keen to promote pastoral care in the school and he shared the letter with staff. For this boy, not many days passed during his time here at school that he wasn't 'bullied, ostracised, and . . . mistreated due to what others perceived to be my sexuality. I was labeled as the class poofter.'

When this was read out to staff, they were fairly quiet. It was obvious when we did some initial work with the staff that there were some people who had problems with homophobia themselves. It was too hard, too confronting. I always felt confident that there was a solid group of staff who wanted to move away from the way some things had been in the past, in terms of how kids had been treated, and also keen to improve the student culture.

In 1999, I went to an in-service entitled 'Non-Straight Talk About Sex' by Dr Michael Schwartz. He laid out some pretty stark facts and figures about same-sex-attracted

youth: about the connection between boys in that group and youth suicide. He also provided some good activities in that package to do with staff based around how you respond to obvious homophobic comments made in the classroom. We used these with staff and managed to really get people to understand the problem better. I think it takes a couple of years to properly clue staff in and galvanise them to really want to do something.

In my first year as principal I also made a public apology to former students for the abuse, and that has been helpful. We called a press conference, bought some space in the local newspaper, went on radio and it was reported in the *Melbourne Age* and in other parts of the media. I think we might have been the first school to make such an apology.

Claire: In 2000 when Paul became principal, he appointed two deputies, one being myself. I don't think there are too many other female deputies in all-boys schools. I think that was quite a significant decision on his part to bring about that broader cultural change,

including addressing some of these issues.

One of the things that we did early on was to become involved in a program run by the Catholic Education Office called 'A Whole School Approach to Pastoral Care: A Road Beyond The Gatehouse'. The whole idea behind 'A Road Beyond The Gatehouse' was to help schools develop a whole-school approach to pastoral care. An aim of the program was to develop the health and wellbeing of adolescents. So we joined that program to use it as a framework to review pastoral care at the college and identify areas we needed to work on. A number of things came out of it, including that bullying was an issue for us, and we knew that homophobic bullying was a part of that.

How did you discover bullying was an issue in a way that you didn't already know?

Claire: Part of our involvement in 'A Road Beyond The Gatehouse' was to conduct a Year 8 survey and that involved asking a range of questions to all Year 8 students. We conducted the survey in the first year and then again two years later. The surveys



Improving the physical environment has been part of the St Joseph's College wide range of initiatives to improve the school's culture.

Timeline of events

- 1995 Paul Tobias appointed deputy principal to Principal Peter Cannon
- 1997 The Homophobia Task Force established, meeting over the next two years to discuss issues and strategies and review resources
- 1998 Letter from ex-student sent to Peter Cannon outlining his experience of harassment during the 1970s
- 1998–99 Tried 'Pride and Prejudice' package, developed by Daniel Witthaus, with a Year 9 class
- 1999 Paul Tobias and Mrs Margaret Sutton, Student Welfare Coordinator, attended in-service by Dr Michael Schwartz 'Non-Straight Talk About Sex'
- 1999–2000 Boys To Men: a Year 9 parent night looking at boys' development; all staff in-serviced
- 2000 Paul Tobias appointed principal; two deputy principals appointed: Ms Claire Brown and Mr Tony Paatsch
- 2000–03 Landscaping of school grounds accelerated to soften the school environment; as part of the promotion of the arts throughout the college, an extensive building program was undertaken, including Music Centre and Performing Arts Centre
- 2001 St Joseph's College joins 'Road Beyond Gatehouse' project developed by the Catholic Education Office, a follow-on from The Gatehouse Project
- 2002 'Safety in Our Schools: Responding to Homophobia': a whole-day staff development program developed by La Trobe University
- 2003 'Pride and Prejudice' program run across Year 9
- 2004 Speech by school leader about bullying, discrimination and harassment, linked to School Equal Opportunity Policy

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Excerpt of a speech by a Year 12 student at a whole school assembly, February 2003

Many students have been bullied. I have been bullied in my younger years ... To quote from the St Joseph's College Geelong Equal Opportunity Policy: 'It is the policy of St Joseph's College that the learning and working environment is a positive, supportive one, for all members of the school community, and one in which diversity is valued and difference respected.'

Discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and bullying, are not only against school policy but are also illegal in all workplaces in the broader community. Under no circumstances will they be tolerated in our college community. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any member of the school community who is found to have breached this policy.

... We as a single sex school don't even realise calling even your own mates a faggot or a poofter is a serious offence according to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*. It states that any name-calling or harassment on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation is a serious offence and can lead to a charge of sexual discrimination.

.....

confirmed what we knew: that we needed to do more to address these problems.

The next thing we did (besides develop the pastoral structure and so on) was to invite the people from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, based at La Trobe University and set up with Commonwealth Funding to help schools address issues associated with youth suicide.

Having taken on the latest research that said same-sex-attracted youth (particularly males) are disproportionately represented in youth suicide rates, by extrapolation, we knew that there had to be young men in our school who are at risk. So we undertook the training that La Trobe offered: a whole-day training for staff called 'Safety in Our Schools: Responding to Homophobia'. This dealt with helping boys feel safe and comfortable in class, the school grounds and in the school community.

How did staff respond?

Paul: I had a real sense that while some of them were struggling with some of the early in-services, there was a sort of an upbeat notion about this particular in-service and it really told me as principal that we, the staff, had made a substantial shift.

At one point I said we knew we had some of these students in our school and that we had to do something. People actually clapped, and you don't get that very often. So there was a clear sense that yes, we had traveled part of this journey, that we were learning and we needed to keep learning to protect those students who were battling.

Claire: Part of that training was an opportunity for staff to examine their own attitudes to same-sex-attracted people. I can remember the facilitators lining us all up, asking us to stand somewhere on a continuum in terms of our attitude to same-sex-attracted people. It was quite challenging for

staff but it was also quite supportive and very encouraging to see that a lot of people had shifted and were ready and looking for practical strategies for working with kids in the classroom on these sorts of issues.

What kinds of programs did you use to address the homophobia?

Paul: A member of our original Homophobia Task Force was a local youth worker, Daniel Witthaus, who developed a curriculum package focusing on homophobia. We trialed 'Pride and Prejudice' in 1998-99. The package was launched by VicHealth in 2000. Last year we decided to run the program for all Year 9s because we'd noticed homophobic/bullying behaviour in that year.

We incorporated it into our pastoral program, which runs at all year levels for one period a week, where we deal with things that are relevant to the boys' level of development.

What were the outcomes you wanted to achieve by running a formal program?

Basically we wanted to address homophobia and bullying at that year level in a more structured way. We talked about where we thought the program would be most useful and it was our collective decision that it would be Year 9. Prior to running the program we conducted a parent information evening and the feedback from parents encouraged us to proceed.

What did the teachers say at the end of eight or nine weeks?

Claire: They had mixed responses. They felt the boys responded really well to some sessions but they found it difficult to manage large groups — groups of 28 — because the boys wanted to talk; they all had stories and questions, and that was difficult to manage. The scope of the program was too big and teachers found it hard to follow the sessions that Daniel's program provided, so

we didn't achieve all the goals. We agreed that we needed to modify the program and do some things differently and are currently working with the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne to do that.

Did you run a group yourself, Claire?

Claire: Well, I did, along with the college counsellor. I thought it was a good opportunity to get involved and to experience the program. Like others, we found that it was difficult to manage what the program hoped to achieve. In reviewing it with teachers, we agreed that we needed to modify it and probably incorporate it into a section of the religious education program on Christian sexuality.

What was the most powerful part, where the boys actually tuned in?

I think the boys responded most positively to the idea of difference and to diversity. Once we started

focusing more on homophobia some of the boys seemed to struggle a bit more.

Before the Pride and Prejudice program started, had you made any overall gains with the student culture that you could see?

Claire: There is a better feeling about the culture of the school.

Paul: I think there is less bullying and homophobic bullying. I would say, particularly in working with the senior boys, that in the past it would not be uncommon for boys to come and tell me that they were receiving homophobic taunts and ask what should they do about it. It's a fair while since I have handled that sort of enquiry from a senior boy. I meet with the senior leaders weekly and I meet regularly with the school captain and two deputies. So I have some sense of the issues the boys face.

In what other ways have you tried to change the student culture away from homophobia?

Sometimes in the past we felt there was an 'anti-academic' push amongst the kids. If you were good at your schoolwork, quietly spoken, studious, artistic — inevitably you were branded a poof. So, the staff wanted to improve the student culture of learning. One of the things that happens with homophobia is that you have a narrowing of male identity. You can only be these certain kinds of things and you can't step out of that very narrow definition of 'maleness'. If you do, you are vulnerable. We wanted to address that in some way.

There had been moves to do that in the curriculum area by emphasising things like the creative and performing arts. In our newsletters and assemblies sport is not over emphasised and things like dramatic productions and music are talked up. Both the facilities and the number of students involved in those areas over the last 10 years have improved dramatically. At Solo Night 2003 we had 96 performers for music compared to a much smaller number in 1995. That has been a big change.

Student leadership

Paul: It was interesting at the first assembly in 2004, a student leader on his own initiative, told me that he would like to talk to the rest of the school about abusive language and homophobia. Three or four years ago we would never have got away with the sorts of things that were said at that assembly. The student culture of the college would have made this difficult.

Claire: He elected to address the whole-school assembly about acceptance, diversity and treating each other with respect. He talked about language and bullying and made reference to the Equal Opportunity Policy, which we redeveloped last year to cover the whole range of harassment and



• Before and after: St Joseph's College's quadrangle used to be known as the concrete jungle (above), but today (below) there is shelter, seating and greenery.

Excerpt of letter from an ex-student to former Principal Peter Cannon, May 1998

... Not many days passed during that time [seven years] that I wasn't harassed, bullied, ostracised or generally mistreated due to what others perceived as my sexuality. Even well before I reached puberty and started to gain an understanding myself of my sexual identity, I was labeled as the class poofster. Unfortunately during this time I don't recall any time when the school effectively tried to deal with this situation, let alone help me attempt to come to terms with my sexuality.

I coped through those years by quiet sufferance. I rarely fought back in an obvious sense. I suppose I did fight back in that I didn't disappear, and refused to let the situation break me. I also coped by generally being quiet and introspective, something quite contrary to my nature. So, I graduated from SJC a quiet, conservative, shy man, confused about my sexuality and wounded by my experience at SJC. When I say I was confused, I mean that I knew I was gay but had no idea how to come to terms with that. I managed at the time by effectively denying myself any expression of sexuality at all. It was 10 years and a nervous breakdown later that I finally came to terms with being a gay man.

Certainly the 1970s at SJC was a dark time and while I was totally uninvolved and unaware of the sexual molestation of boys that was going on at the time, I can also say that the school was, at that time, an extremely homophobic environment. Good estimates of the size of the homosexual population put it at five to 10%. Homosexuality is not a choice; it is a natural occurrence. That means that Catholic families are just as likely to have a gay child as any family. So at the time I was there, there were probably 40 to 80 gay students, all of them experiencing the same oppressive, prejudiced and discriminatory environment during those critical formative years.

... Please give some thought as to what SJC currently does to create an environment where every student, gay or straight, can grow naturally into a well-rounded happy individual. Don't just think about it from the point of view of the gay students! What is the school doing to educate the heterosexual students about gay people? We form five to 10% of the population, we are everywhere, all your students will encounter us during their lives. Increasingly, we refuse to be invisible. However, our daily experience is dictated by the attitudes and actions of the majority straight population around us. SJC has a responsibility to the community to address this, as I'm sure it does in addressing attitudes toward other religions, cultures, races etc. An understanding of the diversity of humanity is an important part of creating an harmonious society, and of the broad education we get from our schools.

bullying. It was the student leaders' initiative to set up the 'Bully Box' as another way for students to report incidences. So, the student leaders are very much on board about changing the culture of the school or making the culture of the school more accepting of difference.

The other thing about the leaders is that the nature of the boys being elected has actually changed. In the past they were more likely to be good sportsmen, popular boys in that sense. The group that is elected now is far more diverse and includes some of those quieter, more serious types. We see that as evidence of a shift in culture.

Have you changed your selection procedures for student leaders?

Paul: Yes, we moved away from just a straight popularity model about three years ago — in 2001.

Claire: It has had benefits in terms of what those student leaders do, how they operate, and what they are modelling amongst the boys.

Is it desirable to be a student leader or is it seen as a chore?

Paul: It is highly desirable. They are asked to do things, like be around on an open day, but they are happy to be a part of that. At their own request last year, the captain and the deputies now have a different coloured tie to the rest of the school. The captain this year went away to a national camp for the leaders of all Christian Brothers schools held in Perth in January. The other leaders also spent a day with the student leader coordinator working through some issues, such as bullying and homophobia.

Claire: Those leaders also did two days of the Rock and Water program at the end of last year. That was run by four of our own teachers for the purpose of developing leadership skills.

Have you started using Rock and Water Program elsewhere in the school?



ABOVE: Seating and gardens now overlook the Aphrasia Street oval.
BELOW: Gardens have been created and seating provided near the resurfaced tennis courts and basketball courts.

Yes. We decided that we wanted to proceed very gently with Rock and Water because we think it has a lot to offer but we are not quite sure how best to approach it. The decision we made this year was that the four teachers who had been trained would trial aspects of Rock and Water with their own pastoral care classes. We will see what comes out of that.

Softening the environment

We have also done an enormous amount to soften the environment: landscaping, providing seating and making it a more pleasant, less bleak environment, which is another way of influencing boys.

How have you changed the seating?

Paul: This was in short supply previously!

Claire: When I arrived I thought, 'God what have I got myself into?' It was a bleak looking place. It looks very different now. We have lots of grass and trees and roses and new seating. Boys are now sitting and talking to each other. There are sunshades and it is a very different looking place. That is a more subtle and yet important part of the push to change the culture of the school, whether you are talking about homophobic attitudes or attitudes towards academic excellence.

How have you involved fathers in the changing of the culture?

Paul: We have parents involved in particular activities. We have a Parent Participation Form that we send home each year to try to get involvement from parents/carers across a whole range of school

activities, from help with reading to canteen, the Men's Association, the Board and its subcommittees.

Generally this is an extraordinary place for parental involvement. The Men's Association, a group of sixty men (in four rotating teams), runs a working bee every Sunday, mowing the lawns, planting trees, cleaning lockers, and then they have a beer afterwards! So they enjoy themselves, and there is a bit of rivalry between who achieved what last Sunday. They have been doing much of the work in developing the school grounds.

We run eleven Little League football teams and parents coach all of those. Quite a lot of them involve kids from outside of our school so we have some sort of broader community involvement in that way. Similarly with cricket — we run about eleven under-age cricket teams, which are run predominantly by parents and their friends via the St Joseph's Cricket Club.

From 2000 to 2002 we ran 'Boys to Men' as a night for parents, predominantly fathers. Again it was based at Year 9, looking at boys and puberty and we actually spent a bit of time looking at initiations in ancient civilisations and some of the issues raised by Steve Biddulph (difficulties boys face in a more contemporary world). The parents responded well. There would have been about half of parents attend, once a year.

Paul, in your nine years at the school and four years as principal, what particular avenues in addressing homophobia and bullying are you most encouraged about, and which ones remain a bit too difficult?

Paul: I think there is no doubt that in terms of the student culture it is a different school to the one that I came to nine years ago. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that the staff do not tolerate bullying or homophobic comments from students, because they now have more confidence to challenge those

things. There have also been considerable changes in people's attitudes in the wider community.

We know from discussions with senior students that their thinking has changed and that they are more tolerant and open to difference. Not just in people's sexuality but in a whole range of things. I think racial tension has eased. For a long time we have been confident about tackling racism and if someone makes a racist comment, staff are very confident about how to respond. I think something like homophobia has taken us longer to feel confident about.

Our Year 12 academic results have improved. I suppose we have worked at being 'experts' at boys' education. That is, on boys' preferred learning styles and how boys learn best, so those sorts of things have been curriculum-driven initiatives. All of this is in the melting pot and happening at the same time.

Have you focused your boys' learning styles on middle years or senior years, or has it been across the board?

Paul: It has really been right across the curriculum. We have established learning network groups that are looking at best practice in boys' education and modelling what has worked well in their classes. There are lots of little groups happening around the school and they report back to other teachers. We often open a staff meeting with an activity that someone has run in a class that has worked well for them. We also print a lot of stuff about boys' education and boys' learning in our newsletters from week to week. You might actually find a few of them on our webpage: www.sjc.vic.edu.au

Looking back what advice would you give schools that want to grapple with homophobia?

