Boys’ identity

Where it comes from and how to explore it by:

- understanding its origins
- building on boys’ strengths
- including their dads
- building racial harmony
- using music and art

The Boys in Schools Bulletin
Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys’ Needs

Produced by Boys in Schools Program of the Family Action Centre

Vol 9 / No 2 / June 2006

Boys in Schools

THE INAUGURAL AUSTRALIAN ROCK AND WATER CONFERENCE
16 OCTOBER 2006
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL, NEWCASTLE, NSW

bringing it together

Conference themes
• Implementing Rock and Water in different contexts
• Evaluating Rock and Water programs

Who should attend
• Primary and secondary teachers
• School leaders and policy makers
• Youth workers and parents
• Implementers of Rock and Water
• Anyone interested in implementing Rock and Water

Hear from these keynote speakers
• Freerk Ykema: Author and founder of Rock and Water
• Deborah Hartman: Manager of Research and Dissemination at the Family Action Centre
• Dr Wes Irms: Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Program, National Research Manager

Presentations by
Freerk Ykema, Gadaku Institute: The Rock and Water program
Suzan Hirsch, St Patrick’s College: Using Rock and Water to enhance self-esteem and develop anti-bullying strategies for primary schools
Alan Tolley, Richmond River High School: Bedrock of the school: Rock and Water as a highly effective element of an integrated student leadership and support initiative
David Nehr, Child Youth and Family Services: Rock and Water in alternative care
Paul Edwards, Child and Adolescent Mental Health: Engaging and working with angry young men
Jean Illingworth, Djarragun College: Rock and Water — the journey at Djarragun College

What is the Rock and Water program?
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 within the three-day training workshop includes: intuition, body language, mental power, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Discussion topics within the three-day training workshop include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

Registration fees
Early-bird fee $275.00 (closes 31 August 2006)
Standard fee $330.00

Also available: pre-conference one-day introductory workshop and post-conference three-day workshop (additional fees apply).

Full program and registration forms available from June 2006
Michelle Gifford, Events Coordinator
Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle
Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
Phone: 02 4921 6830 Fax: 02 4921 5512

Rock & Water national tour: The next three-day Rock & Water Training workshops will take place throughout Australia in October to November 2006. Contact Michelle Gifford for tour dates or see inside this issue.
EDITORIAL

Boys’ identity: biological, social and diverse

In this edition we’re really picking up on the visual and physical skills of boys and showing you some products of the incredible diverse talents of boys. And we challenge you to look at your perceptions of where those talents come from. Is it biological or is it learnt? Or could it be both? That hoary old debate just won’t go away. In the first in a series of research articles, Richard Fletcher shares his insights into the complexities of the links between biology and the social realm — and delves into boys’ brains along the way.

Teaching values to boys is an important aspect of developing male identity. Several articles in this edition show how school values can be enacted and a positive male identity developed when boys’ strengths and talents are harnessed. The boys at Reddame House use their artistic talents to give back to the community, from the beginning of primary school, when the school enables the boys to enact school values of ‘giving back’ through art. ‘Boys singing their heart out’, Steve Goul;l lets us in on the positive results that happen when a rugby coach opens the door to other performance arts — it’s good for the school and the boys! And at Hunter Sports High School, the school is developing a positive, cooperative male culture from the moment the boys begin Year 7.

Boys like to have responsibility for real projects and to do real work. Furniture restoration’ shows how engaged boys can become with their learning when there is a real job to do. ‘Drawcards for dads’ shows how the older primary children created a fun day that really drew dads into Haylebury Primary School.

Of course, it’s not that easy for all boys to develop and use their talents. ‘Typo Station experience’ tells about an alternative education setting in Victoria that helps boys keep on track. ‘The journey project’ shows how boys can develop the style to stay focused for the long haul — until the job is done. And for you hard-working teachers who deserve good professional development: two pieces of good news. Firstly, the inaugural Australian Rock and Water Conference will be held in Newcastle on 16 October this year. See the back cover for how to register and get in early for early-bird prices. And the next round of Success for Boys funding can be applied for from 3 July (go to www.successforboys.edu.au). We at the Boys in Schools Program can act as consultants to help you with this great professional development program.

For those of you who have been patiently waiting for Educating boys: the good news to be published — the wait is over. You can order and receive your copy of this important volume now. Available as CD-ROM or hard copy, it has contributions from over 40 academics and educators. The DVD Boys’ World (made by boys and giving their views on school) is a great accompanying resource. You enjoy this edition.

Deborah Hartman
For the editorial committee

Editor’s Note

Our cover features a work by Joel Fuller titled Portrait of a Boy (inspired by Canadian artist Jeff Lyons — used with permission). Joel was a Year 10 student at Tabour Christian College when he created this painting last year. Many thanks, Joel, for allowing us to use your painting to make such a vibrant cover.

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Disclaimer

Other than the Editorial, the ideas and opinions presented in The Boys in Schools Bulletin are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the ideas and opinions of the Boys in Schools Program or the Family Action Centre.

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).

Articles don’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 to get the guidelines and talk about it.

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Nuts & Bolts of Kids & Schools: A Course for Dads
6 Pack of Strengths
6 Pack of Strengths — Men’s Pack: Fitness, 200 pop sticks & booklet
6 Pack of Strengths — Teen-Up/Walker Pack: 300 pop sticks
7 Days That Matter — Building Your Father-Son Relationship
Boys Business (book & CD-ROM)
Bringing Fathers in Handbook
Resilience Identification Resources
Boys World DVD — Boys’ views on learning, literacy & identity in schools
What Kids Want DVD — Year 7-8 boys & girls interviewed about their view of an ideal school
113 Ways to Be Involved As a Father poster
Rock and Water polo shirts
Fatherhood Research in Australia (report)
The Skills & Strengths of Indigenous Dads, Uncles, Pops & Brothers DVD
Boys Business Fatherhood Research in Australia (report)

Other Resources

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The Boys in Schools Bulletin 2005 — Combo Set: 1 copy each issue of Printed + CD format
The Boys in Schools Bulletin 2005 — Single subscription $1 = 1 copy of each issue
The Boys in Schools Bulletin 2005 — School set subscription $3 = 9 copies of each issue
The Boys in Schools Bulletin — School Set: Printed format only = 3 copies of each issue

PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

113 Ways to be Involved as a Father poster $15.00
113 Ways to be Involved As a Father poster $15.00
Rock and Water Approach Manual (3rd edition) $55.00
Rock and Water Basic Exercises video
Rock and Water Basic Exercises DVD
Rock and Water Basic Excercises video
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The Boys in Schools Bulletin 2006

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Contact information above will be added to the RRP database (if it is not used to send out promotional material about relevant resources and events. If you do not wish to be added to this database please tick here.)
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Art for heart’s sake
Boys give back to the community

Not only are the boys from Reddam House creating amazing works of art, they are also developing a social conscience and making a worthwhile contribution to their community.

In a conversation recently about boys’ creativity, we at the Boys in Schools Program wondered what boys were actually doing out there in schools across Australia. How are they expressing themselves? How do they see the world? What are they trying to say through their art? What’s important to them?

So we decided to ask. We sent an email to schools saying ‘If your boys are doing anything creative, we’d like to know about it’. Little did we know the process we would set in motion. My email started to jam, letters and parcels piled on tables — just about the same time as our very resourceful resource person went on maternity leave. Yikes! What a mess, but what an eye opener!

Artworks arrived from all over the country from boys in Kindy to Year 12, from the country and the cities, from single sex and co-ed schools in the public and private sectors. The scope of the artworks was astounding. They varied in subject matter, interpretation, modalities and complexity. And they were fantastic.

As a result, we will be showcasing the boys’ work over the next few issues of The Boys in Schools Bulletin. Unfortunately, many of the images don’t fit with the themes of our journal, and we are racking our brains as to how we can get this work out there. We have, however, catalogued all the images, hopefully for use in the future.

Believe it or not, the work on these pages was created by infants and primary-aged boys and was sent to us by Mark Bailey, the visual arts specialist for Reddam House Primary School, a private co-ed school in Sydney. A former high school teacher, Mark’s experience included co-educational and single sex school in the public and private sectors.

Mark’s move to the primary school sector was motivated by the feeling that many students, especially boys, were not as engaged or motivated in art as he thought they could be. ‘I believed that I could make a greater difference earlier in the students’ lives. Once the students had reached high school they had already pre-judged the subject based on their primary school experiences.’

‘I decided to be a primary school visual arts specialist so that I could influence, motivate, encourage and engage the students in art by offering them a range of positive experiences that would enhance their self-image and self-esteem. Being a positive role model and building rapport with the students,
especially boys, needs to be done in both the classroom and the playground. I find this rapport and trust transfers easily to the art room, helping with classroom management as well as developing an environment where students are prepared to take risks with their artworks and learning.’

The programs Mark creates aim for each student to experience success and incorporate a range of activities, from making art, to art theory, and appreciating all with a lateral thinking component. The nurturing, safe environment ensures that students are prepared to take risks with their art making without fear of failure. Each unit is designed in a practical framework in which differentiation and individual learning styles are incorporated.

Mark also ensures the students create art in every unit of work. All art units begin with a practical art-making demonstration that motivates and helps the visual learners. Procedures are written on the board with mind maps followed by art appreciation and theory. Examples of other artists, and previous students’ works are also shown and discussed.

Both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms are incorporated in every unit throughout the year. Students use a variety of media — such as painting, expressive drawing, sculpture, photography, digital art, ceramics and printmaking — to create their artworks.

The more able students are encouraged to explore and experiment in art even further. They are encouraged to develop their work using their own creativity and lateral thinking.

The students have the opportunity to exhibit their works in a variety of ways throughout the year, continually building on their success. A rotating year-round exhibition and a major annual exhibition help the students, especially the boys, to stay focused . . .
Believe it or not, the work on these pages was created by infants and primary-aged boys.

exhibition help the students, especially the boys, to stay focused in terms of always creating their best work.