Paul: I'd encourage them to make a start. And I think the starting point has got to be your staff.

What if staff are resistant or confronted?

Paul: I think that is where good professional development is invaluable, and I would certainly recommend that.

Claire: When you look at the statistics about youth suicide amongst young same-sex-attracted young men, then you look at your population and apply the percentage, no-one can deny that it's an issue. These boys are there! One of the quotes from the La Trobe in-service is that 'just because you don't see them, doesn't mean they aren't there'. They are part of our population and according to our mission statement that means we need to care for those boys.

Paul: I think we have tried lots of things. I would like to have had a more together, whole-school approach right from the word go. It has been a bit stop-start and when we are trying to evaluate how effective something has been — it is often really difficult to do that. I find that we get caught up in anecdotal evidence.

Have you recruited a lot of staff recently?

We've recruited a significant number of staff, many of them much younger than previously. I find that one of the most effective ways of educating boys is to put in front of

them enthusiastic young teachers, both male and female. Some boys' schools stack their schools with male staff and I think that is a mistake. We have exactly 50:50 male to female ratio.

We have about 20 new staff this year. We spent two days inducting them prior to the year beginning and a fair bit of that was around boys' education. Because of the number of new staff we need to continue to provide good in-service opportunities and probably whole-staff opportunities.

So how will you know when you have done enough?

I suppose in terms of public perception, clearly there has been a change. That has been reflected in demand for enrolment. I don't think it is just about homophobia, I think it is about curriculum, how the place looks, boys' learning focus, a whole lot of things. I don't want to sound like we are on top of everything either, because we are not. I often say to the staff, we don't need to just do one or two things we need to do 200 things well, and simultaneously. ■



Paul Tobias (seen here with Co-Deputy Principal Claire Brown) was appointed deputy principal of St Joseph's College in 1995, under then Principal Peter Cannon. Paul credits Peter with giving him the encouragement to run with the anti-homophobia focus. Paul was appointed principal in 2000.

They can be contacted on phone 03 5226 8100 and by email on claireb@sjc.vic.edu.au and paul@sjc.vic.edu.au



Peaceful parenting/peaceful school

A whole-school-community approach

Kahibah Public School is a great place to be a student. The parents and children have known that for a long time. Now the government has made it official, with a national award and grant from the Federal Minister for Education Dr Brendan Nelson. What are they doing that makes the school such a safe and caring environment? Pam Richardson explains how the Peaceful Parenting program is re-educating parents and, in the process, reducing violence, bullying, disobedience, disrupted learning and disrespect.

What's it all about?

Our Peaceful Parenting course, adapted from Dr Nancy Buck's work, takes a fresh approach to effective parenting. It is aimed at improving and maintaining a child's connection with his parents by helping parents improve their parenting skills. This course helps people understand the source of behaviour, and is aimed at preventing problems rather than solving them later.

All parents want their children to lead happy and successful lives. They want their children to keep safe and make responsible decisions. This course teaches us that we are responsible for our own behaviour, and though we have the tendency to lump blame on someone or something else, we do have the choice to make more effective decisions to find peace and harmony in our lives. Some boys find it very hard to control their emotions and are more likely to act them out, so this is a very important lesson for them to learn. Nationally, boys feature in between 80 to 90% of statistics on behaviour incidents, suspensions and expulsions from schools.

If we, as parents, can teach our children to meet their needs in a responsible way, the result is

improved quality of life for every member of the family. Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with all the people in the world that matter to us is the key to ongoing happiness throughout life.

Why did we run this course?

Our project aim was to build a quality school, a peaceful place, a place of joy, where children were really happy and safe and where real learning could take place. As a staff, we felt that to be really effective, staff, students and parents needed to share the same philosophy. We knew that programs rarely work well in isolation. They have much greater impact when they are connected and fit together like a jigsaw. Parents wanted to be involved anyway. They had asked for guidance frequently. This presented a great opportunity for us all to speak a common language, with common understanding, taking a consistent approach.

What does our school look like?

Kahibah Public School, with an enrolment of 239 students, 124 of whom are boys, is a coastal suburban school in the City of Lake Macquarie near Newcastle, NSW.



••• **Kahibah Public School's Principal Pam Richardson with some of her boys.**

Our school population is relatively stable. Of our student population, 6.2% come from a non-English-speaking background and 1.6% of are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

There is a strong community spirit in the school and we really work well together. We have a strong belief that we are a team of equals, each with a different job to do. These are not plastic words. Parents play an equal role in determining school policy through involvement in meetings, through surveys and through incidental conversations. Children also have their say through the student council, through

classroom meetings and through individual suggestions that are discussed. There's a lot of trust and mutual respect between all parties.

Staff observations: What did we notice?

In the year 2000, concerns were raised by members of staff that some inappropriate behaviours, particularly that of boys, was increasing over time. Our actual school data (shown in table 1) confirmed this.

These figures, based on the analysis of our records, explicitly detail the increases in the incidences of particular specific behaviours and mostly, boys were involved. Violence, bullying, disobedience, swearing and general disrespect were becoming a cause of great concern. Less than 10% of the issues were related to girls.

Contributing factor

Of significance was the fact that over a two-year period we had five staff changes out of nine classroom teachers. We were no longer really all doing the same 'thing', and our common philosophy was growing shaky because we didn't have a common understanding. Therefore, there was some disparity between staff in their approach to behaviour management and this had become obvious to some children.

Staff reflection and assessment: What did we find?

In a debriefing and information-gathering session with staff and parents at our School Council and P&C, we determined that:

- Staff needed a more consistent approach to student welfare.
- Staff practices needed to be reviewed, based on a common set of beliefs and values.
- Staff, students and parents required training in understanding behaviour to build stronger, connected relationships, so that our actions would mirror our beliefs.

Table 1: Record of antisocial behaviour during 2000

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Violence	25	35	36	41
Bullying	11	22	27	35
Disobedience	36	30	33	37
Swearing	11	14	18	24
Disrupting learning	10	20	19	21
Vandalism	11	6	5	9
Stealing	5	4	3	3
Disrespect	19	19	19	29
Other	5	1	0	13
Total	133	151	160	212

- Students needed to feel confident that they could feel safe in the playground.
- Bullying needed addressing.

What did we do?

Training and development was divided into three separate phases to ensure that we could systematically implement our approach. At their own request, all staff members received intensive four-day training in 'Choice Theory' philosophy, developed by William Glasser, which became embedded into our school culture, with an interwoven belief system based on a deep understanding of what we wanted to achieve. To have children change what they were doing, we realised that first we had to change ourselves and what we were doing. This was phase one.

Phase two was training and development for students. They were taught to understand behaviour, they were specifically taught values and they learned to self-reflect and self-assess. They learned to practise more effective behaviours to get what they wanted. This has been an ongoing program.

In February 2004, some of our students were interviewed on ABC radio. One of the boys mentioned that this was the best school he had ever been to because of the values we have taught and because of the way everyone cared for one another.

Another boy mentioned that everyone plays well together and cooperates. Girls talked about understanding each other, even though we are different, and others spoke about respect and what it looked like and meant. That these children could clearly articulate what they had learned and how they felt gave our program real credibility. What we were doing was working.

What did we teach?

Phase three was the training and development of parents in a program called 'Peaceful Parenting'. The course focuses on effective parenting. It teaches parents how to overcome the natural urge to control everything their child does, replacing it with a loving relationship which will help the child make sensible decisions regarding personal safety and security.

Parents learned what to do when they met the challenges of the push-pull relationships, which start at birth and then continue through the years. The course was designed to make life easier for parents. It helped them understand behaviour, by understanding what their children wanted and by understanding what they wanted for themselves, personally. We focused on how to keep cool in a crisis, how to relate to children and how to understand that all behaviour is purposeful.

They learned that the only behaviour you can really control is your own.

It was interesting that after only a few weeks, parents who had tried to change what they were doing were having significant success relating to their children. One little girl stopped screaming every morning before going to pre-school, one pre-school teacher asked a mother what was happening because the little person's behaviour had changed so much, and one husband thought he had a 'new' wife because she was no longer screaming and yelling.

We taught parents the difference between the seven deadly habits of criticising, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing and rewarding to control, as opposed to the seven constructive habits of caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting and befriending.

We dealt in depth with our quality world, which is what we really want and how we'd like the world to be for us. Involved in this was the understanding of the need to develop strong negotiation skills because we can't always get what we want. Compromise and cooperation are key elements in negotiation.

We taught parents what to do instead of giving in to tantrums. We examined the catastrophe scale, which is a useful tool to help us to stop blowing things out of proportion. We taught parents how to harness their emotions more effectively and, above all, we taught that if you use force to win, you might get your way in the short term, but the consequence is that this approach has the potential of destroying the relationship between parent and child. We covered how to teach self-discipline to your child, how to hold family meetings and how to communicate effectively. There were a total of eight lots of two-hour sessions with one session per fortnight. Parents loved them and wanted more.

What effect did this program have on parents who attended?

It's best if we let the parents speak for themselves. All of these comments are direct quotes from the evaluation forms:

- I found this course not only beneficial as a parent, but also in my work with teenagers. I've been able to diffuse situations at work more efficiently when trying to identify what they want. Most successful for me.
- Loved it. Sorry it's over. My husband has commented on how it has changed me and that's been good for me.
- Really enjoyed this and got a lot out of it.
- I am a better parent and home is more settled.
- Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make our homes more peaceful.
- The door has been opened and there is a long way for me to go and sometimes I'm not sure if I can make it on my own, but I don't want to give up.
- I feel more able to analyse and reflect on 'bad moments', so I can deal with the same situations better next time.
- I learned how important it is for children to feel loved.
- I'm now a parent that listens.
- I've learned how to self-analyse and now have the ability to understand my family.
- I feel calmer and more in control of my emotions and my feelings. I feel better able to cope.
- I learned to react with love, not criticism.
- Very early in the program I understood that I could change the way I handled my kids, and putting in the effort now makes it easier in the long run — obvious and simple, but I couldn't see it at the time.
- Please go and teach this course to — — school!
- I feel I am a better mother. I can deal with things much more



Parents Kim Scott and Joanne Best participated in the Peaceful Parenting program at Kahibah Public School.

- calmly.
- It has improved the tranquility of our home.

What was the result of what we did?

The three phases of the training allowed us to work in unison. One parent, who is a medical doctor, wrote: 'Indeed if I were to use any words to sum up this school I would say that it is a school devoted to the promotion of the wellbeing of the children within its care. It has established a nurturing, balanced and caring environment from which foundation children can participate in their education and excel, both personally and academically.'

Another parent wrote: 'It means that the children, parents and teachers are involved in the child's development, helping them to make sound choices and to become aware of their responsibilities.'

The reality is that everyone works together for the common purpose and parents and visitors frequently comment on the genuine warmth of the atmosphere that prevails. They also experience a sense of peace and calm. There is no coercion at our

Table 2: Record of antisocial behaviour over time after training

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Violence	25	35	36	41	38	29	10
Bullying	11	22	27	35	12	8	5
Disobedience	36	30	33	37	40	19	11
Swearing	11	14	18	24	5	1	1
Disrupting learning	10	20	19	21	15	9	6
Vandalism	11	6	5	9	3	0	0
Stealing	5	4	3	3	8	1	0
Disrespect	19	19	19	29	14	5	3
Other	5	1	0	13	17	1	1
Total	133	151	160	212	152	73	37

school, there are no put-downs, no blame, no judgement and no sarcasm. Each teacher connects to each child. Children feel strengthened.

Evidence of success: How do we know? How can we back this up?

Our data collection over time has been detailed (see table 2).

The updated statistics support our claim that enormous improvement has resulted from the total approach our school has taken. (Note: Staff and students were trained in 2002 and parents were trained in 2003. The figures for 2003 were current till July 2003 when we took our last census.)

New students enrol at school each year. Three families arrived in 2003 and many incidences of unacceptable behaviour were due to the fact that these children were not familiar with our programs. We worked particularly hard to teach these children that there might be other ways to get what you want.

Basically we were very pleased with the progress the school had made in terms of using more effective and acceptable behaviours. There was a huge reduction in violence, in bullying, in disobedience, in disrupting learning and in disrespect. Together we had achieved great improvement.

Benefits of our program

Everyone at our school actually believes in what we are doing and we actually ‘walk the talk’. We are passionate in embracing the same philosophy. Our belief system is infused through all of our practices and everything we do is interwoven and connected as we strive to build a quality environment for learning and living.

Staff, students and parents have a great sense of belonging within our school community and they genuinely work together ‘to be the best they can be’ in every endeavour undertaken. Kahibah Public School was rewarded with national recognition for being a safe and caring school in February, 2004, and won a grant offered by Federal Minister for

Education Dr Brendan Nelson.

At our school we are all a team of equals, each with a different job to do. No-one is more ‘important’ than anyone else, whether teachers, students, parents, office staff, or cleaners. We value every member of our school community. Our core business is teaching and learning. Everybody understands that, but to learn effectively children need to feel connected to their school and particularly to their teachers. They need to feel safe and free from fear of ridicule, coercion, put-downs and sarcasm. To do this we needed to ensure that we have built really strong meaningful relationships. Students then learn and achieve. We feel that all of these aspects are interconnected. ■



Principal of Kahibah Public School, Pam Richardson has a strong background in Choice Theory, Reality Therapy and Quality Management, a philosophy she’s been studying for 10 years. Pam has also been trained to run Peaceful Parenting courses, which she runs at

school, and frequently addresses staff from neighbouring and inter-district schools, helping them understand this philosophy with a view to implementation at their schools. She also runs sessions for parents at other schools. In recognition of her efforts, Pam received a National Award for Excellence in Teaching and, though now a principal, stays current with the latest teaching techniques because she is a lifelong learner. Pam also has a Certificate of Gifted Education from Sturt University. Pam can be reached by email at Pam.Richardson@det.nsw.edu.au or phone 02 4943 4501.



Going beyond academic outcomes

Facilitating and reporting on social and emotional development in boys at Slade

Peter McGlennon outlines the steps taken at Slade to assist middle school boys in their social and emotional development.

Slade Campus is a residential school facility based in Warwick, just over two hours from Brisbane in rural south-east Queensland. Slade was opened four years ago by Anglican Church Grammar School, a boys' school of 1700 students. All students from the Middle School's East Brisbane campus participate in residential programs at Slade. In Queensland student ages in Years 7 to 9 usually range from 11 to 14 years.

Programs involve boys residing at Slade for one week in Year 7, three weeks in Year 8 and five weeks in Year 9. Teams of three classes, around 85 boys, are on campus at any one time for Years 8 and 9, with larger numbers for Year 7. Personal development is one key focus of the Slade program.

By the beginning of 2003, Slade staff had been reporting to parents on aspects of their sons' social and emotional development for three years. Receiving reports on this was possibly new to many parents and it was challenging for some to hear that their son might be doing well academically, but not so well socially and emotionally in some contexts. There was also some feeling among staff that the outcomes we had been using were perhaps too narrow and too open to interpretation. The goal became to design a more comprehensive approach to assessment with a clearer focus.

It is now widely accepted in business and employment that an individual's self-image and ability to



Learning about social and emotional development has to be fun! This is a Design-A-Game activity as part of a Leadership and Influence session.

relate to others are critical factors to their success. Increasingly, schools realise that academic achievement alone is not enough to prepare boys for an uncertain future. It can be argued that academic outcomes are dependent on social and emotional progress as students are expected to be self-managed, to make accurate self-assessments, set realistic goals and use a range of learning strategies, including working effectively in groups.

There has been a lot of debate about social and emotional development (S&ED) in relation to boy's education. We view this as a critical area. Our reading of literature on resilience and emotional intelligence did not realise a

satisfactory framework or reporting process that would be meaningful to parents and students.

Five key areas

As a starting point we asked ourselves what specific aspects of boys social and emotional development we could focus on to best prepare them for a rapidly changing world.

We now run an integrated program linked to five key areas (domains) of social and emotional development. During their residency the boys work in a range of groups. Every group provides an opportunity for social and emotional development, as does life at the campus:

- Social and emotional domains
- Confidence and self-image
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social competence
- Leadership and influence

Sleeping Groups of seven are responsible for maintaining their living space in the residential area, and for duties in the dining room, including making announcements, welcoming guests, saying grace, organising serving order, and for preparation and cleaning up.

Student-managed Challenge Unit Groups in Year 8, and Depth Study Groups in Year 9 involve groups of five to seven students in practical and primary research projects linked to the Slade Campus curriculum, which focuses on the Murray–Darling Basin.