Reddam’s school motto, ‘We Shall Give Back’, is not just rhetoric. The students ‘give back’ continually to local, state, national and international charities. At Easter the boys continued this tradition by visiting Ronald McDonald House in Randwick, where they presented a cheque from money raised through student-driven activities, and Easter eggs, to the families who were staying there.

Last year Ronald McDonald House chose around 20 works from the school for permanent exhibition, and over 80 works now adorn the corridors and executive suites of the Sydney Children’s Hospital, Randwick. The students are proud to be part of this permanent community art exhibition. It provides the students with positive life and artistic experiences, while ‘giving back’ and helping others.

Mark Bailey chose to be a visual arts specialist so that he could nurture, encourage and foster students’ talents, interests and abilities in art.

And — yes! — he has discovered that all children have some form of creativity. His role at Reddam House is to find that talent, then encourage, nurture and continue to develop it through teaching innovative, diverse art programs where all students have the opportunity to achieve success and reach their full artistic potential. Mark can be contacted on Mark.Bailey@reddamhouse.com.au
Mayfield East Primary School is no stranger to social challenges. A working class suburb within cooee of the now defunct BHP steelworks site in Newcastle, NSW, Mayfield is characterised by low socioeconomic factors, high unemployment and a recent influx of refugees. Already a melting pot of Indonesian, Samoan and Indigenous Australians, the school is now incorporating the recently arrived Sudanese refugees.

Of the 500 Sudanese to arrive in Newcastle in the past 12 months, 20% have settled in Mayfield. This new wave of refugees is highly visible, not only because of their striking physical appearance, but because they tend to walk everywhere. This has given rise to groundless accusations of ‘roaming gangs of Sudanese men’ from anti-immigration groups.

In order to nip this racism in the bud, Mayfield East has been proactive in its community. The school has a strong ethos of welcoming students from all backgrounds, and strives to highlight the contribution all children can make to the school and its community.

Living in harmony
Harmony Day has been a red letter day on the school calendar for several years. On this special day the school celebrates the cultural differences and special contributions made by students from diverse backgrounds. In 2005, in partnership with Mayfield Mainstreet, the school decided to raise the profile of racial harmony in the Newcastle community. A grant was secured from the Federal Government’s ‘Living in Harmony’ initiative to produce Little leaders, a documentary about the multicultural youth of Mayfield and the leadership they are showing to their community.

With the attitudes the school is developing, particularly in boys at this age, the school hopes to create a positive attitude toward other cultures and avoid incidents such as the nation witnessed recently in Cronulla.

Inspiring stories
There is no shortage of inspiring stories from boys at Mayfield East Public School. The school made the Little leaders video to tell the stories of several students who are leaders in the school and community. One of those students is Ryan Bartlett, who arrived from Indonesia with no knowledge of English. In the documentary he talks about how scary it was starting school with no English, but how he found it easier to find other children in the same situation. He tells of how thankful he was for the way the boys at school invited him into their soccer games, sport being a language they all could relate to. Ryan’s level of acceptance in the school was so great that, nine months later, he was...
Afag . . . now likes to be at school rather than other places because he feels safe there.

Similarly Afag Chinmouth, a refugee from Sudan, showed such enthusiasm for basketball that he has inspired a new fervour for the sport in the school, becoming a leader amongst his peers. Afag arrived in Mayfield last year with his mother, brothers and sisters. He travelled by boat from Sudan to Egypt, then stayed in a refugee camp for nine months before flying to Dubai and finally Sydney. He just wants Mayfield to be a safe place. In Little leaders, Afag tells us that he was very shy when he arrived at school in Australia, but he now likes to be at school rather than other places because he feels safe there.

The hardships endured by some of the refugees are often beyond the comprehension and experience of children brought up in Australia. Principal Warwick Beard asserts that ‘It’s a testament to their resilience and public spirit that they’ve been able to direct energy into our school and the broader Mayfield community’.

It’s not just refugee students who have contributed. Indigenous student Luke Single has been a role model for other Indigenous students. Luke is proud of his Indigenous heritage, is a great friend to his peers, and provides wonderful support to younger children in the school.

Boys tell it like it is

Little leaders explores the life and tells the stories of six students from a range of cultural backgrounds. Filmmaker Owen Eliot recorded the students and their teachers speaking openly and honestly about the matters of race and cultural background that they encounter in the playground.

According to Warwick, Little leaders is an outstanding example of multiculturalism in practice and will become part of the school’s teaching resources. These resources will also be made available to schools across the Hunter and NSW Central Coast.

‘Our student leaders taught their peers how to get along by leading them towards greater understanding of other cultures, a welcoming of diversity, and a realisation of how our school community is richer as a result of this mix’, says Warwick.

Leaders influence grows

And the students are not just leaders in the school community. With their participation in Harmony Day the students’ influence has extended beyond the school gates. Mayfield Mainstreet coordinator Kathie Heyman says that, while many people from different backgrounds live in Mayfield, they have not been recognised or celebrated within the wider community. The school joined other community groups, such as NADUS (‘Sudan’ spelt backwards, a Sudanese young men’s leadership group) who showcased their basketball skills for the community on Harmony Day. Afag is a member of NADUS and has extended his basketball and leadership skills by also being part of this Sudanese community team.

At the Harmony Day event the school showcased a range of culturally focused groups, including Japanese and Polynesian dance groups. The Polynesian dancers included a boys’ haka team (pictured page 5) who also did a traditional spear dance. The group comprised boys of Polynesian, Anglo-Celtic and Indigenous Australian descent.

Kathie asserts that ‘The encouraging message from the Year 6 students from Mayfield East is that it doesn’t matter where you come from and that we should encourage people to look past each other’s visual differences’.

While the first little leaders may have moved on to high school, they have left a legacy for the future as a new group of senior students from different backgrounds take on the various leadership roles.

As principal of Mayfield East Public School, Warwick Beard works closely with the immediate and wider community to create a genuine learning community. He strongly believes that engaging families, particularly fathers, in school life and activities is a key strategy for improving boys’ education. Partnerships have been formed with key personnel from organisations such as Mayfield Mainstreet, Newcastle Family Support, TAFE Outreach, PCYC and Hunter Star Foundation. As a result, dads are given many opportunities to participate in a variety of activities which link them to the school and their children’s education. Dads are also provided with opportunities to develop their own skills as parents through programs such as ‘Dads and Kids Bounce Back’, a program aimed at building resilience.
In 2002, we at the Hunter Sports High School recognised that things were not going as well as they should be for our boys. Having attended presentations at regional principals’ meetings (held by The University of Newcastle’s Boys in Schools Program, or BiS) we decided in 2003 to invest some of our Priority Action Schools funding in the BiS’s Boys’ Education, Better Outcomes Program (BEBOP). That started a long-term, ongoing productive relationship between the school and university researchers, one which has had great results for the school, our boys and our girls.

The Hunter Sports High School context

Hunter Sports is located in Gateshead, NSW. It attracts students from the local Gateshead–Windale area as well students from the NSW Central Coast and Hunter region who are selected for our targeted sports program. The local area is severely economically and socially disadvantaged, being one of the 10 poorest postcode areas in Australia. There is long-term generational unemployment among many of the area’s families. We have a high proportion of Indigenous and Pacific Islander students attending our school.

Hunter Sports has an enrolment of about 980, 66 per cent of whom are boys. When we analysed our school-based data it told a damning story of our boys. High suspension rates, high classroom referrals, poor attendance rates and poor literacy and maths results in our system-wide ELLA and SNAP testing, as well as poor School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results characterised our school, particularly for boys. Right from the time they entered our gates in Year 7, the boys quickly became part of this culture of violence and failure. There were more suspensions in Year 7 than there were in Year 9. This was the impetus for our project. We wanted to change the culture of the school for the boys, from one in which violence and lack of success were considered the norm to one in which boys had a clear picture of how they could succeed at school and in life.

The BEBOP project

We began in 2003 with a series of whole-school staff development sessions held by the university to inform all staff about current boys’ education issues and to develop a bank of ‘boy-friendly’ teaching and behavioural strategies. This created a climate of support and a knowledge base for the development of specific elements of our boys’ program. We wanted a positive framework that would bring the parents on board and motivate the boys to do well. We had the evidence of the needs and we took a strengths-based approach, borrowed from community development, to identify the assets of the community and of the boys. This led us to the idea that the dads could play an important part in the program and that the project would be driven by the teachers who volunteered to be involved. The project ran with those who were passionate about it, and the whole school was kept informed. Through this process, which included a good hard look at our school-based data, we identified three major concerns:

- the high number of incidences of violence in the early years of high school
- poor academic and behavioural areas for Year 7 boys. ELLA and SNAP results are up. Suspensions are down. Violent incidents are rare.

Paul Tracey (Hunter Sports HS) and Deborah Hartman (Boys in Schools) explain how they achieved such great results.
The camps . . . give the boys opportunities to think about themselves as males — how they want to be, how they prefer to learn, what and who will help them achieve their goals.

- the need for specific motivation and direction-setting strategies for Year 7 boys
- the need for respectful relationships throughout the school.

We conducted some hands-on activities to find out the views of the boys, dads and teachers using the BiS Being a man photopak. We got a clearer idea of what our school community thought were the qualities of a successful man — and this was not a narrow view. Being a good father, being happy in your work, being able to do the job you want, looking after your friends, doing the right thing, standing up for what you believe, trying hard . . . these were the sorts of images of success for men the whole community could agree on. Our job was to work out a program that would help the boys achieve this.

In 2004 we decided to target the Year 7 boys so that we could begin to create a positive climate of success from the moment boys began their high school career. It was a deliberate early-intervention strategy, designed to support the boys to see a pathway to successful manhood through education. A Boys’ Action Team (BAT) of interested teachers across all faculty areas was set up to design the project for 2004. Based on the strengths and our agreed project concerns, four key project strategies were developed.

Year 7 boys’ direction-setting camp
In 2004 we had a boys-only camp at the beginning of Year 7, involving many adult males, teachers and community members. The boys wrote an invitation to their dads (step-dads, uncles, pops — an important male in their lives) to come and join them.

The boys’ camp proved to be a great success for the boys, teachers and dads. It has become an institution, held early in Term 1 each year. We also now have a parallel camp for girls.

The camps set the tone for the year. They are fun and active and they give the boys opportunities to think about themselves as males — how they want to be, how they prefer to learn, what and who will help them achieve their goals. Dads are included in all activities, from orienteering to finding out your preferred learning styles. Dads and sons are often stunned when their learning preferences turn out to be identical. The boys are grouped into random ‘tribes’ for all the activities and develop positive relationships with others they have only just met, as well as with the teachers and dads. They define their individual definition of the successful man they would like to be in the future. They plan strategies to stay on track in Year 7 and offer suggestions for the teachers about how to help the different learning styles succeed. The dads have a focus group at night where they identify what they would like to do with their sons this year — both in and out of school. The school makes an undertaking to organise some dads’ events and some dads volunteer to get some going.

A motivational speaker inspires the boys to achieve their dreams though perseverance. Islander and Indigenous culture is celebrated with Islander and Indigenous boys taking leadership and teaching all the boys, teachers and dads the haka or other traditional male dances. It’s a powerful and inspiring event on the last night of the camp to see our Year 10 Islander boys lead 120 Year 7 boys in the haka — there’s no mucking around in that session — and the whole group commits to staying strong and achieving their goals.

Dads in the school
In 2004, we surveyed the Year 7 boys about dads’ involvement in the school. The boys were pretty clear that they did not want the dads regularly coming into the classroom. They felt that that was too much like primary school. As one boy put it: ‘We’re not babies any more. We’re trying to be men, we don’t want our dads looking over our shoulder all the time or holding our hands’.

What the boys did want was for their dads to notice their achievements and to do things with them that might be fun. The dads said the same thing. So each year we run a few events for dads and boys. The camp is important. We’ve also had cricket games, orienteering, games at the PCYC, some dads run a breakfast club, and the boys especially invite dads to important events at the school. The relationship between the school and the dads in the community is changing. It’s no longer one where the only time a dad has anything to do with the school is when their boy is in trouble — and even those times are easier now. And dads turn up to events — especially the camp and celebration day at the end of the year. The boys feel more supported by their dads in their school tasks.

Development of Year 7 units of work
A group of Year 7 teachers across the curriculum areas took the lead on developing quality teaching for boys. They took the learning-
preferences information gathered at the camp and designed some new units of work around boys’ interests and learning preferences. The learning-preferences data was very revealing. We used a short questionnaire, based on Gardner’s multiple intelligences approach (Seven ways that matter, McGrath & Noble, 2006), to ascertain the boys’ self-reported preferences. There is a distinct pattern in the preferences of the boys, with ‘body’ and ‘self’ consistently ranked highly by a large number of boys, and ‘music’ and ‘word’ ranked low. In 2004, only eleven boys out of the 109 who completed the questionnaire rated ‘word’ as their first preference. Yet when we looked at our teaching and assessment, the vast majority of it in almost all subject areas was delivered verbally and assessed in written form with little scope for variety.

The teachers who joined the BAT committed to developing some new units of work based on the preferences of the boys. They also committed to examining their own teaching practices, writing journals as they went and sharing new ideas with each other. The university researchers acted as their critical friends. The boys did not know which teachers were doing this work. Yet, when the researchers conducted focus groups of the boys who had completed Year 7 — asking them which lessons or units they remembered as being interesting — the only units that were mentioned were those developed by these teachers. In 2004, the teachers developed a wide range of units which met their subject outcomes. In science, the boys made bottle rockets and tested how high they could fly. In TASS they made H2O-powered cars and tested how fast they could travel. In maths they developed and tested orienteering courses. In history they designed their own shields and weapons and investigated family trees, and in English they explored their own identity, making raps, poems and a DVD about boys at Hunter Sports. In PDHPE they had a big focus on communication. In all of these they developed a love of learning and were willing to dig deeper to produce quality work and to demand intellectual quality from their learning experiences.

The teachers in the BAT used a framework for boys’ learning developed by the researchers. It has five elements: personal interest, immediate experience, clear goals, competence, and control. This framework complements other work the school is doing using the quality-teaching framework for NSW public schools. The teachers mapped activities and assessment strategies onto the multiple-intelligence grid to ensure that there were a variety of tasks and activities of high intellectual quality that suited all the learners in their group. They also looked at the engagement and motivation of the boys as they

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<td>Logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one boy put it: ‘We’re not babies any more. We’re trying to be men, we don’t want our dads looking over our shoulder all the time or holding our hands’.
worked though the unit. They noticed that the girls’ motivation in these units remained high or higher than before as well.

Some of the teachers were very experienced and some relatively new. An experienced female teacher commented: ‘I had to push myself to find new, rich activities’. And from an experienced male teacher: ‘The hands-on stuff really worked for the boys. It worked for me as well’. A teacher with three years’ experience said, ‘I’ve had to change my whole teaching style . . . and it’s been great. Much more fun for all of us, and the boys are doing so well now’.

Respectful relationships
We’ve pushed the need for respectful relationships throughout the whole school. We have a new positive-relationship policy based on the way we want relationships to be conducted in the school. We’ve asked teachers to examine how they treat students and we’ve actively taught students the social and emotional skills they need to conduct relationships respectfully. In 2004, we introduced a commendation system for all teachers to use, and in 2005 we strengthened this system by trialling a tool developed by the university. The 6 pack of strengths highlights specific personal and interpersonal skills we want the boys to develop and rewards students for displaying these skills. Initial results are very favourable, with both boys and girls striving to develop specific skills that are personal challenges for them — and much more time on-task in class. We have implemented it more systematically in 2006.

A celebration and review day at the end of Year 7
A public celebration of the efforts and achievements of the boys is the final signpost for the boys in Year 7. Fathers and mothers are invited to an event at the end of the year where Year 7 boys’ achievements are celebrated, work displayed and awards given. Boys from different groups speak about their achievements. In 2005, we had a one-day electives workshop based on learning styles the day before the celebration day. The products from the workshop were displayed. One group made a massive and very impressive welded sculpture of a mythical creature out of recycled material. Another produced a hilarious and thoughtful DVD of boys’ views at Hunter Sports. A third cooked the morning tea we all shared afterwards, and the final group performed a drumming expo and rap about boys at Hunter Sports.

Project evaluation
The project evaluation included focus groups of boys, interviews with teachers, ratings by parents and analysis of the data. Our data shows some dramatic improvements in both academic and behavioural areas. ELLA and SNAP results are up. Suspensions are down, both in the overall numbers and in the proportion of boys suspended compared to girls. Violent incidents are much rarer now than when we began the project. Suspensions from 2002 to 2005 have dropped in percentage terms by well over 50 per cent — keeping in mind that the school population in that time grew from 650 to 980. So, in other words, we have had more kids enrol but less suspensions and behaviour referrals. These changes can be attributed to our whole-school approach to school improvement, including the specific boys’ strategies.

We are changing the culture of the school. Hunter Sports High School is now seen as a place that values positive relationships and learning. We help the boys identify the qualities they already have and those they aspire to, and provide them with male role models who show these qualities and recognise them in the boys. We build on the strengths of the whole school community. Each year the boys are doing better. Each year about 20 dads get actively involved in the
ELLA and SNAP results are up. Suspensions are down, both in the overall numbers and in the proportion of boys suspended compared to girls. Violent incidents are much rarer . . . Suspensions . . . have dropped by well over 50 per cent.
The big message in the program for the school was the need to explicitly link boys’ male identities to positive behavioural and learning outcomes.

Paul Tracey was, until recently, the deputy principal of Hunter Sports High School in the Gateshead–Windale area of NSW. Throughout his 20-year education career he has maintained an interest in the learning styles of boys as a driver for school and classroom pedagogy. During his time at Hunter Sports High he undertook action research on the effects of changing pedagogy and of supportive welfare structures to improve the engagement of boys. He continues this interest in his current position as principal of Rutherford Technology High School.

Deborah Hartman has been an educator for over 20 years. She has taught primary-aged children in Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, where she worked as a teacher, teacher–educator and curriculum developer with Indigenous communities. Deb is the mother of two fine young men, and has an interest in the education of boys both as a teacher and parent. She is currently the manager of Research and Dissemination at The University of Newcastle’s Family Action Centre (FAC), where she specialises in research and teaching in boys’ education with the Boys in Schools Program. She has lead many research programs with individual schools and clusters of schools which have resulted in better outcomes for boys in those schools. She is also the coordinator of the FACs Graduate Certificate and Masters programs in Educating Boys. She is the author of I can hardly wait till Monday: women teachers speak about what works for them and for boys, and co-editor of Leadership in boys’ education and The Boys in Schools Bulletin, with Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne.
The stench of Hobart’s weekend garbage is even less appealing after a downpour. A ray of sunshine breaking through the clouds teases me as the drizzle continues to fall silently. I head back to the car for my umbrella, which I should have taken in the first place. I need to complete my mission and escape as cleanly as possible.

I check my watch . . . 8 am . . . I’m going to be late so I ring the office to let them know. My first class is at 10 am today so I’ll be right. ‘Michael, why are you at the tip? Do I want to know? No, don’t tell me, I’ll just pass the message on!’ Accustomed as they are to my early morning calls from suburban tips, the office staff are beginning to sound a little nervous.

I’d like to wax lyrical about a more auspicious start but you know what they say about humble beginnings. Not that this was the beginning really. The idea had been slowly percolating in my mind for many years; back as far as 1996 when my wife and I rescued a tired, old, grey dining table from a shed just outside of Scottsdale, a farming community in Tasmania’s north-east. Covered in paint, rusty nails, meat mincer marks and rat poo, it rendered me its stories throughout my week of toil emerging as a thing of beauty, ready for a new life at the centre of another family.