Mentor Groups of 14 combine two Sleeping Groups, allocated to one teacher. The teacher facilitates Challenge Unit and Depth Study Groups and plays an important pastoral care role for those 14 students.

How do you introduce students to your S&ED approach?

In a five-week residency (Year 9), for example, the boys have an active introduction on day one, an introduction to the reporting format and indicators on day two and five 90-minute S&ED sessions spread throughout their program. These S&ED sessions are facilitated by two mentor teachers who are paired to look after one class, and are designed to boost the social and emotional development aspect of everything in the students' experience at Slade.

When the students arrive we run a range of group initiatives in a session designed to be an active introduction to the S&ED program. Teachers say as little as possible, but ask questions designed to elicit student's current understanding about social and emotional development. Teachers will usually make a statement that lets boys

know that in the end all the maths, science, language and other ability in the world is not going to be of much use to us if we don't feel good enough about ourselves to offer what we know or if we can't relate well enough to other people to work effectively with them. We are not saying that academic learning is unimportant. It is, but it is only part of what we feel is needed to be successful and happy. We also let them know that they will be assessing themselves and each other in terms of social and emotional development during their Slade program, and that their assessment will contribute significantly to their Slade reports.

The boys then rotate through five key activities over two 90-minute sessions on that first day. Each activity focuses on one of the key S&ED domain areas, exposing the students from the outset to the goals of the program.

Design-A-Game, for example, has a focus on the key S&ED domain of Leadership and Influence. Students and teachers form a circle. Leadership and influence is introduced as the focus for the session. Students are reminded of the ground rules for discussion groups:

- One person speaking at a time
- No interruptions
- Everyone listens
- If you want to speak indicate and wait
- You are free to disagree as strongly as you like but you are not allowed to laugh at or put a person down for their idea

Then they asked what comes to mind when they hear the words leadership and influence. Each response is accepted without discussion before the activity is introduced.

The class is split into two groups of 14. Each group has 10 minutes planning time to design a game using a range of equipment, e.g. 15 pool 'noodles', a rubber football,

four cones, and two rubber tyre tubes. The brief is that the game must be fun to play, must involve everyone in the group (whether swimming or not), use all of the equipment provided and must be safe. The groups meet for five to 10 minutes in a circle and are not allowed to leave the circle or use the equipment during that time.

Each group then demonstrates their game by playing it. The watching group has to identify the rules and object of the game and then the demonstrating group clarifies if necessary.

The class group then meets together in a circle to debrief. We use focus questions like:

- *Did you notice any examples of effective leadership and influence?* Students offer their observations without discussion at this point. Each boy is merely thanked for his comment.
- *If you were involved in a group, what would someone have to do if they wanted to lead you?*
- *What wouldn't they do?*
- *Rate yourselves individually on a scale of 1 to 5 for your contribution to the group in terms of leadership and influence.* Students then indicate their self-rating by show of hands and are asked to observe each other's rating. They are invited to comment or ask questions about ratings given. Often the comments are supportive, e.g. 'Daniel, I don't understand why you only gave yourself a two.' When asked Daniel replied, 'I yelled at Joe when he didn't do what I told him.' Other explanations include such things as: 'I didn't listen to anyone's ideas', 'I put someone down'. Students will also query each other when they feel someone has rated themselves too highly.

What makes the reflection work?

The success of the game is not the focus. The activity is designed to provide a very recent experience to

reflect on in relation to the sessions focus. The teacher makes no correction or value judgement on comments offered by the students provided they are within the discussion ground rules. The teacher simply says thank you after each comment and moves on. This creates a safe environment with clearly defined boundaries. In a 40-minute session we spend about 10 minutes on reflection. We don't drag it out. If the topic is done we simply move on. It works best when teachers discipline themselves to stop talking and listen actively to students.

How do the five S&ED sessions work?

The S&ED Leadership and Influence session is typical.

We start each session in a circle with a question or two designed to engage thinking about the session's focus. An example in this case: what sorts of things do effective leaders do? We listen to the boys' various responses without discussion. The session's activity is then introduced. A territorial game called Raid (see

description page 19) involves two teams of 14. It involves tagging, taking and releasing prisoners, and bringing treasure back to your home area. Once the rules are clearly understood, planning time is given for teams to develop a strategy. The group debriefs in circle formation after the game with questions relating to leadership and influence as it occurred during the game.

Do the boys get better at reflecting on their leadership behaviour?

Once boys realise that we are genuinely interested in their thoughts and are not setting them up for yet another lecture from us, and that their right to an opinion is going to be respected, they talk very openly, and take a lead from the more reflective students. Debrief might last as long as 20 minutes. Focus questions include:

- Did your team have a strategy? How did your team come up with its strategy?
- Did anyone take on a leadership role in your team?
- Why do you think people are

willing to take directions from the leader/s?

- Did people have specific roles in your strategy?
- How were the roles decided?
- Was everyone in the group happy with their role?

One effective variation is to stop the game early, debrief and then give more planning time before restarting the game.

How important is the assessment process in your program?

It is critical. If boys are to focus on specific aspects of social and emotional development and have opportunities to develop in these areas we need to make it clear to them what those areas are. We find that having students engage in self and peer assessment proves useful in clarifying the goals of the S&ED program and assisting them to greater understanding about those goals.

What was involved in developing your S&ED framework?

Our starting point was to get very



Boys talk and listen to each other during a Leadership and Influence debriefing.

clear about what aspects of S&ED we were aiming to foster and therefore assess. We drew on existing writers on emotional intelligence, like Daniel Goleman, on some research ACER had done for the Department of Education in Western Australia on social competencies and adapted a framework Rollo Browne proposed in his submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys. Essentially we considered the following questions:

- What would a socially and emotionally mature individual be like?
- What identifiable characteristics would they exhibit?
- What skills and attitudes will help prepare students for happy and successful lives in this changing world?

In the end we settled on the following key attributes for a socially and emotionally mature individual:

- confident with a positive self-image
- self-aware
- self-managing
- socially competent
- able to lead and influence others

The five S&ED domains correspond to these points. The accompanying table shows the aspects in each domain and identifiable behaviours or indicators for each which could be understood easily by boys, teachers and parents. We devised the following scale for students and staff to rate individual students in terms of the consistency with which they demonstrated these specific behaviours:

- 5 always
- 4 usually
- 3 more often than not
- 2 sometimes
- 1 rarely or not at all

The key here is that most individuals demonstrate these characteristics at least occasionally and that the



One prisoner taken and one released (background) during a game of Raid as part of a Leadership and Influence session.

observable difference between individuals is the consistency with which they demonstrate them. So, in essence, we are not saying that individuals progress to new behaviours as they mature, but that they increase the consistency with which they demonstrate the same behaviours. We also recognise that individuals behave differently according to context.

We decided to include all staff in the assessment process and, importantly, the students in self and peer assessment. Over time we are moving towards assessment in a wider variety of learning and living contexts.

How do you do the assessment?

We trialed an approach for most of 2003 for the Year 8 and 9 students.

On day two the boys do a short self and peer assessment within their Sleeping Groups based on the activities from day one. This data is not actually used in the final report. It is done to introduce students to the S&ED goals, language and to the self and peer assessment format.

In week three they do a self and peer assessment based on their

Depth Study groups, which have worked together for nine 90-minute sessions on a self-managed group project. Each student rates themselves and each group member. They consider the indicators before giving a rating from one to five for each of the five main domains, based on how consistently the indicator behaviours were demonstrated. The average group rating about each student is compared with his self-rating. Mostly these are compatible. If not, the teacher may use this info to help a student to reflect more honestly and accurately about his performance.

For example, if Ben gives himself five out of five for everything and the rest of the group gives him twos and ones, the teacher might facilitate a discussion about this: 'Something interesting is happening when I look at the self and peer assessments. Ben, you've been giving yourself high scores. Are you willing to say why you have rated yourself this way? Ben responds. Other group members have been giving Ben lower ratings. Would anyone like to say why you have given this rating?'

When the basis for the ratings is clarified the teacher could invite Ben to set some goals for himself, or his group to reflect on the fairness of their rating.

It is important that this is not allowed to become a debate. The teacher might say, we're not trying to prove who is right. It's an opportunity to hear and think about what others think about your contribution to the group. You don't have to defend yourself. It's also an opportunity to think about if the ratings are honest and fair. They generally are, and it is pointed out to the students from the start that is fairly obvious to the mentor if someone does make an unfair assessment because it stands out from what everyone else is saying.

Generally students take self and peer assessment very seriously and make their best effort to be accurate. Boys generally have strong values about fairness.

In week five the boys make their Depth Study Group presentations and hand in their group written report. Immediately after the presentation they do their final self and peer assessment based on their Depth Study Group experiences. All staff rate students who they feel they have worked with sufficiently to make a meaningful assessment. The data from all of these sources is used by the mentor-teacher, to assist in writing individual reports. At this point, the boys do not see how each teacher has rated them in the five domains or what their individual peers have said. They see an overall rating which is the cumulative result of an average of ratings from his peers, from other staff, the student's self-assessment and the facilitator's own observations from working closely with the student.

In practice, the mentor looks at all of the data and a pretty clear picture emerges of each boy's S&ED in the Slade context. Generally, there is a good grouping, although discrepancies occur occasionally for various reasons, including a student's disinterest in a topic or a

less than positive relationship with a teacher. The reports are posted to parents and the boys take a keen interest in them.

Occasionally a parent finds the comments different from what they know of their child at home. In these cases the extensive data gathering is very helpful in alerting parents to a clear picture of how their son has operated in an independent and self-directed learning environment. The report is a snapshot of their son in the Slade environment.

One overall goal is to assist the boys to make these kinds of self and peer assessments throughout their schooling so that they can intervene in their own performance while keeping parents informed about their progress.

What has been the effect of using this S&ED framework at Slade?

We have observed boys starting to apply their understandings in their groups and in living together. We have more harmonious residencies, although there are other factors contributing to that as well. The assistant headmaster at East Brisbane campus recently commented that the social organisation of the Year 11 boys at their 2003 leadership camp demonstrated graphically to him that the Slade program was proving highly effective in terms of social and emotional development. The head of Faculty for Music commented recently that he attributed the cohesiveness and social competence of his leadership music group to the work they had done at Slade.

What do the boys say about what you do?

Each boy is asked to write two entries a week in a reflective journal. These cover a student's experiences, including their responses and feelings to events. Journals are read by mentor-teachers, who make brief personal and encouraging comments in writing, such as 'I enjoyed the humour' or 'I relate to how you felt'.

One boy's entry read: 'Today in S&ED I couldn't believe what happened. We went to the hall and were given pool noodles that were chopped in half and told to hit each other. It was such fun. I couldn't believe we were told to do that. It had to do with self-management.'

From student surveys, when asked to list the three most important things you learned from Slade, the top-ranking responses related to some aspect of learning how to live and work successfully in a community.

It should be noted that these surveys and the following comments from parent surveys relate to the Slade program in its entirety and not just the S & ED program.

What do parents say about the Slade program?

From anonymous surveys 'What do you consider as strengths in the Slade residential program?'

- A different learning environment with different outcomes from normal school activities. Understanding and tolerance of others and assisting your son to become more self-sufficient.
- A learning environment that is very different to a structured, primarily academic environment is a wonderful opportunity. The supportive environment away from home is great to encourage personal growth through new challenges.
- Opportunities for boys to gain further insights into acceptance of others as they are.
- Develop tolerance, independence, organisational skills and self-motivation.
- I think the Slade concept is great in helping our sons to grow and develop in people skills, self-awareness and the awareness of others in preparing them for adulthood.
- Teamwork, responsibility, cooperative living, self-management.
- Engendering independence and a

sense of community.

- The self-development and independence taught at Slade. He came home positive, confident, and focused on doing the best he could around home and with school projects.

What do the teachers say about the assessment process?

Staff members made the following observations:

- The data from the various sources gave me increased confidence that I am giving a well informed assessment of each student, and a more accurate one than was possible without student input.
- Student involvement in the assessment and reporting process has really helped them to better understand and focus on S&ED goals. As a result some boys modified their behaviour in their Depth Study Group and in social interactions. It also gave me opportunities for meaningful discussion and teaching about these concepts.
- Peer assessment made the boys reflect on what their peers were saying about them. This was particularly useful at times when a student or parent had an unrealistically low or high opinion of his development. It also gave boys specific information about aspects of their behaviour that they could focus on.

What outcomes have you noticed?

The boys generally enjoy the program. This is because the expectations are clear, and the activities are designed to appeal to a broad range of student interests. We feel we are much more clearly focused about S&ED and that we are achieving the outcomes we set as goals. The consistency of the program is beginning to bite.

What have you learned?

Boys can and will reflect with great insight and vulnerability when given meaningful experiences and a safe

environment to do so.

All willing teachers are capable of and come to enjoy running these activities if given appropriate professional development in areas like effective group facilitation, debriefing and facilitating student-centred learning.

A real key to the success of the program is that teachers speak minimally and resist the temptation to comment, lecture and moralise.

What advice would you have for other schools?

- Get really clear about the goals and the student outcomes you are after.
- Design fun interactive activities and develop teacher skills in group facilitation and debriefing.
- Ask students to assess themselves and each other and take what they say seriously.
- Be prepared to reflect on your own consistency in modelling the behaviours you are promoting.
- Understand that no stand-alone program is likely to achieve significant and lasting results unless it serves to complement a learning program and environment, which shares consistent values and goals.

All our activities are drawn from easily available PE, outdoor, drama and other experiential education resources and really can be drawn from anywhere provided they provide experiences that are fun and create opportunities to focus on the program's goals. A key is the teacher's skill in building the reflection cycle into the experience and helping students to connect that with the assessment domains and life in general through thoughtful questioning.

Next steps?

We aim to increase the use of the language and concepts involved in the S&ED program throughout curriculum-based learning programs.

We need to convert data collection and collation to a computer-generated process. This will make data entry, collation and retrieval more efficient.

We plan to collect data from an increased range of contexts over the three years students visit Slade campus. This will provide a record of their social and emotional development over time, and make it possible to develop benchmarks from our data. Data could be entered from co-curricular and curricular contexts from the wider school throughout a student's school life. The S&ED assessment items could be built into the mainstream middle school reports at East Brisbane campus.

In conclusion, there are a few key benefits from the assessment process as it has evolved so far.

- Student involvement gives students clearer understanding of the goals for the social and emotional development program.
- Students receive and can reflect on specific information about their social and emotional development from a range of sources. This empowers them to make informed choices and set appropriate goals.
- Staff has access to solid data from a variety of sources to make reporting more informed, accurate and justifiable. Reports are more objective statements about the consistency with which a student has demonstrated particular behaviours in particular contexts based on information from a number of sources. ■



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Raid

Object: To raid the other team's territory and take all of their treasure or play to a time limit and see which team has the most treasure

Requirements: Playing field, two buckets. Fifteen to 20 treasure items per bucket (half pool noodles are ideal, but beanbags, tennis balls etc. are fine)

Game: Teams position themselves in opposite halves of the area

Players attempt to move through opposing teams area to the End Zone without being tagged (players are safe once they cross the back line into the End Zone)

Players tagged in opposing team's area wait as prisoners in the opposing teams End Zone

Players who run out of bounds become prisoners

A player who safely reaches the End Zone may either:



- release a team mate who is a prisoner (walk around the outside of the arena together to own area)

- take one piece of treasure (walk around the outside of the arena and place the treasure in own team's bucket)

The game continues until one team has all of the treasure

Disputes: If a dispute arises about whether a person has been tagged or not, the players acknowledge it as a dispute and return to their own areas without taking treasure or releasing a prisoner

Stress that the game can only work if people are honest

Slade Social and Emotional Development Framework 2003

Note on S&ED Framework: It is recommended that readers look more at the concepts involved in this process than at the detail of our draft criteria and outcomes. We expect that those will not suit all contexts and we will no doubt modify and improve ours over time. If you use this framework please acknowledge the source.