Waiting, waiting, waiting

Over the next nine years the course in wooden furniture restoration began to formulate. Why did it take that long? Well, conditions never seemed quite right. Firstly, we needed discarded furniture. Country people know about the good and the hard times. They rarely throw out anything that might be useful, storing it away for a rainy day. And it’s clear they believe that day will come. So I had to wait for the right surroundings.

I also needed the right timing and the right boys. Having spent three years at New Town High School (NTHS) as a teacher of Materials, Design and Technology (MDT) and a grade supervisor, ‘my’ boys were now in Grade 10 and made up the majority of the three ‘Design in Wood’ classes I was taking for the year.

I needed a strong relationship with the boys as the project would be an enormous amount of work. I had to ensure that a majority of my time in class could be spent working alongside the students rather than focusing on the inevitable behaviour and safety issues that occur in workshop classes. There was also the possibility they would become as enthused as I was and we would have fun!

The idea for furniture restoration percolated in Michael James’s brain for nine years. It was worth the wait. Ambitious in scope, risky to undertake and painstaking to implement, the project’s success has gone far beyond teaching woodwork skills.

Furniture restoration

Puts the finishing touches on boys’ attitudes

The idea for furniture restoration percolated in Michael James’s brain for nine years. It was worth the wait. Ambitious in scope, risky to undertake and painstaking to implement, the project’s success has gone far beyond teaching woodwork skills.
A shift in school culture
Historically NTHS was a public boys’ technical school with an emphasis on developing skill in sport, academia and trade. My own father was a student there more than 50 years ago and a teacher early in his career. The stories he told since I began teaching paint a picture of a very different environment than currently exists. The last eight years in particular have seen many internal areas of the school receive facelifts and redevelopments, the biggest of which began mid 2005 and will (hopefully) be finished June 2006. The exterior of most of the school hasn’t changed, yet there has been a major shift in the school culture. For both staff and students, the emphasis has expanded from teaching and learning to encompass personal conduct, respect and understanding of each other.

There is a great deal of pride in the educational opportunities offered to students. NTHS is still the only state boys’ school in Tasmania, with a curriculum of courses catering for individuality and creativity. The scope ranges from the more traditional approaches to new, trans-disciplinary courses, and even programs that are tailored to individual student’s needs.

Essential learning areas
The recent implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework (ELF) statewide, from Kindergarten to Grade 10, has overarching aims of ‘engaging learners more deeply in their learning and to make learning more relevant to them. To interconnect and interrelate knowledge, skills and dispositions within and across specialist areas within the school’. It is also vital that the curriculum focuses on important life-related matters and prepares students for the world of their time.

Each grade team in the school has established a general focus or ‘Throughline’ for the year which guides curriculum development:

- **Grade 7**: The self — me as a person/personal development
- **Grade 8**: The group — me as a member of a group/group development
- **Grade 9**: Choices — my choices
- **Grade 10**: My future — me in the community.

The ELF identifies five key areas, with a focus on what we want our students to be when they leave Grade 10 and enter the next phase of their lives. In summary, it looks something like the table below. Each Essential Learning contains a number of Key Element Outcomes around which curriculum can be constructed, and is described in a Culminating Outcome.

### Essential Learning Culminating Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Learning</th>
<th>Culminating Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THINKING</td>
<td>We want our students to be inquiring and reflective thinkers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATING</td>
<td>We want our students to be effective communicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL FUTURES</td>
<td>We want our students to be self-directed and ethical people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>We want our students to be responsible citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORLD FUTURES</td>
<td>We want our students to be world contributors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now for the hard bit
The Furniture Restoration Project fitted well with our Year 10 goals. So, back to the practicalities of...
managing 26 students and furniture restoration. How was I going to sell this? How was I going to get them intrigued, enthused and looking forward to coming through the door each lesson? How was this going to be relevant to them in 12 months time and beyond my workshop door? How could I get them engaged? How was this going to differ from previous years where students were either given an open-ended design brief for producing a piece of furniture, or they had to negotiate their own design brief, all after coming off seven weeks of holidays? This was going to be tough!

I needed a plan!

- **Money**: always a good motivator. The student can sell the piece once it is finished and keep the profits.
- **Need**: personal or other. Bedroom, mum, dad, present.
- **Achievement**: begin the year with a finished project.
- **Effort**: up to 75% of the work has already been done for them.

That would be a good beginning as I wanted to do just enough myself to get them off and running and be open to letting it develop from there once the classes started.

The Essential Learning would be **WORLD FUTURES**, aiming for the students to become world contributors, ‘willing to consider the consequences of scientific and technological innovations, make thoughtful decisions about their application and act to maintain, protect and enhance local and global environments’.

The two Key Element Outcomes I saw as most appropriate for this course were:

- investigating the natural and constructed world
- creating sustainable futures.

**But would they buy it?**

Okay, they are here! The first lesson with each class was going to be the key. Once I had delivered the initial three-minute pitch I felt like they were listening and certainly no-one had fallen asleep or was gazing at the staff cars out the window. Predictably, many of them became very interested when they heard me say I could possibly pay them for making their project this year. Maybe a silent auction at our mid-year Related Arts Night? Who knows, but the mention of money certainly got their interest.

Then the key question that would guide our direction for the year: why restore furniture?

Initially their answers were good, and as time went on they thought a little deeper and came up with quite a list, which we grouped under the following main headings:

- **Enterprise**: making and saving money/future prospects.
- **Effort**: much of the work already completed/a good guide as to how to do what was required.
- **Skills**: learning both design and practical processes as well as becoming discerning consumers.
- **History**: learning about the period the piece was constructed in as well as the life of the piece itself.
- **Environment**: resource management, including recycling/environmental factors.
- **Personal**: links with class members/others/adults-specific personal considerations.

Once I had established that, of the 75 students from three classes, less than half could bring in their own pieces to restore, we set about acquiring the rest. Ten dollars seemed like a popular figure that students were prepared to pay for a piece of pre-loved furniture, so I placed a ‘wanted for donation to student project’ advertisement in the local gazette. We also let our fingers do the walking and looked up as many tip shops and out-of-the-way second-hand shops that we could find in the yellow pages. Two weeks, many tip trips and 40 furniture acquisitions later, we were ready to begin.

**Noses to the grindstone**

The time in the workshop was great. Initially it was like Christmas with such a variety of items we had gathered together. There were ‘before’ photos to take, sketching and understanding how the pieces had been designed and constructed. The practicality of actually storing 70 pieces of furniture and keeping track of all the bits from each piece when we started carefully disassembling was challenging, but we seemed to manage.

Then there was the added stress and near mutiny when I told them that no powered tools were allowed to be used during the restoration process. All work had to be true to
the original way in which the pieces had been constructed. Admittedly, there were compromises along the way, but we pretty much stayed true to this throughout the year. I must admit, though, that on the odd occasions when I was absent a few of the students made remarkable progress, which they explained was due to having an excellent relief teacher. I suspect his name was Makita!

The range of furniture we gathered together was broad, including dining chairs, lounge chairs, many tables, lamps, mirror and picture frames, stools, chests, a range of boxes and even an old butter churn.

We were well underway and I could see that the design and practical components of the course were going to be satisfied. I had a vague idea of the other directions I wanted their minds to go but wasn't quite sure how to lead them into looking beyond what they were accomplishing in the workshop and see the bigger picture.

We had already had a trip to the local auction house early in the year to view furniture and see the auction in progress. (I lost count of how many times I instructed them before we left to keep their hands in their pockets during the auction. I nearly had heart failure when one of my students proudly proclaimed to a gathering of mates, all with looks of anticipation, that he had just successfully bid for a table. Various responses from ‘You were told you were not allowed to bid’ to ‘I hope it wasn’t the Huon Pine dining table’ were about to issue from my mouth as I turned around. Then I saw him with a cheeky grin, and his Nan standing beside him. He had arranged to meet her there so she could register and bid for him. He had paid $5! Bargain! Phew!)

The bigger picture

It was the resource management and environmental issues I wanted to lead them into, but how could I keep it factual and non-political? (I am not sure how much of Tasmanian news reaches the ‘Big Island’ but environmental debates are never far away from the headlines here.)

The answer found me in the form of a phone call one Sunday night. A man representing a group called Timber Workers for Forests (TWFF) had seen my advertisement in the local gazette and had rung up to offer an amount of myrtle, a beautiful minor species timber. Getting permission through the appropriate channels, TWFF had retrieved about 90 tonnes of myrtle from an area that had recently been clear-felled. Supposedly, all useable timber been removed from this area and it was about to be burnt. They rescued what they could in the time they had been given in the area and had to leave the rest. In return they asked to come and speak with the students about what it was that TWFF were trying to achieve. They also asked if I would attend one of their meetings to outline what I was aiming to achieve with my course and with the students during the year.

I realised instantly that this was a wonderful opportunity and just the direction I had been seeking. Over a six-week period I invited a representative from Greening Australia, Forestry Tasmania and
TWFF to do a presentation to the three classes of students for about an hour each. The presentations were scheduled two weeks apart to give us enough time to go over our collective notes to discuss and research different aspects of what each person presented.

At the end of all this information gathering and group discussions the students were asked individually to come to some conclusions about:

- the forest management practices that are currently in place in Tasmania
- current timber resource management
- long-term timber resource management
- current related environmental issues
- long-term environmental issues.

This was the extra element that had been missing, and it was a fascinating process. It was something I had not completed with students before and it really made for some lively discussions as well as opening many of the students’ eyes. At times it was a real battle to get many of them beyond the ‘just because it is on the internet or in the papers, doesn’t mean it is true’ mentality. I also impressed upon them that in a few short years they would be voting and it was vital that they could make informed and educated decisions that would directly affect not only their own lives but the lives of their children as well.

Before I knew it, the year was over, most of the pieces had been finished and many of them had found new homes. The remainder of the furniture has been sold this year and I now have a group of boys who have been visiting me regularly asking when will they get their money, please?