Domain 1: Confidence and Self-Image

Aspect	Behavioural indicator	Simple language
Participation	Engages in broad range of activity options, including group activities	Tries all sorts of activities
	Willing to participate in unfamiliar situations	Has a go at new activities
	Accepts mistakes as learning opportunities	Feels okay about making mistakes when trying something new
Attitude	Focuses on what is positive	Looks on the bright side
	Displays positive body language and vitality	Has plenty of energy and looks happy

Domain 2: Self-Awareness

Aspect	Behavioural indicator	Simple language
Emotional awareness	Identifies a range of emotions, their causes and effects	Knows what he is feeling, what caused it and how it makes him feel
	Understands the concept of behaviour choices in response to meeting social needs	Understands that he chooses what he does because he has certain needs
Honest self-assessment	Knows personal strengths, and challenges	Knows what he is good at and what he has trouble with

Domain 3: Self-Management

Aspect	Behavioural indicator	Simple language
Self-organisation	Is punctual and manages time well	Gets things done on time and gets where he needs to be on time
	Manages resources, personal possessions, personal hygiene and living area well	Keeps his things and his space organised so he knows where things are and has what he needs to get things done
	Presents neat and well organised work	

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Behavioural indicator</i>	<i>Simple language</i>
	Consistently willing to operate within rules and guidelines	Chooses to stay within the rules
Motivation	Sets challenging goals	Aims high
	Perseveres when challenged	Doesn't give up when things get hard
	Reflects and reviews strategies	Thinks about what he is doing to see if it is working and changes to a new plan if he needs to
Emotional management	Allows a range of emotions to surface	Lets himself feel all sorts of feelings
	Expresses and communicates emotions responsibly	Lets his feelings out without hurting himself or others
Independence	Willing to hold positions at variance with peers	Stands up for what he believes whether or not others agree
	Functions happily away from family	Copes well away from home

Domain 4: Social Competence

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Behavioural indicator</i>	<i>Simple language</i>
Communication	Listens actively	Tries to understand others ideas
	Communicates effectively	Does what he needs to so that others can understand his ideas
Conflict management	Identifies conflict clearly	Knows when there is a problem between people
	Considers others perspectives	Tries to understand how other people are feeling and thinking
	Offers alternatives	Comes up with ideas that might work
	Assertively expresses views without aggression	Says what he thinks without trying to force others to agree
	Seeks win-win solutions	Wants to find a solution that everyone involved will be happy with
	Able to resolve conflicts peaceably without adult intervention	Sorts out problems without needing adult help
Collaboration and cooperation	Participates willingly in group situations	Happy to work with others
	Takes individual responsibility for group goals	Does his best to help his group get things done
	Understands and undertakes various roles within a group	Understands that groups need people to play different roles, like leader, recorder etc. to get things done and plays different roles at times to help his group succeed
Empathy	Seeks to understand others feelings and perspectives	Tries to understand how other people are feeling and thinking
	Supports others	Does what he can to help others
Contribution to positive group culture	Accepting of diversity	Accepts that everyone is different and treats everyone with respect
	Expresses individuality	Has the courage to be who he is even when that is different
	Demonstrates respect for reasonable rules and the rights of others	Does what he needs to do so that everyone can feel safe and happy
Relationships	Forms and maintains satisfying social and working relationships with peers	Makes good friends with some people and works well with others of his age
	Forms and maintains satisfying working relationships with adults	Gets on well with some adults and works well with others

Domain 5: Leadership and Influence

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Behavioural indicator</i>	<i>Simple language</i>
Leadership and Influence	Initiates and motivates	Gets things happening and gets others interested and involved
	Recognises, develops and utilises others strengths	Can see what people are good at, helps them to build on that and use it to get things done
	Creates synergies of purpose	Helps people to work together for something they all want

★ Values: The buck stops here

In this election year, education is a hot topic. The Prime Minister's comments on values and education have reignited a long-standing debate. Mark Latham's assertions about a crisis in masculinity and the need for boys to learn clear values have added fuel to the fire. What role does, or should, school play in shaping the way young people see themselves and treat others? Is this a school's domain or should the determining of values be left in the hands of the family?

As a learning support teacher at Windale Public School in the Lake Macquarie district of NSW, Trish Jannu strongly believes that schools not only have a place in the teaching of values to students, they have an obligation to do so.

Di James, CEO of Connectors Australia Training, agrees. Both women are active exponents of the Virtues Project: a method used to develop a values system in families and schools.

In this article, Di explains the whys and wherefores of the Virtues Project. Trish recounts her experience of introducing the project as a whole-school approach and the repercussions when children are offered a positive reframe for poor behaviour.

Patience is a virtue and so are self-discipline . . . tolerance . . . consideration . . . compassion . . .

In her work with families and communities, Di James noticed that many parents worry that their children are picking up values that place personal gain before ethics, integrity, generosity or love.

Many families and children lack a means of accessing faith or spiritual values in their lives. Parents don't necessarily want to turn to organised religion but they know that there is 'something missing' and don't know

what to do about it.

Di believes that the Virtues Project, developed in Canada by Dan and Linda Popov, fills that gap. As paediatric psychologist and psychotherapist, respectively, Dan and Linda were working with extremely troubled children and finding that none of the traditional interventions were working satisfactorily in the long term.

In the Virtues Project they developed simple principles for paying attention to a child's day-to-day spiritual development, identifying 52 virtues or attributes of character (one for each week of the year), such as courtesy, courage, kindness, enthusiasm, respect, commitment etc. The package offers information, examples and exercises to unpack and explore each virtue and encourage children to practise that virtue in their daily lives.

It is a powerful notion that we grow up believing ourselves to be what we were told we were as children. The Virtues approach is based on the premise that all children are born with potential for all these attributes or 'gems', but unless we see them, name them and use them they are lost to us. The Virtues approach offers a wonderful opportunity for us to let children know that they are all of these virtues and to have them grow up believing and knowing that they are loving, tolerant, trustworthy, joyful



and confident people.

When working with boys we often focus on the behaviours that we don't want and find ourselves emphasising these. The Virtues Project offers an opportunity to name, focus on and cultivate positive attributes that we want to see in our boys. This builds character and self-esteem and provides much more solid ground for boys to develop a strong, positive, functional sense of self, and move away from sometimes crippling behavioural stereotypes.

For schools the program also offers an alternative to the reward/punishment system.

When a commitment is made to adopt the Virtues Project on a school-wide basis, studying and practising one virtue each week, children become less reliant on external rewards and more responsive to the qualities within themselves. For example, if the virtue for the week is purposefulness, children begin to understand more clearly what this means and their satisfaction comes from recognising this quality within themselves and being acknowledged for practising it.

There are excellent resources available to support the Virtues Project. There are user friendly guides for educators and parents, sets of Virtues cards for games and

learning experiences, attractive wall posters, and wallet cards. There are also discs of songs about specific virtues with modern catchy tunes and words that kids love, as well as much creative material with lesson ideas and ways to integrate the virtues into the school program such that it creates, what we call, a culture of the virtues.

This means that children and staff readily use the language of the virtues and use virtues acknowledgements to each other, that the virtues are displayed around the school in various creative ways and that the focus is on understanding these very specific qualities rather than on general concepts such as being good or working quietly.

For example, if the virtue of the week is peacefulness this would be the theme pursued by each class all week and where possible integrated into other classroom and whole-of-school activities, stories of peace and famous peacemakers would be selected for reading, and children might be encouraged to keep a 'peace journal'. There might be a 'peace assembly' where children display artwork, banners, or murals and read stories and poems on what peace means to them, and the whole school might learn one of the songs about peace.

Through her work in various schools, families and communities, Di witnesses the positive spin-offs from the project. Stephen Purdon, principal of Hillsborough Public School, recounts:

Being part of a school staff attending an appreciation afternoon tea hosted by students was a rare and humbling experience for me.

The staff at my school demonstrates many virtues on a daily basis — kindness, generosity, compassion, gratitude to name just a few. For the most part these virtues go largely unrecognised and it is not all that common to hear even a simple thank you.

The afternoon tea prepared for and served to the staff by the students on International Teacher Appreciation Day demonstrated that the children involved in the Virtues Project are seeing these qualities in others and are in fact displaying them themselves.

Further to this, the children created an artwork of appreciation for the staff showing they recognised and appreciated the virtues in them. The artwork, listing the virtues seen in the staff by the children — kindness, creativity, caring, service, respect, idealism, patience and perseverance — hangs proudly in our school foyer. ■



Di James is CEO of Connectors Australia — Training and uses the Virtues material in workshops and training sessions with community groups, parent groups and children. Di was the founding director of the Family Action Centre of the University of Newcastle. Email Di at dijames@hunterlink.net.au



Virtue is its own reward at Windale

Trish Jannu is a trained facilitator and had worked with the developers of the Virtues Project, Dan and Linda Popov, many times. Here Trish explains how she went about introducing the project into Windale, NSW.

• All you need do is
• tell people they are
• no good 10 times a
• day, and very soon
• they will begin to
• believe it.

• Lin Yu-T'ang,
• Chinese writer

The Windale community of NSW faces issues such as high rates of long-term unemployment, a generally low socio-economic status and a significant Aboriginal population. The school is overtly teaching positive virtues through a whole-school approach.

Initially I spoke to the Executive who liked the idea and suggested I talk to the staff. As a result, we have now completed staff training and development a couple of times a year on how to implement the Virtues Project, particularly how to speak the language of the Virtues. This is one of the main strategies that the project employs: when you spot a child not behaving in a moral or ethical way you call for them to use the virtue that is missing. For instance, if you see someone being aggressive in the playground, you might ask them to use their gentleness or their respect or courtesy. When you speak to the children, the idea is that rather than being punitive it is educative.

The school has been working on this project for 18 months now. The staff is very supportive of the idea and is trying to spread the concept through the whole school community.

The school newsletter goes out every week and right at the top of the newsletter it says, 'this week's virtue is . . . ' and then it gives the brief explanation of what that virtue is about. We focus on a virtue for a fortnight, so I talk with the staff about which virtues they want

covered during each term.

There have been a number of parent meetings to discuss the initiative, with little attendance and support. Parental involvement can be difficult to harness without resources such as time for someone to generate interest from the wider school community. As with most cases, this project is being driven by someone who has a passion for their work and a love for the children.

Towards the end of last year, the principal suggested we have a review of the project. We talked around and around and in the end it came out that they very much wanted to continue. They thought this was a valuable and worthwhile project. I said that I was happy to put time and effort into it if they felt that way about it and if they valued it.

The project doesn't work in the classroom in isolation. There is often a whole-school activity that celebrates a significant event.

What we have done is look at the special days coming up and try to incorporate virtues into them. There is Harmony Day on 21 March so we are fitting tolerance in across that fortnight. Usually we might plan a special assembly around those days. For example, we might do International Day of Peace or Harmony Day where the whole school will learn a song and some of the children might speak on that topic at assembly or do some related artwork, craft activities which will be on display.

The staff has been given a folder



with resources they can use during lesson time based around the particular virtue being focused on for that week.

The staff asked if they could have a Virtues folder with everything set out, so I've put together materials that explain each week's virtue, a poster to put up in the room, and discussion questions to go with it. For instance, for self-discipline some discussion questions might be: What are some problems you might have if you don't use self-discipline? What does it feel like to lose control of your emotions? Have you ever lost control? What happened? How did it affect others? What are some things that you do too much of? How could you use your self-control to stop? There are some activities and usually a list of texts, like story books that you can read to the class that show that particular virtue. I took some of the material from the *Virtues Educators Guide* plus a few other books and put a combination of different things together.

The focus of the school is to have the Virtues cross over all sections of school life. The language of the project is particularly important.

The executive staff is really keen to use this approach and I hear some of them using the language of the Virtues. The principal in particular is very much focused and in tune with it. When the children are sent to her the first thing she does is ask them what has happened, what virtue is missing, what can we do to restore this.

We are trying to establish what we call 'restorative justice' where they identify what they did, who they hurt, what virtue was missing in that situation, and how could they restore things to right. What could be the natural consequences of what I did and what should happen as a result of it or how can I do my best to restore things to right.

What we are trying to do is give virtues acknowledgements, so when we see someone being orderly or using excellence in their work we acknowledge them: 'I like the way

you have used your excellence. You've gone to so much trouble with your work.' It is an opening statement, a virtue and then putting it in a setting. It is giving them feedback and telling them what the feedback is for. We are always naming the virtue — whether it is to say we've seen the virtue or to say that it is missing and we know that you have got the capacity to use it — you are making the choices here.

Having put these structures into place with support from the school executive and staff, the resulting impact on the children's behaviour is the most important evaluation tool. While as yet there has not been a huge shift in behaviour, in talking to groups of boys and asking them to write down how they have used their virtues, we see there has been an impact.

What some of the boys have to say:

- I used my patience when we were playing soccer because I never got a chance to kick the ball but I just kept on waiting and waiting.
- I was patient while I was playing tennis because I had to wait till the coach was finished talking to someone else before he would speak with me. *[This little boy has a big problem with self-control.]*
- I used helpfulness when I helped the teacher to clean up the computer lab.
- I used helpfulness when my friend came late to a class. I told him what he had to do.
- Me and my friends were playing tips and one guy started pushing people. I lost my temper but I didn't hit him — I used my self-control. *[This is a Year 6 boy who has a huge problem with temper. I was actually there and saw this happen and it was pretty amazing!]*
- I got angry and stormed out. Then I sat down quietly and I got control of myself and I walked back into the class.

The peer support structure sees students from Years 5 and 6 take

responsibility for leading a group of younger students. Everyone in the school is involved in peer support by either being a part of a group or acting as the group leader.

We found with the peer support leader training, the first thing we asked them last year was what sort of qualities would you need to be a leader? Out came all these virtues they had learned such as responsibility, respect, tolerance, kindness, generosity, honesty, truthfulness. As the teacher who was with me said, 'Twelve months ago they wouldn't have had anything to say. A lot of them would not have even heard of those words before!'

Reflecting on the process and the impact it has had on the school community is not any easy thing to do unless you have set up measures such as pre- and post-testing or establishing benchmarks that can be compared across periods of time. Anecdotally, there has been a shift to acknowledging these virtues and recognition of the impact they have on those involved in using, or neglecting to use, the appropriate virtue at the time.

I feel that each year we undertake the Virtues Project, there is a deeper level of understanding and the staff is more committed to it. I think it needs to be something that is integrated into all aspects of school

life — it can't be just something that is tacked on at the end. It's got to be ongoing.

Windale Public School plans to continue teaching Virtues as a whole-school focus. They realise that a positive view of things may be a rare situation for many of their students. The aim is to integrate it more into the discipline policy and into the planning room where students go to think about their actions and plan a better course for themselves when interacting with others in the school. The peer support program is another vehicle where the students have the opportunity to model the virtues they have been taught and to share those with the people within their group. Often we are told we are wrong or not doing the right thing. Changing the focus from, 'This behaviour is wrong and stop doing it' to 'This behaviour is much better for you and others, start using this instead.'

Children are born in potential, and what happens in their environment and how they are spoken to has a lot of power over the way they grow and develop. If we provide the right environment and appropriate statements around the things that we are doing, children learn to make responsible, moral choices. ■

Trish Jannu has worked in NSW Department of Education for 25 years in various roles and capacities: as a classroom teacher, early literacy facilitator, reading recovery teacher, early school support teacher and support teacher learning difficulties. A trained workshop facilitator, Trish has been involved in the Virtues Project for eight years. She introduced the project at Windale School 18 months ago and has helped to in-service staff over this time. Trish is particularly interested in the development of moral education for children and how this can be facilitated within the current public school system.

Contact Trish by email at jannup@hunterlink.net.au

Website for the Virtues Project is www.virtuesproject.com



Like father like son

Engaging fathers in literacy at home

Research suggests that boys are more likely to be successful readers when they experience positive images of males as readers. Stephanie Tranter explains how the Fathers and Schools Together literacy project is achieving this by encouraging fathers to be actively involved in their children's educational development, focusing particularly on literacy at home.

What is the FAST Literacy Project?

'FAST' stands for 'Fathers and Schools Together'. It is a literacy project that we have been working on with schools in the Newcastle area since April, 2003. Through FAST we work with teachers on developing strategies and resources for engaging fathers in the literacy lives of their children. We operate in six primary schools in the Newcastle area. These schools possess various attributes, such as enrolments ranging from 57 to 380, schools in the public and private sectors, and a school that has been identified as a 'priority school'.

What is the aim of the project?

We have several aims. The most significant aim is to engage fathers in the literacy lives of their children. Fathers have reported that they would like to take an active role in the education of their children. This intent, however, has not been transferred to school environments, where teaching staff and education-based volunteers are predominantly female, and fathers remain rarely involved in the educational development of their children.

Research has found that children do better emotionally and academically when their fathers are actively involved in their education. Children learn more, exhibit healthier behaviour, and have increased self-esteem when their fathers play an active role in their learning.

The Engaging Fathers Project had already worked successfully with schools in low-income areas to engage fathers in whole school activities, such as gala afternoons and dads' breakfasts. We are now working to take this further and develop strategies and resources for teachers to use to involve fathers in the education of their children. We would like children to see that their fathers value what is happening inside the classroom as well as outside.