**Before and after . . . and the bit in the middle**

One of the best aspects of writing this article is that it has allowed me to re-live the whole process and remember how incredibly busy and enjoyable the whole experience was. Compiling ‘before’ and ‘after’ shots, some of which you can see here, I felt very proud of the boys; not just their practical achievements, but also the incredible journey we went on together. Hopefully, I have had an impact upon them in some way that will be lifelong. As teachers we often believe this but rarely get absolute proof that it’s actually happened, yet we still believe and continue with what we are passionate about.

There were many memorable moments: the presentations from our three guest speakers; our trip to the auction; discovering beautiful timber under layers of paint; views and opinions discussed about resource management and environmental issues during class time; boys getting parents and grandparents involved; four boys with promise being selected to

I felt very proud of the boys; not just their practical achievements, but also the incredible journey we went on together.

These ‘before and after’ photos show three of the 70 works restored by the boys of Tasmania’s New Town High School.
participate in a Designers as Mentors program; six boys arguing for 20 minutes about the best way to fold the corner on a chair that they were re-upholstering; generous donations of upholstering fabric, timber and time from community members.

There were many examples of individual success: Dane and Shaun teaming up with mates for an easy ride, but learning how to work in teams and achieving heaps; Josh encouraging Dane to be involved and standing up for him when he felt I was being a bit hard on him; boys who would not normally speak to each other communicating and negotiating simply because they wanted to work on the same piece of furniture; Jacob, who was able to ride out a rough personal year by pouring himself into an ultimately beautiful dining table; Anthony, whose attendance seemed to improve the more work he did on his stool; Yordanos, a quiet English-as-a-second-language student who didn't speak a word of English and yet was able to understand my gestures and demonstrations enough to restore a bookshelf then go on to design and make his own table.

Would I do it all again? Certainly, but not this year. New challenges are needed each year to maintain enthusiasm and engagement, including my own. I have also found that creativity is maximised when boys in my classes do not know what journey we are about to embark upon when they come through my door in February.

Ticking the boxes
Did we achieve all our outcomes?
No doubt, and then some. As always when working with adolescents there were many incidental things that happened along the way that were great and totally unplanned. We managed to give tired furniture a new lease on life. We really got people talking, thinking and questioning what they believed. We had fun.

The whole experience is probably best summed up by one of the boys whose dad works for Forestry Tasmania. In the beginning he was content to restore a piece of furniture but wasn't quite so happy with some of the other guest speakers and discussion aspects of the course. At the end, when asked for his overall opinion on the timber resource management and environmental issues, he simply looked at me and said, ‘We need to do it better!’
I think he is right!

Michael James is a highly skilled teacher in the area of Materials Design and Technology (MDT). He came to New Town High School in 2002 as an Advanced Skills Teacher and as Grade Supervisor for the 2002–05 cohort of boys. He is energetic, efficient, dedicated to his work and unfailingly cheerful, and above all else believes that learning should be fun. As a leader Michael is respected for his ability to develop a collaborative culture that promotes support at the same time as elevating expectations. He builds capacity in others and nurtures confidence. Recently appointed as Head of Department for MDT, he has a focus on implementing necessary changes to keep abreast of the current needs of our students. Michael is concerned always to deliver relevant learning programs which lead naturally to enhancing life skills. Michael can be contacted at michael.james@education.tas.gov.au
At Edrington, the Berwick, Victoria, campus of Haileybury College, we have an enormous amount of support from mothers on a day-to-day basis. However, in my role as classroom teacher in 2003 I could safely say that, by the end of the year, I had met less than half the fathers responsible for the children in my class. I suspected that this was the norm across the school, so decided to test my theory by surveying the number of fathers attending a recent parent-teacher interview.

These results were highly alarming. Less than a quarter of the relevant fathers had met with the homeroom teacher of their child during that parent-teacher interview, which occurs just after the distribution of the Semester 1 student report. Considered vitally important, this interview provides the opportunity to discuss the progress of students, and to refocus goals for the following semester.

How can we involve more fathers?
To encourage the participation of fathers within the school, and the life of their children, we initiated the Haileybury Engaging Fathers Project. This was designed to address a number of key issues:

- quality of relationship between the father and child, and the father and school
- opportunities available within the school for fathers to participate
- connectedness to the school and fathers’ attitudes towards the school (and indeed toward fathers by the school).

In the original proposal the project was to be divided into four areas: sporting; environmental; and social experiences programs; plus assessment and reporting. We already had a major project underway to celebrate Father’s Day and so we decided to focus on the social experiences program. We also felt that a social event could be more enjoyable for fathers, and an easier way to build the culture of inviting fathers into the school.

The school is divided into many sub-schools. Within the Edrington Campus there is an Early Learning Centre, a Junior School (Prep to Year 4), a Boys’ Middle School (Years 5 to 8), a Girls’ Middle School (Years 5 to 8) and a Pre-Senior Centre (Year 9). At the conclusion of Year 9 all students are transferred to the Senior School to complete their Victorian Certificate of Education over three years. We decided to target the fathers of boys in the Junior School and the Boys’ Middle School as these areas typically have the lowest involvement of fathers. In fact, their involvement gradually disappears as the child moves through the school, as is evident in Figure 1 (left).

We hoped that by offering social activities to these fathers they may become more committed to attending other functions, events, or even classroom help as they would.

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**Figure 1: Father involvement in parent-teacher interviews, Term 3 2005**
... mothers need to understand that their role in the development of boys is not being questioned; it is the role of both parents that needs to be redefined.

no longer be hesitant to enter unfamiliar territory.

Firstly, we created an action plan to ensure the project met its required timeline (end of 2005) and to delegate tasks to other staff members. It was important for all staff to be involved so fathers could see that there is a single vision for their involvement in the school.

The project plan detailed the amount of support that would be required from senior management to approve the various events, as well as to encourage other staff to be involved. It also highlighted the need to find resources in the local area that could support the program. We started with three social activities.

1. Breakfast with Dad
A letter to parents explained why we were running the project, especially the research component, in order to encourage as many men as possible to come along. We also hoped it would include mothers in the process and encourage them to send their partners along. As Richard Fletcher (2004) points out, mothers need to understand that their role in the development of boys is not being questioned; it is the role of both parents that needs to be redefined. This letter also explained the 'opt-out' method of data collection for the project.

All fathers of children in the Junior School and Boys’ Middle School were invited to a father-son breakfast to be held on a Sunday two weeks prior to Father’s Day. During the planning stages we made contact with Rob Koch, a Men’s Health Officer with our local council. Casey Council is one of a handful of local governments in Australia to recognise that a Men’s Health Officer is important, and to hire a full-time counsellor.

Rob agreed to hold a hands-on workshop for fathers and their sons aimed at educating them both about the importance of an involved parent. By running a ‘Who wants to be a millionaire?’ style quiz show, Rob provided a very informative and entertaining presentation about the importance of fathers, suggesting many ways they could involve themselves in their child’s life at school. A pivotal moment of this presentation occurred when all sons were asked to stand on their dad’s chair and listen to their father recite this pledge:
**MY MANIFESTO**
I am a man,
But I am more than a man,
I am a FATHER!
I have a reason to live,
A reason to grow,
A reason to celebrate . . .
*(turn to your child)*
I am your FATHER:
Your protector,
Your provider,
Your pastor,
Your playmate.
I commit myself to be
The best FATHER I can be.
This is my solemn vow and promise.
© Rob Koch, City of Casey
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This certainly was a moving moment, and many fathers reflected later that it was very powerful. All fathers were given a copy of this mantra to keep somewhere handy to remind them of their role as fathers.

The breakfast was attended mainly by fathers with children in Junior School. The results from the fathers’ evaluations indicated that an overwhelming majority saw the presentation as a motivation to a greater commitment to fatherhood, and would plan on attending future sessions (see Table 1).

The general comments in Table 1 indicate an overall support for the program. As well as this feedback, data was collected in the form of a ‘placemat’ survey for both fathers and sons to complete. These surveys yielded some very good feedback. Fathers commented on their strengths and weaknesses, and discussed other areas they would like to address in future information sessions. Sons discussed the fun things they do with their fathers, and activities they would like to do in the future. Younger students had the option of using the back of the placemat to draw a picture of having fun with their father.

The main request from fathers was for the school to involve their children in school activities.

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**Table 1: Extract from results of fathers’ survey at father–son breakfast**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage of positive responses</th>
<th>General comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Did this presentation motivate you to a greater commitment to fatherhood?</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>Pleased to see this program will be followed up in the coming months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Was the presentation enjoyable?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Fantastic event: would like to see more father/mother–son event, perhaps whole of family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Did you learn anything new during this session?</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Thank you, quite enjoyable — fantastic!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you plan on attending future sessions?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Great presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I think my son was too young, but I enjoyed it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A well presented and informative morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Should include daughters also</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
daughters in future events. As the focus on this project was for the engagement of fathers within the school, and improving the quality of relationships with their children, it wasn’t a problem to involve both sons and daughters in future events.

Following on from the success of this program, planning was undertaken for a ‘Father’s Day Afternoon Fair’ to replace the usual Father’s Day breakfast and assembly, which we suspected was a rather boring and cumbersome event for fathers.

2. An afternoon of pure fun
Looking at the breakfast figures, we noticed an apparent lack of involvement from the fathers of our Year 8 boys, so we asked this cohort of students to lead the afternoon instead of missing out on it completely. They came up with the list of activities, including rock climbing, face painting, manicures, fortune telling, footy handball, footy darts, mural painting, gumboot toss and lawn bowls. The boys and girls from Year 8 planned these activities over three weeks, developing shopping lists, action plans etc. During the afternoon, they set up their stalls and ran them until the end of the function. This leadership experience allowed them to be involved even if they didn’t have a father in attendance.

At the commencement of the activities all fathers were given a map of the oval, with spaces to be stamped each time they participated in an activity. In order to receive a stamp, both the father and son/daughter had to take part in the activity. One of the more popular activities was the rock wall, which enabled father and child to climb at the same time, supporting each other, and then abseil down the other side.