How does FAST engage fathers in literacy at home?

Teachers decide on goals they would like to work towards, and the Engaging Fathers' staff support them in achieving these goals. Examples of goals include:

- running literacy workshops for fathers
- implementing units of work based on the theme of fathers
- incorporating literacy activities into Father's Day celebrations
- engaging a father in classroom-based literacy activities

One goal that several teachers choose is to target father involvement through homework. Teachers have addressed this goal in several ways. Some strategies have been:

- classroom discussions that enable children to identify when they could involve their dad in their





- homework, and to identify an appropriate father figure when dad is not at home
- asking children to read to both mum and dad
 - questions requiring parental help
 - both parents asked to sign the homework when it is completed

One key strategy teachers are using to involve fathers in literacy at home is the 'Homework Activity Cards for Dads'. The Engaging Fathers Project has created these cards based on research that found that men prefer to be engaged in active rather than passive activities, such as reading a book. These activity cards provide the children with an activity (often a procedure) to complete with their fathers as homework. The cards have been successful in engaging fathers in literacy at home. One teacher reported that his class originally identified two children experiencing father involvement in homework on a regular basis. After implementing the activity cards into homework, 96% of the children were involving fathers in their homework at least once per week. The cards are also a useful tool for teachers to give to children when they are visiting fathers who don't live at home.

Another approach that some teachers in the FAST project are about to trial is the use of 'read-a-bags' to encourage father involvement in literacy at home. Teachers will be sending the bags home as part of their homework activities. These bags were inspired by previous work with reluctant boy readers who would engage with reading and books if they were presented through activity. As mentioned, this 'active' focus is also relevant to men.

The bags are designed to target specific stages. An example of the contents of stage one bags are:

- *Wombat Stew* by Marcia Vaughan
- Australian animals magazine
- Australian animals and a toy cooking pot (for retelling and interacting with the story)
- word search (laminated for re-use)
- internet card (with related websites listed)
- procedure (for father and child to make an Australian animal)
- story Map (laminated for re-use)
- comment booklet (for dads and children to respond to the materials)

The impact of these bags will be evaluated later in the year.

.....

What teachers have to say about the differences in kids and dads as a result of the goals they have been working towards so far with FAST:

What differences have you noticed in the children?

- Those who had father figures come to school were very positive, keen to continue with literacy work.
- Senior children conveyed more enthusiasm towards father involvement.
- The children were thrilled to have something they could do especially with dad.

What differences have you noticed in the dads?

- more accepting to assist with schoolwork and activities sent home
- more friendly and willing to get involved
- most are keen to work with the children

Other comments from teachers:

- ... the beauty of this project is the knock-on effect it has with boys — they're seeing their dads involved with literacy.
- More dads are walking their kids into the classroom.
- More dads from FAST classes attended the event than dads from other classes.

What dads have to say:

- I interact with my kids differently now.
 - I know so much more about literacy and how my daughter learns to read and write (after two literacy workshops).
 - It was nice to be invited to the school for something other than to fix things.
-

How does the FAST project benefit boys?

The FAST project targets both genders, however, the specific benefits to boys are acknowledged.

Teachers are assisting boys' reading development by encouraging fathers' involvement in literacy at home. Boys model themselves on significant men in their lives. They are more likely to be successful readers when they experience positive images of males as readers.

Research indicates that boys, like men, prefer active activities to passive activities. As a teacher, I have always found engaging boys in procedural texts easier than any other types of text. Therefore, several of the activity cards focus on carrying out procedures, enabling both fathers and their sons to engage in a mutually enjoyable activity. Other activities implement games to address reading and talking and listening skills.

What challenges are you encountering?

Teachers have identified the need to take time to identify fathers and/or father figures that the children can engage with at home. For schools with a high number of single-parent families, this is essential in ensuring children are not set up for disappointment. Father figures include uncles, granddads, big brothers, sports coaches, family friends, and step-dads.

Children usually can identify a father figure. We have had just one case where the child could not identify a father figure at home, however, he was thrilled to accept the principal's offer to act as his father figure for activities where he was needed. ■



Stephanie Tranter coordinates the FAST literacy program for the Engaging Fathers Project, University of Newcastle. A teacher, she is working with teachers to engage fathers in the literacy lives of their children. Stephanie works in conjunction with Ken Bright, the community worker for the Engaging Fathers Project.

The Engaging Fathers Project aims to promote the well being of children from 0 to 8 years of age by engaging fathers and father figures in the lives of children. The project has a focus on schools, family services, antenatal, childcare and early education institutions.

Boys and reading: Yes please! No thanks!

An overview of research into the leisure-time reading practices of boys

When Julie Hamston and Kristina Love from the University of Melbourne examined the reading practices of boys they brought new perspectives to the usual stereotyped notions. Julie explains what they found.

Our research into boys and reading, conducted within the context of a private boys' school in Melbourne, has taken place over a three-year period (Love & Hamston 2001; Hamston 2001; Hamston & Love forthcoming). In this research, we investigate boys (aged 11 to 17) as differently committed leisure-time readers. The first stage of the research focuses on boys identified as good and committed readers. The second stage of the research focuses on boys identified as generally able readers who choose not to read. We have also examined the role of the family in assisting boys to construct themselves as particular sorts of readers across a wide range of reading materials. In both stages of the research we have investigated the reading practices of parents and the ways they share reading with their sons.

Importantly, we recognise that through their lives at home and at school the boys in this study have large reserves of what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as linguistic and cultural capital. This means that through engagement in the life of their family and hence the dispositions and values of their family, the boys have been exposed to socially valued literate practices.

Clearly, the development of comprehensive and effective literacy practices is a desirable goal of these families and school community. However, something is at work here for some boys to maintain commitment to leisure-time reading over time and for others, from the same school community and as members of families similarly disposed towards literacy, to be able to read in their leisure-time, but nevertheless choose not to.

Each stage of the research project constituted two phases of data collection: (i) the distribution of questionnaires to boys selected as either good and committed readers and boys who are reluctant readers, and (ii) the distribution of questionnaires to each parent/guardian of the boys. Follow-up interviews with a select number of boys and parents in the second stage of the research also took place.

Extensive space in the questionnaires was provided for each participant to contribute detailed discursive comments, as desired. As with the interview data, we believed that getting to the 'voices' of the boys and the parents marked out the research as different from that research which relies on observations

or quantitative data collected at some distance from the participants.

Data from both stages of the research have been analysed quantitatively to examine measurable features such as the frequency of reading done by boys and their parents and the types and range of materials read. Discursive data from the questionnaires from committed readers have been analysed in relation to Freebody and Luke's template of reading practices (1990; see Luke 1995, 2000). This enabled us to see the range of reading practices the boys engaged in and the types of practices they employed with different texts. Discursive data from parents of committed readers have been analysed according to Rogoff's (1995; Rogoff et al. 1993) features of guided participation. For the boys and parents in the second stage of the research, discursive data have been analysed according to Rogoff's guided participation. The concept of guided participation, which outlines the various features of supportive relationships that develop between parent and child, is a powerful template for the analysis of the sharing practices that take place within the home.

Research into boys and reading

Our study contributes to the growing body of research in Australia and overseas into boys and literacy. Significantly, it addresses two gaps in this literature: a focus on boys who are good and committed readers and an investigation into the many ways that reluctance is manifested in adolescent boys who can read, but choose not to.

Firstly, the focus on boys as committed readers (see Bunbury 1995) provides a much-needed balance to the emphasis in the research literature on research from a deficit model. In this sense, much research has been devoted to boys who do not read (see among others Gilbert & Gilbert 1998; Hall & Coles 1997; Millard 1993; Nichols 1994; Office for Standards in Education 1993). It is hoped that the findings from research into boys who do read will inform the kinds of practices and strategies that can be produced for boys who do not read. Another prominent theme in the research literature is on how boys' dispositions towards reading reflects aspects of their masculine 'reading identities' (Davies 1997; Gilbert 1998; Martino 2001). Our study of boys as committed leisure-time readers, predominantly as readers of novels, throws a different perspective on some of the conclusions drawn about reading as a feminised practice.

Secondly, the focus on reluctance as choice offers a different perspective to reluctance as the inability to read. In this way, our study builds on the small base of research that suggests that motivation and engagement in leisure reading is a complex phenomenon that varies with context and social relationships (see for example Arizpe 1993; Bintz 1993). We presume that even though they may have been identified by their teachers as 'reluctant readers', many adolescent boys will read a range of 'non-

school' materials for leisure with motivation and engagement (Bunbury 1995). Preliminary analysis of the data from stage two of the research suggests that boys demonstrate different reluctances to reading.

In addition, our research builds upon the understandings gained from research into family literacy practices (see among others Barton et al. 2000; Cairney & Rudge 1998) and influential studies such as those conducted by Heath (1983) and Wells (1986) that provide rich portraits of the varied literacy practices that occur within families. We have investigated the significant role that parents play in mediating reading as a cultural practice in the everyday context of the home.

A 'snapshot' of the boys' responses to leisure-time reading

Committed readers

Some of the findings to emerge from the analysis of the data collected from boys who are committed leisure-time readers are outlined here in respect to particular reading practices (Freebody & Luke 1990; Luke 2000). Boys reported that they

- **employ a range of decoding strategies**

Boys, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, judged their capacity as a reader on their ability to decode texts or to problem-solve when they could not, for example, pronounce a word, or know the meaning of a word. Others talked about their fluency in reading and their willingness to tackle unknown texts.

- **have a pragmatic orientation to reading**

Many of the boys reported a strong sense of pragmatism in their leisure-time reading. They discussed how they pursued their interests through reading (for example, reading magazines on how to build model spacecraft; reading novels for their

escapist qualities; searching the Internet to find out about Japanese cooking; scanning the newspaper for articles on world events).

- **are able to bring their semantic resources to a text**

It was common for boys to talk about how they enjoyed the experience of entering other worlds through texts and to explore new meanings. Some reported the experience of learning about other cultures, other ways of life through texts. In addition, many boys spoke of reading several books by one author and engaging with the worlds that this author created.

- **engage in critical practices**

The number of reports where boys spoke about their capacity to engage with a text critically were few. This may have been a problem in them naming such a practice, or it may be that the critical dimension of leisure-time reading was reduced for these boys. Nevertheless, many boys spoke of the pleasures they take from reading and justified why this was so for them.

In general, the data revealed that the boys read consistently and widely. It also revealed the choices these boys were making about leisure-time reading in that many of the boys

- **choose to read novels above other types of texts in their leisure-time**

Many of the boys' reports about leisure-time reading focused on their choice to read novels. Some reported reading all the books written by a particular author, others spoke of how they preferred to read a particular genre (for example, world history). Many of the boys stated that reading was their favourite leisure-time activity. However, it was also evident that the boys reported an increased engagement in 'masculinised' reading practices (the

Internet, CD-ROM, computer games) as they matured.

■ **shared their reading with other family members and friends**

In the majority of cases, a strong sharing relationship with either parent or both, and with their friends appeared in the boys' reports. Interestingly, although boys attested to the significant role that their mother played in supporting their reading, there was a noticeable increase in the number of reports of shared reading with fathers as the boys matured. Comments from Tom (Year 9) illustrate the kinds of reading relationship he has with his father:

My father helps me choose my non-fiction. Often after reading the newspaper Dad hands it to me and recommends articles to read. After reading it he often begins conversations about it or I might ask him a question.

Significantly, many boys also told of sharing reading with extended family members: aunts, uncles, grandparents. These reports affirm the importance that many boys placed on a 'reading relationship' with some other person.

Reluctant readers

Data collected from boys who are reluctant to read in their leisure time reveal patterns and themes that contrast with those patterns and themes evident in the data from the committed readers. Of note, the boys who are reluctant readers tended to be reluctant writers and so their discursive comments are relatively brief. Nevertheless, boys reported that they

■ **read the Internet and magazines more than they read novels**

As can be seen from figure 1, over half of the boys who can read, but are reluctant to do so, report that they read the Internet and

magazines. This choice may relate to their capacity to follow up on personal interests such as sport, or that these types of texts demand different things of them as readers. It can be assumed that both the Internet and magazines afford these boys the opportunity to self-direct and self-pace their reading.

■ **have a pragmatic orientation to reading over a pleasure orientation**

Like many of the boys who are committed readers, the reluctant readers spoke of a pragmatic orientation to reading. This may relate to their choice of reading material as revealed above, whereby they read magazines to find out more about mountain-bike riding, for example, or they scan the Internet to locate the website of a favourite music group.

In contrast to the committed readers, a notable number of boys expressed an inverse pragmatism; that is, they could not see the point in reading in their leisure time. Whilst some qualified such belief by stating they knew they should read more, others reported that they gained little or no pleasure from reading.

■ **manifested reluctance in different ways**

Some boys told us that they were

reluctant to read at all in their leisure time, some said they were reluctant to read novels, some were reluctant to read what their parents suggested they should read, others were reluctant to share reading with the family. This comment from Richard (Year 9) indicates the strength of his general reluctance to reading:

Here's the things, I don't read cause I can, I don't read cause I don't want to, I don't read 'cause I think it's stupid. I mean, why would they have invented TV if everybody liked reading. I don't read!

In contrast, Antony (Year 8) talks of reluctance to read particular kinds of texts:

Because I don't read as much as I should read. Only if it is a book I enjoy. Just the Internet, a little bit of newspapers and I'm staring [sic] a new book I just looks [sic] for the books I like. Because I like the types of books I like.

■ **knew what they should do, but . . .**

A common theme throughout the boys' comments were that although they knew they should read, and although they recognised the efforts of their families to encourage and support leisure-time reading, they made the choice not to read. The

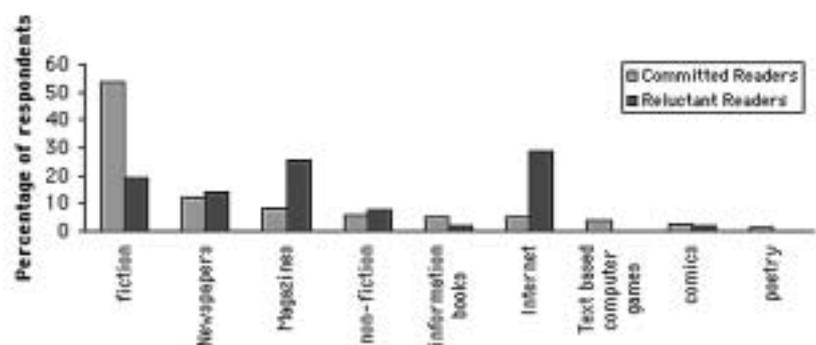


Figure 1: Favourite kinds of reading materials for committed readers and reluctant readers.

matter of personal choice was emphasised strongly by some boys and has been being pursued more closely in interviews.

Parents

From the parents of committed readers it was evident that 'reading relationships' operated as a vehicle for meaningful personal relationships to be maintained between parents — mainly mothers — and the boy.

This comment from a mother testifies to the multifaceted nature of such a relationship around reading:

As parents we assist him in accessing information from newspapers, books and the Internet, and discuss the merits of the particular information. With reading for pleasure I discuss the books I am reading with him and talk to him about his books. We also talk about the books his friends read and their suitability. He often reads humorous parts of books to me, parts that really take his fancy, but often he has to explain this left-field humour to me, but it doesn't deter him at all. Often, especially on Saturdays or holiday time, we sit in bed together and read our books or the newspaper and comment to each other on aspects of our articles. It sometimes leads to lengthy discussions about social issues or issues relevant to teenagers.

Parents of reluctant readers also testified to the kind of reading relationship evident in the comment above, such as the one here from a mother:

Jeremy might read in bed beside me while I read, then tell me about the happenings in the book. He shows me the latest in car magazines. He draws houses after reading architecture magazines and we discuss them.

However, it was common to see that **different kinds of reading relationships were established with reluctant readers.**

Some parents reported that a meaningful reading relationship with their son was not evident at this point in time. Some talked of the relationship being controlled by the boy, whereby parents were kept at 'arm's length', or that attempts at sharing reading produced negative outcomes. Many parents spoke of the limited nature of mutual, intimate sharing practices they had with their son, as evident here with a comment from a father:

When attempted, like drawing teeth. Probably at least related to my very own lack of discipline in ensuring we have the time on a regular basis

General frustration at the attempts to pass on reading habits to the son also appeared in the parents' comments, such as this one from a father:

I am unable to convince him to read regularly for pleasure. I believed that by reading aloud together when my son was young would encourage him to read more extensively for pleasure when older, but so far it has not paid dividends.

And this mother:

As Craig gets older he is less interested in discussing his reading with me. He feels I place pressure on him to read (probably true!). I feel that I am turning him off reading as he feels I over encourage him and he feels that I think 'he is hopeless' because he isn't that interested! The sharing is limited these days.

It must be pointed out, however, that there was noticeable evidence of parents continuing to pursue some form of reading with the son, and evidence that both mothers and fathers took on a significant role in applying explicit strategies to assist their sons with reading.

Conclusion

The findings distilled from the research have shaped two

professional development sessions we are offering parents and boys. One session aims to 'hook' boys into reading adolescent literature and to help parents and teachers connect with this literature (see Moloney 1999; 2000 for a discussion of the importance of connecting boys to literature). The other session focuses on strategies for parents and teachers to engage boys in reading a wide range of texts (see Alloway & Gilbert 1997, and Willhelm & Smith 2001 for such strategies).

Plans for future research include the study of boys as differently committed readers, and their parents, in a variety of schools. Such comparative research will hopefully present a rich portrait of the ways boys take up the reading experiences available from engagement with different texts. ■



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★ Meeting the challenge

Lessons from Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme, Stage One

A federal government initiative to enhance teaching and learning in boys' education — the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme — is providing great opportunities for Australian schools to address the needs of boys. We think the lessons from Stage One are worth reproducing

Over the next three years, Stage Two of the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme will identify best practice and disseminate information and professional development to teachers.

The program commenced early in 2003 and Stage One is now completed. The resulting report, *Meeting The Challenge: Summary Report*, details the 110 projects undertaken by 230 schools across Australia.

Schools and clusters were invited to apply for the program in one or more aspects of best practice in boys' education such as:

- adapting pedagogy, curriculum and assessment for different learning styles, including interactive and experiential styles, and with the use of information and communication technologies
- improving literacy and communication skills and performance across the curriculum, including the integration of structured phonics into literacy teaching
- developing effective and sustainable behaviour management programs
- improving student engagement with schooling and motivation to learn
- drawing school and community resources together to provide positive role models for students

Lessons from Stage One

The basic intention of Stage One of the program was to establish an

understanding of good practices in action in schools and classrooms across Australia. Of particular interest in this regard was the congruence or otherwise between the accepted body of knowledge about successful practices in boys' education from recent reports and research, and what teachers themselves found to be worth doing to help boys learn.

Stage Two of the program takes this intention to another level by funding self-directed, cluster-based innovation and professional development that builds on the lessons of Stage One, and clearly links to a common set of guiding principles for improving the learning engagement and outcomes of boys. This will involve the identification of Lighthouse Schools, which will support the professional learning of teachers in an associated cluster of schools, with the objective of enhancing teacher understanding and skills.

Guiding principles for success in educating boys

Stage One of the program resulted in a wide range of activity to advance the educational achievement of boys. What is clear from this stage of the program is that school-based initiatives can be enhanced by:

- developing an even stronger relationship between local school or cluster activities and the research evidence of what works
- creating more coherent programs of activity to improve the

education of boys by linking the various categories of school-based activity outlined in this report

- focusing on professional development for teachers as a priority to enable them to confidently expand the range of teaching and learning experiences in their classrooms

A common set of guiding principles has been identified from good educational practices, which has emerged from this program and key research in the area of boys' education. The following set comprises 10 interrelated core propositions, which ought inform the development and implementation of ongoing programs to improve the education of boys in schools.

1 Collect evidence and undertake ongoing inquiry on the issue, recognising that schools can do something about it.

Boys' education is an issue of concern within schools in Australia as evidenced by a significant body of research and the experience of the 110 project schools and clusters. It also is an issue that schools can do something to address. This requires each school to gather and analyse its own student achievement and other data (e.g. attendance, behaviour incidents, student opinion survey data) on a gender basis and identify the needs of specific boys and students 'at risk'. Such inquiry should involve sustained data collection, reflection and evaluation

at the local level, informed by research in this area. The school then can develop, implement and continue to evaluate and amend appropriate strategies and targets tailored to the unique and specific needs of students.

2 Adopt a flexible, whole-school approach with a person and team responsible.

Improving the educational outcomes of boys requires a whole-school approach based on a common vision and a coherent, integrated set of programs across the broad range of activities noted in the report (i.e. pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; literacy and communication skills; student engagement and motivation; behaviour management programs; and positive role models for students). Such a whole-school approach is more effective with the identification of a leader in the school who is responsible for its implementation, and the establishment of an appropriate team to support the leader. It also requires a degree of flexibility on the part of the school when needed in relation to structural and other arrangements to support the programs adopted (e.g. single-sex classes and activities, withdrawal programs). This approach should be integrated with existing school improvement strategies and should engage the broader school community.

3 Ensure good teaching for boys, and all students in all classes.

Improved education for boys depends, just as it does for girls, upon good teaching of all students in all classes. While there are many recipes for good teaching in schools, teachers demonstrating good practices all have the following features in common:

- Have high expectations for all students, know their students well and listen to their students.
- Reflect on current teaching

practice in terms of the information collected by the school and an informed evidence base of research.

- Use a range of teaching techniques — if all a teacher does is talk at the students and write things on a board, they are unlikely to learn very much. All learners require variety and teachers need to vary the ways in which they pass on information to, and engage, students.
- Structure their teaching so it supports student learning — the teacher is the trained, professional adult in the class, so must ensure that the key messages and lessons are learned. This means they need to make sure that students understand the main points as they proceed, make connections to other things that have been learned, build on what students already know and keep reinforcing key messages.
- Involve students in learning activities and encourage their participation — learning requires that students do things, as well as having them explained or shown to them. Teachers need to actively involve students in solving problems for themselves and get students working together in groups so they learn social and cooperative skills.
- Provide positive feedback and praise — an important part of teaching young people is providing them with feedback on their work. Teachers need to let students know how they are going in general, what their strengths and weaknesses are and how they can continue to improve.
- Are open, flexible, fair and consistent in dealing with students, have a ready sense of humour and are prepared to negotiate and discuss teaching and learning with students.
- Make connections with the community — involve the students' parents and other important community members helps demonstrate to students the

importance the teacher attaches to the program and their work.

4 Be clear about the kinds of support particular boys require.

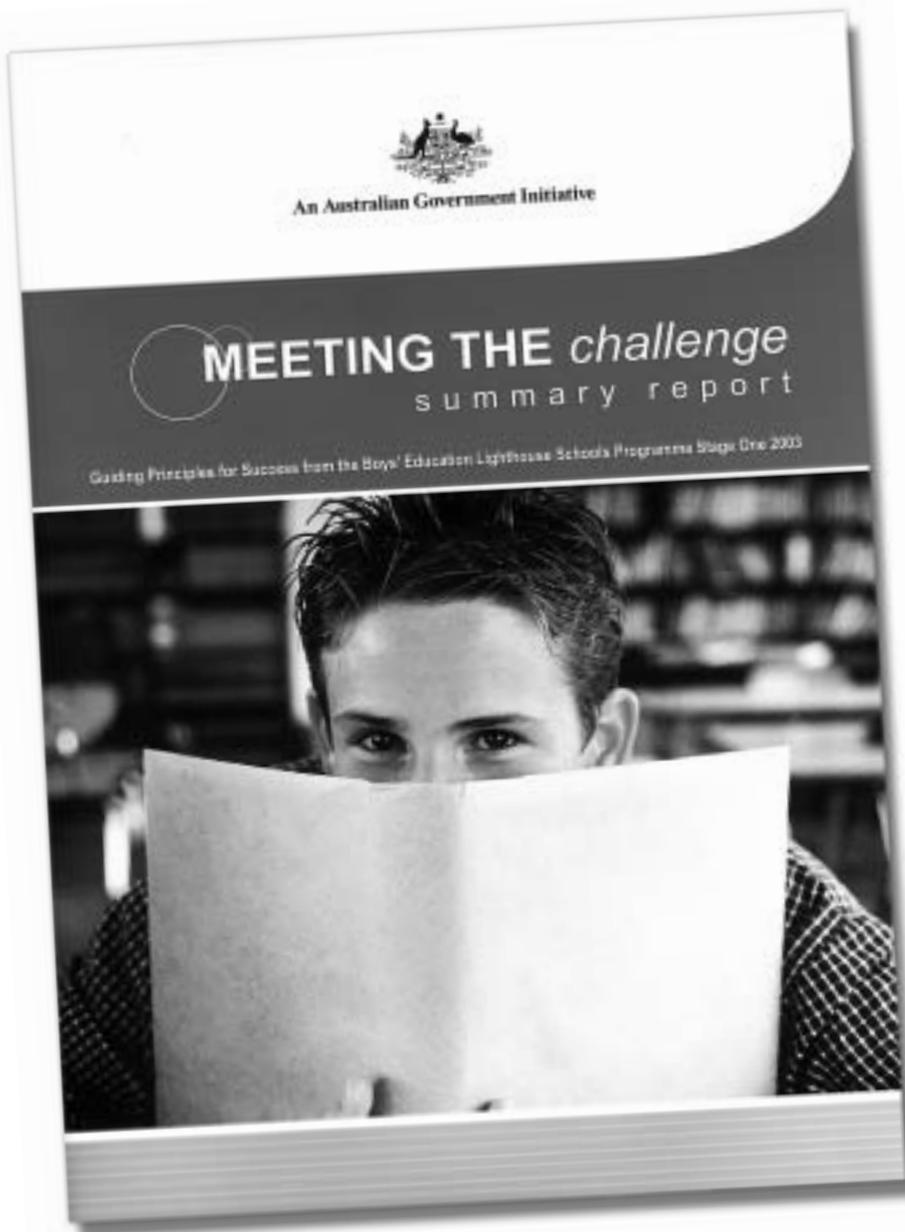
Boys are not a homogeneous group and not all boys can be treated the same. Gender intersects with a range of other factors, including developmental and sub-cultural factors, to affect each student's experience of school. Some boys may experience a tension between being masculine and engaging with and being good at school. Not all boys, however, experience this tension and there are many boys who do successfully integrate success in schooling and growing up as adult males. Hence, the school needs to clarify how best to support each boy in his learning at school.

5 Cater for different learning styles preferred by boys.

Students learn in different ways. There is, in this context, substantial research as well as school and cluster experience through these projects to suggest that boys (as well as many girls, of course) commonly respond more positively to learning experiences that:

- have a practical focus and physical or hands-on dimension
- they see as relevant and having a real world connection
- use thinking skills focused on actual problems
- challenge them by requiring higher order and conceptual thinking
- have clear instructions and structured sessions in manageable chunks
- enable them to work with others as well as individually
- provide for a range of ways in which work can be presented
- provide them with a degree of involvement in decisions about content and opportunities to negotiate their learning as a valued stakeholder

That said, good practice in boys'



adult males in modern Australian society. Schools should, in this context, seek to establish a culture where achievement is seen as 'cool' and desirable for all students and is accepted as something to be celebrated.

7 Develop positive relationships, as they are critical to success. Relationships are crucial in any young person's schooling, especially the teacher-student relationship within the classroom and in the broader learning environment of the school. Particularly important for success at school is that each and every boy should know and feel that there are people in the school who care about him and his development. Beyond this, boys will benefit where there is consistency of approach between the home and the school, and parents are actively engaged in the education of their children and in developing 'shared values' with the school. The experience of clusters in this program also has demonstrated the benefits to be gained from increased cooperation between schools and, in particular, sharing of strategies and resources to improve the education of boys.

8 Provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school.

Boys in school want and need to develop positive relationships with significant males within and beyond the school, most obviously their fathers and teachers, but also older male students and members of the wider community. Such role models provide inspiration and support for young boys seeking to develop their own understanding of how to become an effective adult male in the community, and also can assist in the development of clear goals and pathways to future learning and personal development.

9 Focus on literacy, in particular. There is little doubt that boys'

education also seeks to broaden the range of ways in which boys view themselves as learners and the strategies they adopt, while strengthening their capacity to develop responsibility and self-awareness, and to value success at school.

6 Recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged.

Acceptance of gender identity is important for all students. Boys should be encouraged to value being male and the positive virtues this entails. Equally, the negative aspects

of stereotypical views of masculinity, often manifest in bullying, aggressive and physical responses to conflict and difference, or a conscious disengagement from school, need to be challenged. Schools and teachers are well placed to promote and model values and behaviours that are fundamental to people learning and working together. Schools can enable boys to broaden the ways in which they relate to others as they develop and grow, and exercise power, control, competition, cooperation, freedom, responsibility and choice; thereby enhancing their development as

relatively weaker performance in literacy than girls has been one of the threshold factors leading to the focus on improving education for boys. Literacy, especially in the early years of school, is critical for educational success at school and subsequent successful participation in the community and its economy. There is substantial evidence to show that effective literacy for boys requires a balanced approach, which includes some whole language teaching, but also direct instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness to improve outcomes across the board. Effective teaching and assessment should incorporate a recognition of the range of literacies students require today, including multimedia and emerging literacies in which young people and, particularly boys, are achieving success. This is a strength that can be built on. Beyond this, there is a clear need to ensure that processes are in place to identify students at risk of under-performance (primarily but not only in literacy) as early as possible, so they can be provided with appropriate, targeted support (e.g. one-to-one or small group tutoring).

10 Use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a valuable tool.

It is well documented that boys, and especially boys who are under-achieving at school, respond favourably to the use of ICTs as a means of engaging them in learning activities. Many of the schools and clusters involved in this program have drawn on the motivational and

educational powers of ICTs. The interactive nature of many new technologies helps create learning environments where boys can learn by doing, receive immediate feedback and continually build new knowledge and enhance their level of understanding. This enables students to develop a richer and deeper understanding of core knowledge and skills and to lead their teachers in an area where they are often experts and adults are learners. ICTs that include an emphasis on application and tailoring education to the needs of individual learners are also supportive of a shift in practice to more learner-centred approaches, which encourage the active participation of boys in the learning process, rather than the passive absorption of knowledge.

Working in clusters

One very significant benefit identified from Stage One of the program has been the value of working together in clusters of schools. Many schools involved in clusters specifically pointed to the fact that it was one of the few opportunities they get to work together with other schools, with some funding provided to focus their efforts. This has, for many participants in the program, proved both professionally rewarding and exciting, while providing links that ordinarily may not exist between primary and secondary schools, between the various school sectors, and on occasions with TAFE, tertiary institutions and the broader community. ■

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From strength to strength

A Lighthouse case study from the West Wallsend Cluster, NSW

Using a strengths-based approach, West Wallsend Cluster has developed excellent data-gathering instruments — which have been used to establish baseline data on boys' performance and behaviour — witnessed initial improvements as a result of their interventions and worked together to help break down the barriers between the two levels of schooling. Lynne Cohen explains how they achieved such great results using funding from the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme.

In order to bring about significant, sustainable changes in boys' education we began by ensuring we had a very clear picture of what the current situation was for our boys' learning so that we would not waste valuable time, resources, and energy working on the wrong things.

It's also been important to us that we focus on the strengths of boys' learning and social development rather than focusing on negative behaviours. By adopting, then constantly reminding ourselves of this philosophical basis, it is easier to keep looking forward to how we can continually improve education for our boys rather than becoming bogged down or overwhelmed by the difficulties at bringing about this improvement.

Putting the philosophy into practice

In November 2002 our cluster of schools formed a partnership with the Boys in Schools Program, to undertake a 'Boys' Education, Boys' Outcomes Project' (BEBOP). This is an assisted action learning project to enable our cluster of schools to join together to systematically address the issues in boys' education unique to our boys over a two-year period, 2003 to 2004. The Boys in Schools Program works within a strengths approach, so we knew this would be consistent with our philosophy.

While the aims of BEBOP are to improve the learning outcomes and educational participation of boys, the strategies and approaches used to engage boys have also produced significant effects on girls as well. Consequently, we aimed to implement a series of systematic improvements to teaching and learning across the Kindergarten to Year 12 continuum that would impact positively on both boys and girls.