This afternoon was highly successful. Dads and their children were seen enjoying all aspects of the fair, with many dads succumbing to the appeals of their children to have their nails done, their hair ‘crazied’ up a bit and their faces painted. Our current Year 7 students are already discussing their ideas for next year’s event.

3. It’s a strike!
Part of establishing any new culture within a school environment is persistence. When this project was announced to parents, it was made very clear that we would offer one social event per term at the very least. During Term 4, planning was undertaken for a father–son, father–daughter Pie and Bowling night.

Fathers and their sons and/or daughters met at a local pie eatery for dinner, and then moved on to a ten-pin bowling complex. Over 20 fathers and their children enjoyed this entertaining evening, with many positive comments about the relaxed nature of the time together. Some fathers also commented on the new friendships they had...
developed, and the way conversations about their children had started to develop. Many of these fathers had previously attended the breakfast together. I deliberately grouped students of similar ages to increase the chance of fathers’ existing or new friendships developing through their children.

Things we had to ponder
Several staff, and some mothers, questioned why the focus was on fathers and sons. Fortunately, we have a very supportive head of campus who was able to explain the purpose of the project, and mentioned that we have had a large focus on mothers and daughters this year (opening of the new Girls’ Middle School coincided with International Women’s Day celebrations). Subsequently, the staff and mothers became supportive of the project.

One mother (a sole parent) objected to the term ‘father–son’. She told me that her nine-year-old son became quite upset as, apparently, all of his friends were set to attend the breakfast, but he didn’t have a father to attend with. She acknowledged that by ‘father’, we meant any type of father figure, and had arranged for another father within the school to take him; however, she felt that there must be a better title for such events. We considered a change but decided to continue with the current title as it seemed the most appropriate for our larger audience.

So how did we go?
In all of the activities the intention was to change the mindset of teachers, school administrators, parents, and students. The project, which has actively engaged fathers at more school functions, showed everyone that engaging men within the school leads to better outcomes for children by providing effective role modelling and gender identity.

Focusing on the year’s final parent–teacher interview, there has been a slight improvement in fathers’ attendance than in the previous interview session. Figure 2 shows the distribution of involvement across the school. A significant improvement is evident in the amount of fathers attending from the Junior School; however, the Girls’ Middle School and Boys’ Middle School show a decrease in the amount of fathers attending.

Originally designed to refocus goals, the final parent–teacher interview analysis, Term 4 2005

![Percentage of Father Participation](image1)

![Percentage of Father Participation](image2)

![Percentage of Father Participation](image3)

![Percentage of Father Participation](image4)

Figure 2: Parent–teacher interview analysis, Term 4 2005

Part of establishing any new culture within a school environment is persistence.
interview of the year is typically not well attended by mothers or fathers. Consequently, we changed this interview to a student-led conference to share digital portfolios with students from Prep to Year 6. Parents have appreciated this change as it gives students a chance to reflect upon and share their best work from the year.

It is still too early for any significant qualitative evidence to be demonstrated. A number of fathers apologised to invitations due to prior commitments, so we planned our social activities for 2006 in advance to ensure more fathers kept these dates free. We are hoping that continuing the activities will further develop the culture of father engagement. At the same time we need to provide professional development for teachers to ensure they are adequately involving fathers in their classroom program.

Support from staff in general has been of a high standard, with regards to filling out parent–teacher interview surveys for the graphs mentioned previously. However, it was decided not to ask teachers to attend the social gatherings (apart from the compulsory Father’s Day carnival) as they already had an overly large workload for this semester. Involving a large number of teachers may have detracted from the important relationship building going on between the fathers and their children. The deputy head of campus, the head of Boys’ Middle School, and the head of Junior School (all male) were the only staff members asked to attend the events with me.

Where to from here?
The outstanding positive feedback from parents (both mothers and fathers) shows that a program of this nature was long overdue.

Further events will help to improve the relationships between fathers and their children in the social sense; however, we need to explore other aspects of engaging fathers such as:

- involvement in classroom activities
- assistance with children’s homework
- attendance of other school events such as sports matches, assemblies, carnivals, excursions etc.

These areas are being investigated in 2006, with emphasis being placed on professional development for staff to encourage them to actively invite fathers into the school, and to ensure the school is a welcoming place for men to visit.

I have enjoyed the nature of action research and I look forward to the future growth of our program. I acknowledge the help of many staff within our school, particularly the Head of Campus, Lyn Watts, and the participation of all our fathers and their children.

Acknowledgement is also given to Rob Koch for permission to use the Father’s Pledge, and for his assistance in our father-son breakfast.

Reference
Fletcher, R 2004, Bringing fathers in handbook: how to engage with men for the benefit of everyone in the family, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW.

Travis Campbell is the Learning Technology Coordinator (Junior School) at Haileybury, Edrington Campus in Berwick, Victoria. He completed this action research project for his Masters Studies in Boys Education (The University of Newcastle). Travis teaches Information and Communication Technology to students from early childhood to Year 6. He is interested in hearing from other schools that have used similar methods of engaging fathers, particularly where staff professional development was involved. He can be contacted at tcampbell@haileybury.vic.edu.au.
Boys in all schools across Australia are allowed by their peers to succeed at sport. They can stand in front of the school assembly and quite openly receive praise for achieving in any sport, from athletics to ten pin bowling.

There are also a great number of schools where it is socially acceptable for boys to achieve academically. Unfortunately, that is not the case in all schools, and often academically gifted boys are pulled back and given a hard time if they try to achieve in this area. They are called ‘try hards’ and the like. We often see boys entering schools in Year 7 keen to do as well as they can, and as well as their parents want them to, only to be put in their place by those who have the attitude that it is ‘cool to be a fool’.

In most schools, however, it is very difficult for boys to be successful in the area of creative and performing arts. The homophobic stereotype that is associated with creative boys makes it very hard for them to stand up in front of their peers and be seen as a dancer, a singer or a musician that is not in a rock band.

Guy Pearce, the Australian actor who starred in movies such as LA Confidential and The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert had some difficult times growing up as a talented, creative boy. In an interview with Andrew Denton on the ABC TV show Enough Rope in 2003, Denton asked him about some of the strange names Pearce had for various bands he had been a part of in his teenage years. One of them was called The Poofters. ‘Why was it given that name?’ Denton asked. Pearce replied, ‘We were males, creative and musical, so obviously we were poofters’.

At Maitland Grossmann High School, NSW, we are blessed with a very active and gifted Creative and Performing Arts faculty. Led by the acclaimed choral conductor Kim Sutherland, there are any number of opportunities for students to explore their creative talents. Typically, however, it is mainly the girls who make the most of these opportunities, particularly with the school choir and dance ensembles.

An all-boy choir

Our school choir generally has 50 to 60 singers. Unfortunately, there are usually only about five or six boys involved. I wanted to get an all-boys choir happening to show the school that it is okay for boys to sing. As the school’s rugby coach I was tempted to follow the lead of Mary Lopez, who is currently the director of the Sydney Schools Spectacular. While Mary was working at Epping Boys High she had an arrangement with the rugby coach that, if you were in the team, you were also in the school choir.

While that may have worked, there were other boys not involved in rugby that I thought would benefit by being involved. So I went around the playgrounds at recess and lunch and personally asked boys I had a good relationship with whether they

The choir was a real trust exercise. The boys had to trust me that it would be a safe thing for them to do . . . It was also a trust exercise on my part. I needed the boys to treat the whole thing seriously.
would like to be part of an all-boys choir. The response was staggering. I had hoped for about 15 boys to come on board. On the day of the concert there were 35 boys and six male staff members involved, backed by a five-piece band.

Now that there was a choir we needed a conductor. We wanted someone who knew what they were doing and would be able to bring the boys along in the process of sounding like a choir. That person was found in Russell Thornton, an ex-student who had been heavily involved in the performing arts during his time at Maitland Grossmann and had gone on to become a music teacher working in the district. Russell was very enthusiastic to be involved from the first approach. He later said it had been something of a cathartic experience for him as he had been bullied at school for his involvement in singing and performing.

We didn’t audition the boys for talent and there were a number of boys who really couldn’t sing all that well. But the aim was not necessarily to sound great, but to have a number of boys stand up in front of the school and say ‘We’re boys and we aren’t afraid to sing’.

The repertoire we chose for the choir was interesting in itself. One of the male teachers who sang in the choir had been involved in The University of Newcastle choir for a number of years and commented that we were not singing choral pieces. Our choice of material was intentional. We sang songs that the boys knew and could relate to, blokey songs that conveyed a bit about male identity and that the boys were comfortable with. The choir would open the show with Queen’s ‘We will rock you’, following that up with Hunters and Collectors ‘Throw your arms around me’ and finishing with a bang by performing a rousing version of Jimmy Barnes, ‘Working class man’.

Taking ourselves seriously
The choir was a real trust exercise. The boys had to trust me that it would be a safe thing for them to do. Singing in front of the school is
not an easy thing and they opened themselves up for possible ridicule by being involved. It was also a trust exercise on my part. I needed the boys to treat the whole thing seriously. Many were waiting for someone to do something silly, to make a joke out it, as boys often do. The focus from the first rehearsal was that this would only have the impact we wanted if it was treated seriously and the boys give a straight performance with no silliness.

We now had a choir and a concert to perform at, but there was a need to include other boys and broaden the range of types of performance to be included. I called on the knowledge of the Creative and Performing Arts faculty as to what talents there were amongst the boys in the school. They gave me several leads of boys who were gifted in many ways, yet had hidden their talents under a bushel.

I approached Mitchell Irwin, a boy in Year 9 who played guitar very well and took lessons locally from guitar master Bruce Mathiske. On the day, Mitchell played an unaccompanied five-minute electric guitar solo that had the audience yelling for more.

The Year 10 five-piece band that backed the choir stayed on stage to do a performance of Jack Johnson’s ‘Sitting, waiting, wishing’. This was the first time the boys had performed as a group and they did a great job supporting the choir and then performing on their own.

Drumming up a storm
The drummer from the Year 10 band, James Jennings, is a very gifted musician. He travels down to Sydney every week to be part of the NSW Schools’ Jazz Orchestra and plays regularly at the Sydney Opera House and other major performance opportunities at district and state level. I asked James if he would be able to coordinate a boys’ percussion ensemble. I had seen one perform in the past and was really taken by the power that emanates from such a group. Asking at the school assembly if there were any male drummers in the school who would like to be involved in the ensemble resulted in 10 boys volunteering to rehearse every Friday at lunch time under James’s direction.

One of the pleasing things to come from the percussion ensemble was the involvement of one of our Sudanese refugee students joining the group. Santino Sabah made a really positive contribution to the act with his talent and enthusiastic participation.

Another positive was the purchase of drums for the school to be used in future ensembles and for their use in anger-management groups that are run using Michael Curry’s Doing Anger Differently program. There is something powerful and binding when a group of boys, in particular, are working together cooperatively to bring about a coordinated result. This was a very well worthwhile venture that will continue at the school this year and beyond. Seeing 10 boys standing in line belting out rhythms on bongos, snares, congas, cymbals, floor toms, djembes, cowbells and the like was a moving experience and a sight to behold.

We were very fortunate to have Cameron Nix, an extremely talented ballroom dancer, in Year 11.
Cameron and his partner Nikki are the only dancers from Australia competing in England this year at the World Ballroom Dancing Championships. There was a real hush of amazement as Cameron and Nikki performed two dances at the concert and it certainly changed a few attitudes towards boys and dancing as they watched the couple glide effortlessly around the stage. Having Cameron run his hands up Nikki’s leg and smack her on the backside also made an impression on the boys!

The closing act of the concert was by a Year 11 rock band called Innovation. They played two original songs that really brought the crowd to their feet and finished things off with a bang. Loud, distorted guitar-based music with long hair flying and a screaming audience. Who could ask for more?

Legends in our own lunch time — and beyond

The concert proved to be a great success and planning is under way for this year’s follow up. Many boys who were not involved last year have approached me to be in the choir or to put on an act for the next concert, which is very encouraging. At the school’s award night held at the end of the last year there were 15 boys in the school choir rather than the usual five, which gives hope that attitudes have been shifted slightly.

It is a long road to break down stereotypes, but seeing the response from the boys following last year’s concert gives hope that with time it may be okay for a boy to stand up and sing, or dance, or play an instrument in front of his peers and be recognised as equally as those who achieve academically or in sport.

Stephen Gaul is no stranger to The Boys in Schools Program. Our first graduate of the Graduate Certificate course in Educating Boys, Stephen went on to complete the Master of Educational Studies, specialising in behaviour problems and boys education. In 2000 Stephen completed the Rock and Water three-day training program and has since taught the program to Years 7, 8 and 9 in his own school and to Year 6 students at his high school’s main feeder primary school. Stephen was trained as a Rock and Water trainer and has instructed hundreds of teachers in the one-day course. He has also written and developed several programs using some Rock and Water activities in conjunction with other resources to develop anger management and social skills within the boys.

In 2003 Stephen took a year out from teaching to act as assistant manager for Boys in Schools. He has now returned to teaching boys in comprehensive high schools, which he has done for over 20 years. During that period he has held the positions of classroom teacher, year adviser, advanced skills teacher in charge of literacy, head teacher PDHPE and relieving deputy principal.
The Grade 9’s making up my art class at New Town High School in Tasmania were certainly a challenging mix of backgrounds and past journeys: disaffected northern suburbs boys like Josh and Aiden who would be loathe to admit that they enjoy the security of routine that school offers; refugees like George and Abdulassis, dealing with the demons of troubled pasts in a troubled continent and at the same time struggling with the nuances of Australian teenage speak; disengaged students like Adam, who invariably struggle to see tasks through to completion; quietly earnest boys like Steven, who wish to press on and to please but under the radar, without creating waves or drawing any attention to their positive approach; or like James, also burdened by his mother’s suffering in the last stages of a terminal illness and facing the impending grief of loss.

In class this bunch of Grade 9 boys expressed the diffidence culturally acceptable among youth: the go-slow approach to undertaking class and the ‘grunt and shrug’ cynicism in the face of ideas, projects or anything for which teaching adults profess will be fun and meaningful. This is the grade which has perfected the ‘wither up!’ sneer.

‘Every day is a journey, and the journey is home’ (Matsuo Basho)
The Journey project was conceived as a gallery-based installation exploring young people’s views about their own identity and relationships. A Grade 9 art class would embark on a creative journey with a final destination, gaining an understanding of where each student had come from and what they had seen and experienced along the way. Students would research and retell stories from their families in a culturally appropriate form.

The central motif for the exhibition was a visually powerful metaphor for the notion of journey — three sculptured spaces presented as large modes of transport: a bus, a boat and an aeroplane. Embedded within these large iconic forms were the journey stories of the students presented in a range of text forms: photographs, poems, journal entries, etc.

Just a bunch of Grade 9 boys, eh? Six months later, some boys are still a little amazed at the achievement of Journey. So, too is the Grade 9 supervisor as she urges the staff to see the children’s exhibition at the Moonah Arts Centre. Kassandra Lovric explains how they got there.
TV images, figurative sculptures, prints, letters. These text forms were melded into the metaphor in subtly symbolic ways — the sails of the boat were woven from photographs, letters and poems, the portholes of the boat were TV screen images, while the engines of the aeroplane were speakers intoning stories, anecdotes and reflections.

The understanding goals governing the Journey project were summed up in four questions:

1. How can I most powerfully express the story of my cultural identity?
2. What is the story of my family’s presence in Tasmania?
3. What assists people with differing cultural beliefs to co-exist in a community?
4. What are the technical challenges of our task, and how can we arrive at workable solutions to these challenges?

To introduce the unit, students were read the opening page from the Dalai Lama’s *An open heart*:

> I believe that every human has an innate desire for happiness and does not want to suffer. I also believe that the very purpose of life is to experience this happiness. I believe that each of us has the same potential to develop inner peace and thereby achieve happiness and joy. Whether we are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white, from East or West, our potential is equal. We are all the same, mentally and emotionally. Though some of us have larger noses and the colour of our skin may differ slightly, physically we are basically the same. The differences are minor. Our mental and emotional similarity is what is important.

> ‘The longest journey begins with a single step’ (Lao Tse)

The first step on the journey for this bunch of Grade 9s was an appraisal of how human beings seek to fulfil their potential for inner peace and how they seek happiness. Students proceeded from considering this philosophical journey of the human spirit to reflection on the idea of a more concrete journey. The majority of Australians live here because they or their families or ancestors journeyed here from other lands. So there are all the questions which bring to the fore a myriad of journey stories, the key question being: Why do people leave the country of their birth to settle in Australia?

From this point the students looked to describing their own travel or journey experiences, even if this was no greater than moving house. The descriptions led to stories and the realisation that all humans tell stories and every story has an element of journey involved. Of
course, stories are told in a myriad of forms: stories are told; shared as anecdotes; stories are written down in prose, poetry or drama; stories are embedded in newspaper articles; stories are shared in visual images (photographs, paintings, sculptures, films).

Now the class was ready to embrace the guiding theme for the installation. It was time to consider the concept of an installation. To this end students were shown the work of artists such as Neil Cameron, Joseph Beuys, Tony Cragg, Jean Tinguely, Nam June Pak and Claes Oldenburg. The boys came to an understanding of the reasons why these artists chose installation and performance to convey their work and tell their stories.

Sustaining the momentum
Naturally, it was when the boys actually began their own work with all the challenges to overcome that they gained some inkling of the power of an installation in conveying a theme. The work was rather pressing — at least, this is how Luke, Joe and James perceived it. Following the week of planning there were two weeks to have the installation ready for the formal opening.

The squash courts of the nearby Moonah Sports Centre became the work studios where the boat, bus and plane were created from pahang cane. Three groups worked on each of the journey motifs. Artist in residence Naomi Marantelli lent her expertise and kept the pace high. As Joe put it: ‘She was very, very bossy. If you slacked off at all, she was onto you!’ ‘Yeah’, adds Luke, ‘like at lunchtime if you went to play handball, she would say “Sit down, eat and save your energy for building the plane”’. James acknowledges that Naomi had to be a serious pacesetter as, after all, they had a limited amount of time and the project was a big one.

As the boat, the aeroplane and the bus took on their forms and completion time approached, the boys came to see that there would be a visually powerful end result. Luke said, ‘The best time was when we were just about finished. You got this picture in your head of what it was going to look like and it was really exciting. There was excitement in nearly finishing. Yeah, that was the best time’. Joe agrees: ‘Yeah, I was so pleased I actually did something!’

So, paper, cane, wire, recycled wood and packing cases found a new form in three iconic modes of transport which were lifted out of the Moonah Sports Centre Squash Courts (an exciting moment in itself) and installed at the exhibition site: the Moonah Arts Centre. Portraits showing the personal journeys of the students were the heart of the installation — two in the cockpit of the aeroplane, most in the passenger seats of the bus. There were audio speakers with dramatised journey stories acting as portholes of the boat, photographs and poems or journal entries wallpapered onto the crafts’ bodies, journal entries, diaries and letters spilling out of suitcases. The public could walk through the bus, boat and aeroplane and share and marvel at the multitude of journey stories already part of very young lives.

Focus on the journey, not the destination
The boys shared in American Greg Anderson’s reflections: ‘Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it’. Their fondest memories of their participation in the Journey project rest with the time they were nearly finished but still constructing, still crafting, still painting or writing. Naturally, there was pride in the achievement, although the formal opening attended by local politicians and dignitaries was an occasion more of awe than pride. The culminating performance involved students in the design of exhibition posters, invitations, the event launch with speaker. After the flurry of doing, the
boys were somewhat overawed by the occasion itself.