Concerns about our boys

Across our cluster we had a number of shared concerns about our boys. These included:

- boys' literacy results, measured across Year 3, Year 5, Year 7, Year 8 and Year 10 were consistently lower than our girls
- boys' attendance rates were below those for girls, increasingly so as they got older
- boys made up most of our remedial programs
- boys were receiving significantly fewer commendations for positive achievements, both academic and social, than girls
- boys made up the majority of referrals for disruptive behaviour and the majority of suspensions for violence
- apart from sport, very few boys participated in extra-curricular

West Wallsend Cluster

- Wakefield School
- West Wallsend High School
- Edgeworth Heights Primary School
- Barnsley Public School
- Edgeworth Public School
- West Wallsend Public School

school activities

- the behaviour school in our cluster, Wakefield, is a co-educational school; however, currently based on need, 100% of enrolments are boys

The Lighthouse Programme is only a small part of our overall project and was viewed as a way to kick-start this boys' education project, hence, much of our initial effort has gone into setting up extensive qualitative and quantitative baseline data on a comprehensive range of indicators so that we can evaluate short-term changes over the time of the Lighthouse Programme, but also follow this up with rigorous evaluation through to the end of 2004. Hence, one of the intended outcomes was to establish a rich and broad range of baseline data to measure how our boys were currently fairing in academic and social aspects of schooling. This has been an important and huge task, which the Lighthouse grant has

given us the impetus to achieve to an extent not previously thought possible.

Developing our approach

As part of our cluster's annual self-improvement cycle, the school principals, as a group, examined their schools' data and found one thing all six schools had in common was an obvious concern for the learning and social outcomes of our boys in comparison to girls.

All six principals agreed any approach undertaken needed to be:

- a collaborative one with teachers from each school working together so that it formed part of our Kindergarten to Year 12 continuum
- a systematic approach, not a one-off event that just happened with a burst of enthusiasm, then went nowhere
- based on latest research on boys' education — so an informed approach
- one that capitalised on the strengths of our boys, rather than taking a deficit approach

To undertake this, a partnership was formed between our cluster schools and the Boys in Schools Program.

Collaborative action

The cluster jointly identified our shared beliefs about the strengths our boys bring to school, our shared current concerns about our boys' education, and our shared vision of what we want for our boys. This was the first time we had done this collaboratively, as a cluster of schools:

Strengths of our boys

energy
enthusiasm
affection
honesty
risk-taking
surprising
enthusiastic about using new technology
practical

resourceful
not bitchy
creative
openly appreciative
broad range of interests

Concerns about our boys

low self-esteem
lack of respect
apathy
underachievement
lack of coping skills
too few male role models
curriculum not oriented to boys' interests

Vision for our boys

high self-esteem
tolerant of differences and show compassion
want to come to school
have a go
organised
communicate effectively
identify and use their own strengths
read books
enjoy learning
complete tasks well

We then undertook a series of combined staff development sessions to build a joint understanding of:

- the process of assisted action research using Action Learning Teams
- a range of strategies and approaches that we might learn from to address the concerns we identified about our boys whilst simultaneously building on the strengths we identified about our boys

We adopted the four principles underpinning the BEBOP approach and used these to determine the project elements that would be undertaken in each school. We decided on three things at this stage:

- to choose the project elements so that we were addressing an issue in boys' education within each stage of schooling, stages one to four, from Kindergarten to Year 8 to build our K to 12 continuum

- to choose a different focus area for each project element so that we could gain the most sharing across the cluster by being able to inform each other of what had been learned through each school's implementation of their project element
- to choose a focus area for each school that addressed the most immediate concerns of staff, to minimise the likelihood that the Lighthouse Programme would be seen by teachers as an add-on, rather than an integral part of what we needed to do for our boys

An Action Learning Team was formed in each school to undertake implementation of each of the project elements using an action research approach.

Project elements

Table 1 (overleaf) summarises each element of the project and describes what the students did in each element of our project:

Evaluation of the project

As there are a number of elements to our project, our cluster has used the following quantitative measures to evaluate successes of the Lighthouse Project to date:

- proportion and number of boys receiving suspensions and behaviour referrals
- proportion and number of boys receiving commendations and merit awards
- participation rates of boys in presenting and talking about their work achievements
- attendance patterns of boys

We have also used the following qualitative measures:

- observations of time on task and levels of engagement as the project progressed
- semi-structured phone and in-person interviews with parents
- student attitudinal survey and focus-group interviews



Year 7 boys' class: On task and engaged in their learning.

■ teacher reflection questionnaires

Long-term success will be evaluated by comparing the extensive range of qualitative and quantitative baseline data with comparison data over the next two years. One measure of our success has been the unprecedented range of qualitative and quantitative data we have gathered at the start of the Lighthouse Project to inform our initial planning and to provide us with a comprehensive set of baseline data. This includes:

- school Map survey comparing student and teacher perspectives on teaching and learning, comparing boys' results to girls'
- Quality of School Life survey comparing results for boys and girls
- Basic Skills Test (BST) results for literacy and numeracy, comparing boys with girls (primary schools only)
- English Literacy and Language Assessment (ELLA) results, comparing boys with girls (secondary school only)
- Secondary Numeracy Assessment Project (SNAP) results, comparing boys with girls (secondary school only)
- multiple intelligence check lists to gauge learning styles

- affective education indicators for children with behavioural disorders
- behaviour management indicators for children with behavioural disorders
- environmental management indicators for children with behavioural disorders
- pre-/post-intervention behaviour check list
- homework completion rates and comparisons
- attendance rates and patterns
- library usage rates
- cultural participation rates (e.g. Star Struck, school band, musical, debating)

Supporting research

Our approach was informed by findings from *Boys: Getting it right* (summary report of the inquiry into the education of boys by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, October 2002) in terms of the factors influencing early school-leaving for boys. Of the 11 factors listed in this report six of these are factors beyond the control of schools. We have taken the view that schools can't redress all inequities in society, so it is more productive for us to put our energy and resources into the core business

of schools, that is, teaching and learning. Therefore, the factors identified in this report that we have addressed in our project are those we can improve: 'quality of teaching, curriculum, early school achievement, literacy and numeracy achievement, attitudes to school'.

Several of the strategies recommended by Dr Andrew Martin in *Improving the Educational Outcomes of Boys* (final report to the ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services) and a Flinders University study called 'Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males' (F Trent and M Slade, The Flinders University of South Australia, June 2001) are ones we have adopted as part of our project:

- mentoring, to harness boys' tendencies to admire older students (hence our range of mentoring situations within the project)
- high quality information and communication technology (hence our use of computer technology)
- listen to what the boys are saying (hence our extensive student surveys)
- 'good' teachers change everything (hence our focus on professional development and our whole-of-cluster, community-of-schools approach to encourage and facilitate ongoing and substantive professional conversations)

Our project confirms much of what we read in the research, for instance, research by Alloway et al., *Boys, Literacy and Schooling: Expanding the repertoires of practice* (Alloway, Nola, Freebody, Peter, Gilbert, Pam, Muspratt and Sandy, Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2002), refers to the common finding from most current research that 'boys do not do as well as girls on literacy tests and assessments'. Our cluster's longitudinal data as measured by BST, ELLA and School Certificate

Table 1. Elements of the project

Engagement	Academic Outcomes	Behaviour & Relationships	Broadening Options
	<p>Stage 2: Parents invited to participate in a boys' literacy project being conducted by University of Newcastle Boys in Schools team. Parents interviewed by university students to ascertain levels of literacy involvement and interest in the home. A group of stage 2 boys were identified as likely to benefit from literacy intervention. Class-based programs implemented based on needs identified through student and parent surveys.</p>	<p>Stage 3: Peer support program: Year 6 students trained as leaders of K-Year 6 groups and conducted weekly lessons with their group. Boys who would not normally take on leadership roles responded well.</p>	
	<p>Stage 2: Literacy and numeracy program for targeted students, surveying their interests to then use everyday materials such as brochures, menus, magazines, advertising, etc. Hands-on construction and mathematics materials to encourage greater levels of participation and engagement, following survey to gauge preferred learning styles.</p>	<p>Stages 1 & 2: Boys interest groups: Target groups of boys working with teacher and community volunteers. Involved in art activity to encourage social skills such as taking turns, working in groups, communicating ideas, decision-making and respecting other people's ideas.</p>	
		<p>Stage 3: Boy-friendly playground: Targeted group of 14 boys identified as 'incident makers' or 'incident receivers' were trained in Rock and Water. The boys spent two sessions a week for 10 weeks learning and practicing the skills of centring, calm effect, assertiveness, personal space, focus, self-control, awareness, being able to back down when confronted and still save face.</p>	
<p>Stages 3 & 4: Wakefield is a special school catering for students with behavioural difficulties. It is a co-educational school but currently all students enrolled are boys. We provide the boys with an individual learning plan to address their academic, social and emotional needs and assist the boys to successfully reintegrate into a mainstream school or other educational setting. To engage and motivate the boys we use lots of concrete material for learning, computer-assisted learning, hands-on skills, experiential learning, and community visits.</p>			
	<p>Stages 1 & 3: Boys' literacy mentoring program: Stage 3 students who have been assessed as being at risk due to their low level of literacy skills have been trained over a two-week period to mentor stage 1 students who have also been identified at risk in literacy. This training was based on the Macquarie University MULTILIT Peer Tutor Training Program with additional peer skills added. During the training program the stage 3 boys refined their own literacy skills, participated in role plays to rehearse their tutoring, and prepared activity sheets. During the mentoring program the boys read with their buddy, played games based on difficult words, reinforced letter and sounds, and wrote joint constructions.</p>		
		<p>Stages 2 & 3: Music program: The music aspect to the project was initially designed as a behaviour intervention, but has, by popular demand, been made available to all stage 3 students to nominate. During the program students use the drum kit, guitar and keyboard to learn basic music notation, strumming and drumming skills.</p>	
	<p>Stage 4: Rich task and student-led conference: An all-boys class, using a teaching-team approach and implementing a 'rich task' virtual tour of Britain taught across the curriculum. All elements of the Intellectual Quality dimension from the 'Productive Pedagogies' research were incorporated into the unit to ensure that engagement of the boys was not being gained at the expense of intellectual rigour. All seven teachers in the teaching team utilise common strategies appropriate to the learning styles of the boys to extend the boys' academic outcomes. During the unit the boys keep a virtual travel diary of their journey, measure distance, time and money exchange, conduct virtual exploration of the flora and fauna of Britain as well as the natural landscape and physical properties. They make extensive use of computer technology to stimulate enthusiasm and increase their active engagement. The boys also collected a portfolio of their work, some pen-and-paper, some digital, and some construction works. They presented this to their parents at a student-led conference.</p>		

results has also found this, which was one of the motivating factors for our focus on boys' education.

Our cluster approach agrees totally with Alloway et al. when they say that 'most explanations subscribe to a deficit theory of boys'. We reject this deficit view totally and are committed to working from a strengths approach — identifying and building on the strengths of our boys, of our teachers, of our parents and general school community.

Other research that has significantly informed our approach has been that which informed the Queensland study of 'productive pedagogies' and the model for 'Quality teaching in NSW public schools'. The three dimensions for effective teaching: intellectual quality, significance, and supportive learning environment, have been used extensively in our approach to each of the project elements. This has been particularly useful and relevant research for our cluster, as these three dimensions both confirm what we have already learned about effective teaching and learning for boys and for all students in general, and at the same time, provide us

with a very useful, workable framework for developing our approach to boys' education even further.

During the course of the project we gathered and used a range of research articles and reports on specific aspects of boys' education.

Project outcomes

Quantitative evidence of ways in which the project has been effective include:

- In the Year 7 all-boys class, all 14 students completed their work portfolio and prepared a student-led conference for their parents. Twelve of the 14 boys followed through and presented the student-led conference. This number, and the quality of their presentations, exceeded the expectations of their teachers prior to undertaking this project.
- Rate of referrals for inappropriate behaviour of boys targeted in this project decreased dramatically: prior to project implementation: 38 referrals in term 1, 35 in term 2; during project implementation: seven referrals in term 3
- Similar dramatic decrease in

suspension rates for targeted boys: prior to project implementation: four suspensions in term 1, four in term 2; during project implementation: one suspension in term 3

- Decrease in playground incidents, recorded by playground duty teachers.

Qualitative evidence of ways in which the project has been effective include:

- Increased confidence displayed by some of the boys exhibited by initiating feedback to younger students, asking teachers for extra support

Other objective indicators of success include:

- All of the baseline data needed to track academic and social outcomes for our boys over time has been collected, collated and analysed as part of the Lighthouse Project.
- Identification of learning styles of our boys has provided impetus for a number of teachers in each of the cluster schools to ask for and trial a wider repertoire of teaching strategies to better address the range of learning styles identified.
- Joint identification of shared beliefs about our boys' strengths, concerns for them, and our vision for what we want for them between teachers from the primary schools and secondary schools in the cluster has cemented a stronger feeling of being a community of schools working together in a Kindergarten to Year 12 continuum. This has been expressed by all teachers actively involved in the action learning teams as an added bonus of the project.
- Welfare lessons have been written and taught to a targeted group of boys.
- A 'rich task' has been written and taught to a targeted group of boys.



Our conclusions:

- The area of developing relationships with boys has proven critical to achieving positive academic and social outcomes from schooling for all age groups.
- 'Lifting the bar', aiming at intellectual quality and higher order thinking to improve boys' educational outcomes is essential (as opposed to 'dumbing down' the curriculum to make it more palatable for boys to participate).

Most significant outcomes:

- The cluster has developed an even stronger and more cohesive bond in our aim to achieve a Kindergarten to Year 12 educational continuum.
- Opportunity to train a body of teachers from each of the schools in the cluster in the Rock and Water program has been a significant outcome for us as we now have the capacity within our cluster to develop this program for our boys.
- This experience has raised the profile of the issue of boys' education within our local community. Parents and community members feel it must be an important educational issue for the cluster to have been awarded the grant. This has validated our cluster's decision to make boys' education one of our targets for 2004.

Unintended outcomes

A positive unintended outcome from the project was a reaffirmation of our commitment to work together as a cluster of schools to further the continuity of learning from primary to secondary school. All teachers involved in this project have expressed the view that one of the biggest benefits they have gained from their involvement in the training and development has been the opportunity to work jointly with primary and secondary teachers to help break down the barriers

between the two levels of schooling. Without the added resources provided by the grant, it would not have been financially possible to bring these teachers together in this way.

In some cases where the project has involved programs in addition to normal lessons, there has been some negativity and lack of commitment by the class teacher as they saw it as taking students from their class and 'doing something' to them. The way around this in hindsight would have been to embed all programs in the project into class routines, rather than create extra programs.

The benefit of hindsight

There are four major things we would have done differently:

- Had we had advance knowledge about the Lighthouse Programme, we would have started collecting our qualitative and quantitative baseline data twelve months' prior to commencement of the project, so this could have been fully collected, collated and analysed before making any decisions about what aspects of boys' education to address.
- Limited the number of concerns about the education of our boys that we attempted to address within the timeframe of this

project, with a much narrower focus. That is, started much smaller for this project, then built up to the range of areas that needed addressing as a second step.

- Spent more time and professional development for the action learning teams to gain a clearer understanding of the processes of assisted action research. One of the negative unintended outcomes was that we overloaded teachers who ended up trying to juggle two very demanding tasks at once: learning how to work within a process that was new to them and implementing a new program for their boys at the same time.
- Spent more time on planning and coordination — we were keen to jump in and start working with the boys, but perhaps did this too quickly, rather than taking the time to ensure all participants fully understood the project. ■

Lynne Cohen is currently relieving deputy principal at West Wallsend High School and coordinator of the Lighthouse project for the cluster of schools. In the high schools recognition for success belongs to Mark Snedden, team leader of the class, and his teaching team David Tweed, Mick Evans and Jamie Watts. Teachers responsible for program implementation at Edgeworth Heights are Margaret Graham, Jeff Roberts and Lynne Wales. At Barnsley Public School the support teacher learning assistance, Trevor Watson, has successfully implemented their social skills program with several groups of targeted boys. At Edgeworth Public School, Maree Lamb, the assistant principal, has been the driving force behind their part of the project. Kimberly Houliston, the support teacher learning assistance, has coordinated West Wallsend Public School's project.

bulletin board

Reading draws boys with right hook

Linda Doherty interviewed Victoria Clay, Boys in Schools literacy project officer, on the subject of getting boys interested in reading. The article, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in February, is reproduced here with thanks.

Boys get hooked on reading and writing if teachers tap into their interests outside of school, whether it is sport, video games or four-wheel-driving, a program in primary schools has discovered.

The use of 'alternative literacy' was found to motivate and involve primary-school-aged boys in reading and other schoolwork during a trial at seven Lake Macquarie schools last year.

The Boys in Schools Program run by Newcastle University's Family Action Centre questioned the Year 3 and Year 4 boys about their after-school interests and their parents' use of any form of literacy, such as crossword puzzles or reading the sports pages of newspapers.

Teachers then used the boys' real-life examples in the classroom, leading to higher self-esteem for some boys and better reading and writing skills.

The project officer, Victoria Clay, said the early findings backed up Canadian research where the boys' home life was drawn on to gain 'a broader view of the meaning of literacy'.

'Literacy in a home setting does not necessarily mean sitting quietly while reading aloud to mum or dad,' Mrs Clay said.

The targeting of boys' literacy levels received a political push after a federal parliamentary report in 2002

recommended a new policy focus on boys to raise their academic standards.

Boys lag behind girls on most academic measures, leave school earlier and in greater numbers, and account for 80 per cent of school suspensions.

In the Lake Macquarie trial, all methods of reading and writing were considered legitimate, from shopping lists to detailed instructions on computer games. Some families started football tipping competitions and read newspapers together to follow teams; a four-wheel-driving family studied maps and holiday brochures.

Mrs Clay said one boy 'who wouldn't read at school at all' did, however, flick through the volunteer firefighters' newsletter his father received. The newsletter became a class resource, and 'other boys got interested'.

Many of the boys were rugby league fans — 'the Newcastle Knights are huge up here' — so local newspapers were used to follow the team. 'This led to some excellent writing in the journalism genre,' Mrs Clay said.

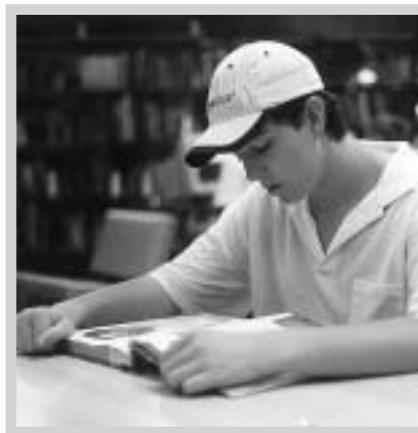
The trial will this year be extended to Year 7 and Year 8 boys at high schools in Newcastle and Victoria.

Australian and international research points to groups of boys who have basic literacy skills they use at home but do not develop further at school.

But the much-maligned video games, for example, can become a secret literacy weapon.

'Using boys' interests and expertise in video games and internet activities provides not only material for reading and stimuli for writing activities, it also taps into boys' preferences for control and purpose and the need to demonstrate competence,' Mrs Clay said.

This year the Federal Government will select 30 groups of schools, each with a 'Lighthouse school' to coordinate programs and train teachers in approaches aimed at boys. A new gender equity framework is also being developed



with distinctive strategies for teaching girls and boys.

In New South Wales, boys' literacy rates, as measured by the Basic Skills Test, remain lower than those of girls, but the gap has been closing in recent years. Specific programs include peer reading, in which older boys read and provide other support to younger boys.



Victoria Clay has been involved in education for over 20 years — first as a primary

school teacher and then as a psychologist and school counsellor. She is currently working part-time as the literacy project officer with the Boys in Schools Program with the Family Action Centre. She also continues to work for the NSW Department of Education and Training as a school counsellor. Victoria's email is <Victoria.Clay@newcastle.edu.au>

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How do I . . . design a behaviour intervention program for a group of boys?

In many schools today, teachers want to do something to help boys who show aggression too easily when upset, who refuse to cooperate and follow reasonable instructions, and who seem to lack impulse control. Boys in Schools Assistant Manager, Stephen Gaul, passes on a few tips that have helped him in the process.

Here is a step-by-step progression that can be used as a model when designing a program.

1 Select the group of boys. Six to eight is a good-sized group. Any less may make some of the activities difficult to complete if there are students away. It is also an idea to have some mainstream students in the group to model patience, self-control, concentration and success. Otherwise you may end up with a group struggling with similar issues and leaving you with very little chance to influence the boys' behavior. They need success modeled to them as they may not have had a great deal of experience with positive outcomes at school.

2 Assess the needs of the group. What behaviours are we trying to address? Anger management, impulse control, concentration, communication, cooperation?

3 What are we going to do to address these needs? The sessions need to be planned to give the boys fun, interesting and relevant activities aimed at teaching social skills and anger management strategies. In this model, the sessions are one hour in length and divided into four distinct sections:

- *Icebreaker (10 mins)*: where the day's session is outlined and a fun activity is completed to gain their attention.
- *Individual work (15 mins)*: involving quiet reflection and discussion.

Worksheets are mainly used here.

- *Active work (30 mins)*: learning in different ways. Mainly up and out of the seat activities.
- *Debrief (5 min)*: this is perhaps the most important part of the session. Here we establish what it is we have learned over the last hour and try to work out ways of applying those lessons to life.

NB It is important at the first meeting with the boys that an agreement is made as to how the group will operate. Issues that may need to be considered include:

- confidentiality
- a safe physical environment
- a safe emotional environment
- no put-downs
- trust

4 Activities to use. There are a great number of programs available that can be used when working on social skills with boys. The main point to consider is the style of activity that is used, it needs to be active not passive in nature. Boys will soon switch off if there is little 'fun' involved. In the past I have selected a little of this program and added another activity from that one. The mixing and matching has helped to design a more individualised program for the needs of each particular group. Here is a list of programs I have found to be useful over the years:

- *Behaviour Management Upper Primary*, Dr Helen McGrath, Blake Education
- *Being a Man Photopak*, Richard Fletcher, 1997, University of Newcastle
- *Boys and Relationships*, David Shores et al., 1993, Education Department of SA.
- *Games for Growing*, Wilson McCaskill, 1994, The Game Factory
- *Have a Ball!* Field Guide, Odyssey PEN
- *Keep Cool!* Paula Galey, 2003, User Friendly Resource Enterprises
- *Rock and Water Skills for Physical-Social Teaching with Boys*, Freerk Ykema, 2000, Gadaku Institute
- *Self-esteem Middle Primary*, Tanya Dalglish, Blake Education
- *Talk Sense to Yourself*, Jeffrey Wragg, 1989 Longman

There is no problem with copyright as long as you acknowledge the program you have used to take the activity from. You are entitled to copy up to 10% or one chapter of a program.

5 Reflections on the process. It is very important to review what you are doing and any effect this is having on the boys' behaviour. We may have come some way towards achieving our goals and that needs to be recognised. Any positive change deserves to be acknowledged no matter how small a step it is. Questions such as:

- What changes need to be made to the organisation to help things run smoothly?
- Have you noticed any changes in the boys over the time period?
- Has your relationship with the boys changed over the time period?

6 Persist. It is a difficult job designing these programs and working with students who often don't seem to appreciate your efforts. It may well be a challenging area to work in, however, it can have dramatic effects in the boys lives and help shape their behaviour and relationships with others in a positive and constructive way.

This is an action learning process. We plan, implement, review and adapt the program as needed before implementing the amended program. We need patience and persistence to model these to boys.



Stephen Gaul is Assistant Manager of the Boys in Schools Program, University of Newcastle. He

has broad experience in the field of boys' education and a passion for helping boys develop into fine young men. For the last 19 years Stephen has taught boys in comprehensive high schools in NSW. He has been a classroom teacher, year adviser, advanced skills teacher in charge of literacy, head teacher PD/H/PE and relieving deputy principal. Stephen has dealt with many issues concerning boys and their personal development and has become increasingly concerned about where boys are headed in their academic and social lives.

Professional Development for Educators

At the Boys in Schools Program, we are passionate about boys' education. We really want to help teachers and parents get the best for our boys and from our boys.

Schools, communities and families all over Australia are grappling with the issues of how best to educate boys. Boys' low levels of literacy, poor academic achievement, aggression and harmful risk-taking are seen as serious problems in our community.

Would you like to know:

- **how to fully engage boys in classroom learning**
- **how to help boys use all of their intelligences**
- **how to bring out the best behaviour in boys and develop their self-confidence**
- **what a boy-friendly school might be like?**

The Boys in Schools Program offers a strengths-based approach to engaging boys, individually and in groups, that recognises the importance of male identity and uses the potential resources of energy, humour and safe risk-taking that boys and older males are likely to bring to any situation. The program offers knowledge and skills development in educating boys for professionals and parents across Australia through workshops, seminars, training programs, postgraduate courses and publications.



Our postgraduate programs will change the way you work with boys

If you are one of the many teachers out there in the dark recesses of the staff-room trying to work out how to survive the boys in 8.8 last period, our **postgraduate programs** may be what you need.

We can help you in your struggle with boys who refuse to cooperate with your efforts to educate them.

The Boys in Schools Program offers both a **Graduate Certificate** and a **Master's program** specialising in educating boys. These programs are the first in Australia for practising teachers who wish to develop their professional expertise in educating boys in various settings, primary, secondary, single-sex or co-educational schools.

The programs are available by distance mode through the School of Education, University of Newcastle, and are delivered by the staff of the Boys in Schools Program. This means you can upgrade your skills and specialise in educating boys, no matter where you teach.

In its short history our postgraduate education has had a major impact due to its practical and innovative nature, as our first students found:

- ***We've changed our whole reporting system to parents as a result of an assignment I did on benchmarking.*** *Principal, large private boys' school*
- ***I've been able to implement programs for boys with nearly every assignment we've done. This is a very practical course.*** *Assistant principal, rural co-ed high school*
- ***The readings are very exciting. They really got me thinking about boys.*** *Female primary schoolteacher*
- ***Where did you find all this up-to-the-minute information? I haven't seen it anywhere else.*** *Male teacher, urban public high school*
- ***Each of the assignments completed could be used within the school environment in one way or another to improve boy' learning.*** *Male teacher co-ed regional high school*

Course details

The program offers flexibility for busy teachers. At least three courses are offered each semester and students can begin either semester one or two. On completion of the **Graduate Certificate** graduates can apply to continue to complete the **Master's program**. To complete the Graduate Certificate students must successfully complete a total of 40 credit points made up of one core course and three electives. Graduates can apply to continue on to the Masters Program. For the Master's program, students need to complete 80 credit points.

The program is full-fee paying, with payment of the fees directly to the university. Costs are likely to be \$750 (inc. GST) per course. There is also a general service charge. Course fees may be a legitimate tax deduction.

More information is available on www.newcastle.edu.au/courseinfo/handbook.htm or contact Michelle Gifford on 02 4921 8739 or email Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au

But don't take our word or it . . .

In 2003 Amanda Hutchins, Mark Sampson and Stephen Smith undertook the Boys and Classroom Practice course. Here are some of their thoughts on three of the issues raised within the course.*



After completing a Multiple Intelligence preference checklist on their students:

- These results will have a dramatic effect on the way I teach this group. I will need to direct my teaching and design my learning activities around their areas of strength and weakness and not my own areas of strength and weakness.
AH
- The results further support the findings of the House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Training report that boys tend to prefer variety, humour, a hands-on approach to learning, and a positive relationship with their teacher. *MS*
- These results indicate clear differences between the learning preferences of boys and girls. Whilst the results for this class do not perfectly match the results for larger/other groups, they do follow the general trends observed elsewhere. The Standing Committee on Education and Training found that about two-thirds of boys are kinesthetic learners and one-third are visual learners. Clearly these findings parallels with the results of the survey. *SS*

On teacher/student relationships:

- The results from my class survey justify Ken Rowe's beliefs that the quality of the teacher and the relationship they have with their students is the key. In effect, students learn the teacher, not the subject. *MS*
- The NZ Education Review Office identifies high standards of behaviour management and discipline, and a supportive environment with positive role models as conditions for achievement. These views are supported by Teele, who recognises the importance of teachers as role models and the development of positive relationships between teachers and students. The Standing Committee on Education and Training also identified the development of positive relationships as a key factor in educating boys . . . This implies that the teacher/student relationship can be as important as the pedagogical delivery mode. *SS*

On assessment:

- Sternberg claims that everyone has a preferred style of learning and that many students are placed at a marked disadvantage because the way a course is taught and assessed is in conflict with the style that a student learns. To overcome this, teachers must constantly vary teaching and assessment methods to reach each student. *MS*
- To meet the needs of this group of boys, I will need to design assessments where they are given a choice as to how they can present the assessment to allow them to use their areas of strength to their advantage . . . If they can meet the learning outcomes of the assessment, but each student produces a product that draws on their areas of strength, then the students are more likely to see purpose to the assessment and to learn something as they are doing it. *AH*

In the courses offered by the Boys in Schools Program in their **Graduate Certificate** and **Master's programs**, we cover material aimed at making the classroom, and wider school environment, a better place for boys to learn and grow. As you can see from the above extracts, issues that are relevant and important in the education of boys are addressed. The courses are about helping teachers help boys reach their potential and celebrate in their successes.

*NB: References not included

bulletin board

Do you want a whole-school approach for Rock and Water?

The Boys in Schools Program & Gadaku Institute now offer a one-day introductory Rock and Water workshop



One-day introductory

The Boys in Schools Program can now offer one-day introductory workshops around Australia with our newly qualified instructors who have been trained extensively by Freerk Ykema.

The one-day workshop provides a survey of the entire course, focusing on the first four lessons of the program which include standing strong physically and mentally, introduction to the Rock and Water attitude (in physical and verbal confrontation), and Rock and Water in the schoolyard and in relationships (What kind of friend am I? Too rocky, too watery?). It will also include breathing exercises, exercises for boundary awareness and body language.

Maximum of 30 participants per workshop. This is a great way to familiarise staff with the Rock and Water principles in your school or organisation.

Total cost: \$2300 (inc GST) plus any travel and sundry expenses. Price includes 15 starter manuals, one basic exercise video

and one perspective theory book and is presented by our qualified instructors.

Three-day course

The Rock and Water course offers teachers a new way to interact with boys in relationship to their physical and social development, though the program can also be taught to girls.

Physical exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. In this way the program leads from simple self-defence, boundary and communication exercises to a strong notion of self-confidence.

The program offers a framework of exercises and thoughts about boys and manhood to assist boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their life.

Topics include: intuition, body language, mental power, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising.

Discussion topics in the three-day course include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory

Newcastle

November 1, 2, 3 (3-day seminar)

Venue TBA

November 10, 11, 12 (3-day seminar)

Sydney

November 15, 16, 17 (3-day seminar)

Canberra

November 18, 19, 20 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Michelle Gifford, Boys in Schools Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

Ph: 02 4921 8739

Fax: 02 4921 8686

Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au

Queensland

Gordonvale (North of Cairns)

April 18, 19, 20 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Brian Dowling, Djarragun College

Ph: 07 4056 3555

Fax: 07 4056 6111

Email: admin@djarragun.qld.edu.au

Email: dowling52@bigpond.com

Caloundra

October 18, 19, 20 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Judi Baker (Caboolture Senior High School)

Ph: 07 5498 0115

Email: jbak22@eq.edu.au or iwill8@eu.edu.au

Victoria

Malvern (Melbourne)

April 22, 23, 24 (3 day-seminar)

Contact: Christine Thompson, De La Salle College

Ph: 03 9509 3011

Email:

crthomps@delasalle.melb.catholic.edu.au

Bundoora (Melbourne)

October 4, 5, 6 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Bernadett Linehan, Parade College

Ph: 03 9468 3300

Email: belinehan@parade.vic.edu.au

Bundoora

October 7, 8 (2-day advanced training seminar, participants must have completed 3-day training & implemented program with students)

Contact: Bernadett Linehan, Parade College

Ph: 03 9468 3300

Email: belinehan@parade.vic.edu.au

Western Australia

South Perth

May 5, 6, 7 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Susan Laughton, Wesley College

Ph: 08 9368 8047

Email: Slaughter@wesley.wa.edu.au

South Perth

May 8 (1-day Introductory seminar)

Contact: Susan Laughton, Wesley College

Ph: 08 9368 8047

Email: Slaughter@wesley.wa.edu.au

South Australia

St Peters (Adelaide)

October 11, 12, 13 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Stephen Webber, St Peters College

Ph: 08 8362 3451

Email: swebber@stpeters.sa.edu.au

New Zealand

Christchurch

March 26, 27, 28 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Chuck Marriot:

Ph: +64 3 358 7014

Fax: +64 3 3587014

Email: rockandwaternz@xtra.co.nz

Christchurch

March 29 (1-day refresher seminar)

Contact: Chuck Marriot:

Ph: +64 3 358 7014

Fax: +64 3 3587014

Email: rockandwaternz@xtra.co.nz

Auckland

March 31, April 1, 2 (3-day seminar)

Contact: Chanel Houlahan, Kristin School

Ph: +64 9 415 9566

Email: choulahan@kristen.school.nz

Auckland

April 3 (1-day refresher seminar)

Contact: Chanel Houlahan, Kristin School

Ph: +64 9 415 9566

Email: choulahan@kristen.school.nz

Boys in Schools Resources / ORDER FORM

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Conference Secretariat

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