What was learnt in the experience? The individual students came to realise that human beings have a need to tell stories and that these stories are journey stories — journeys where all manner of obstacles may have to be overcome, where, in accordance with the Chinese proverb, ‘To get through the hardest journey we need take only one step at a time, but we must keep stepping’. The boys came to a recognition of the shared need to nurture tolerance and foster inclusivity. Most of all, however, in the words of Joe: ‘I guess I learned that if you put your mind to something this big, it can happen’.

For these students to achieve what they did in this project, to be engaged and interested, was a success in itself. It gave some of the students the room to explore their idea of a journey in depth. Individually some made great progress; students, like James, who was able to go over his mother’s death and share his grieving with us. In the group environment George felt safe and trusted us enough to talk about his violent and frightening experiences on leaving his homeland of Sierra Leone, his traumatic survival in a refugee camp in Ghana and the new challenges he and his family face in coming to terms with a new culture and language in Australia.

The African boys demonstrated a new found confidence as they worked on tying and weaving the raw materials. Assisting some of the other students enabled them to feel good about themselves.

Generally unmotivated and disengaged in school work, Jeremy was able to go about his work with a newfound enthusiasm and was surprised that his genuine interest in the project acted as a positive domino effect on his fellow peers, awakening his hidden leadership qualities.

Reluctant to leave at the end of the school day, Martin was happy to stay back till four or five o’clock to finish off work and help clean up. He would often drag his dad in to the squash courts from the warmth of his car to show him what the class was up to, walk him around, talking over in detail who was working on what and what they intended to do the next day.

Adam shared stories of a family holiday adventure around Australia and how this opened his mind and changed his perspective on life.

For the students with an entrenched negative attitude in a classroom setting, the project provided the chance to break this pattern of behaviour by working off campus. Hopefully, they also realised that if you work on something and enjoy what you are doing it doesn’t seem like work at all.

A bunch of Grade 9 boys have learned ultimately to remind us that too often we are so preoccupied with the destination, we forget the journey.

Kassandra Lovric has been teaching at New Town High School, Hobart’s state boys’ secondary school, since 1996. Kassandra is a committed, inspiring teacher who cares for students and strives to help them realise their potential both as students and as people. She fosters a comfortable and supportive learning environment where students feel happy to express themselves and want to extend their skills. Students respect the breadth of her knowledge, her warmth and her ability to relate easily to youth culture and their particular concerns. She has instituted many ways to recognise and exhibit fine student work, including ‘Art of the Month’ awards and ‘People’s Choice Awards’ for artworks exhibited at the school’s annual Related Arts Evening. Kassandra also facilitates the involvement of students in community arts projects, collaborating particularly with the Moonah Arts Centre. The Journey exhibition was highly acclaimed and testifies to Kassandra’s dedication to bringing out the best in her students.
Through an experience incorporating principles of simple living, community involvement and practical activities we at Typo Station aim for young men to build the resilience, initiative and life skills necessary for a positive future. Typo Station is a unique early-intervention experience for young men between 14 and 17 years of age. The journey involves a five-week initial residential experience, follow-up programs and mentoring over two years.

Typo Station is supported by the community, philanthropic foundations and businesses throughout Victoria. We are not government funded, and are committed to self-sufficiency through developing sustainable relationships and a diverse range of initiatives.

We have a demonstrated track record over the past nine years. Our ongoing contact highlights that the majority of our participants experience significant positive changes in attitude and motivation, better relationships, and success in achieving life goals.

Specific objectives include:

- acting as a catalyst and a skills provider for the community and the young person to take a shared responsibility toward a more constructive and positive future for all
- enhancing young people's view of themselves and their expectations about future success
- helping them develop better relationships and connections with family, peers and the community
- addressing gaps in critical life skills, especially those related to education and vocation
- continuing successful participation in further education and training
- providing an adult role model as a mentor.

Where is Typo Station?
Typo Station is an historic property nestled in the foothills of the Alpine National Park, near Whitfield in north-eastern Victoria. Typo Station is the original name of the property, named after Mount Typo Station, some 11 kilometres away. Typo Station is approximately one hour south-east of Wangaratta, and three hours north-east of Melbourne, Victoria.

Our target group
- Fourteen- to 17-year-old males experiencing difficulties at school and home.
- Young people still connected with an educational pathway and stable accommodation.
- Young people without a continuing mental illness.

Our focus is early intervention, before young people experience patterned substance abuse or criminal involvement.

How the Typo Station experience works
Participants are recruited through schools, youth service providers and families. They go through an interview process to assess suitability, and a final assessment at the end of the first residential week of basic skills. They engage in follow-up programs based at Typo Station and community service project/s.

A staff mentor provides ongoing contact and support to the young bloke, his school and family, and offers ongoing support and strategies for the education providers, the family and youth service agencies. Organisational independence, active and varied community involvement, integrity in actions: all of these things make our approach unique and special.

The Typo Station experience
The Typo Station experience takes place over two years. The two-year journey begins with a five-week experience based at Typo Station property. The five weeks include:

- Basic skills: an introductory week, focusing on practical activities, interpersonal and group skills.
- The expedition: an eight- to nine-day hike in a wilderness setting.
Living skills: a week during which participants live at the station and work to a daily routine on activities, including blacksmithing and joinery.

Home visits: occur between each stage and act as important opportunities for relationship building.

At the completion of the residential experience participants are linked to a ‘mentor’ from the staff team. Mentoring involves a monthly phone call to maintain the relationship developed through hours of shared experiences during the five-week experience.

Return visits to the property occur throughout the two years. Along with the mentoring contact, these three- to five-day experiences provide opportunities to extend on learning, reconnect with Typo Station and refocus on goals for the future.

We believe that young men can make positive and significant contributions to our community. Our program is specially designed to be challenging, structured, sequenced and practical. Our participants learn by doing.

Our outcomes

- Work with many young people per year.
- Build strong relationships with existing youth service and education providers.
- Strengthen our community support and connectedness; essential to the unique experience Typo Station provides to young people.
- A total of 75 per cent of young people experiencing sustained significant improvement in one or more of our key objectives.

Andy Kay is the CEO of Typo Station and has 25 years experience in the youth sector, in early intervention programs for ‘at-risk’ teenagers. He was educated at Cornerstone College, Michigan, USA, and Monash University, Victoria.
Twenty years of research on brain development has given us some important pointers for fostering boys’ development. The first is the primacy of relationships in brain patterning; the second is the unmistakable biological differences between males and females; the third is the importance of emotional regulation for economic and academic outcomes. These findings provide a useful basis for educators to inform their practice with boys and to build partnerships with communities to improve educational, economic and social outcomes for boys, their peers and their families. In this article, I tackle the first two issues and, in the next article in this series, I will return to the importance of emotional regulation for boys.

The point from which I begin is the earnest desire of teachers, parents and the community for boys to do well; that is, to grow into fine men. Slowly, we are becoming less fearful of discussing male and female differences, and there is more readiness to recognise the need for teachers and communities to act on locally developed boys’ strategies.

There is also continuing interest in male role models. As the percentage of males in frontline teaching positions continues to decline the need for men to interact with boys during their formative years has remained an obvious starting point for many school strategies. Within the history of educational reform, this is completely understandable. In the 1970s, when I was teaching in Sydney high schools, we invited female businesswomen and female carpenters into the school to talk to the girls as part of the then-novel idea of girls’ education strategies. In the long struggle for attention to Indigenous education the need for Indigenous teachers and Indigenous mentors is one important strategy which is also being pursued. So it is hardly surprising that teachers think of male mentors as part of their plans for lifting boys’ engagement with school success.
What has been lacking, however, is any theoretical or research-based foundation for these strategies. This lack has not stopped schools pioneering male mentorship programs, and nor should it. When we initiated female mentors for girls we had no evidence that female staffing or female mentorship made any difference. Thirty years later we still have very little research to guide us on this matter. To propose a theory, or to point to research to support male mentoring, is not to criticise those who have been building effective boys’ strategies through engaging older males to work with the boys. In my own recent research work, concentrating on fathers’ role with infants and children, I have been struck by the wealth of established, credible, useful evidence about male and female development which is virtually ignored within educational academic debate. My intention in presenting this research is not to criticise teachers who have been undertaking the complex tasks involved in supporting boys’ learning, but rather to point to the available research which can inform and support their efforts. The purpose in presenting this paper is to provide a more solid foundation for the work, based on what we have learned through equally patient, experimental research and careful detailed studies of human populations.

Brain structure alters social skills

My sister had her first baby about the same time that I had my second; her baby boy and my baby girl almost played together. I say ‘almost’ because my sister lives on a wheat and sheep farm in the west of NSW and I live on the coast in a city. But it was not only the geographical distance that separated our children. From the first weeks my sister had a very difficult time with the normal routines of changing, feeding and settling her boy and so it was a relief, in the sense that a puzzle was solved, when he was diagnosed with autism. I start with this example because autism — a rare but devastating condition affecting almost one per cent of the population and with a male-to-female ratio of approximately nine to one — is a great example of the way that the brain can influence social behaviour. Those with autism find it difficult to understand what other people are thinking, they have difficulties with social relationships and communication, and usually have very narrow interests and repetitive behaviour.

Autism is relevant to discussing boys because it is possible to identify specific locations in the brain, in particular the amygdala, which affect the way those with autism interact. The ‘physicality’ or concreteness of the link between brains and behaviour is the interesting aspect. For example, we know from lesion studies in humans who have damaged their amygdala — not through autism but through trauma — that they cannot tell whether someone is concerned or bored. In brain image scans you can see the section of the brain that is affected, and that those with autism actually use different parts of the brain when they try to decode what someone’s expression means (Baron-Cohen 2003).

So my first point from the brain research of recent years is that we have a picture of the physical basis of what is a social, often subtle, behaviour. Those with experience of severe autism may say there’s nothing subtle about it, but one of the key shifts in our thinking about autism is that it is not just a small percentage of the population that this applies to. The phrase coined by autism researchers — ‘the extreme male brain’ — says it all. All of us blokes are autistic, it’s just that some of us haven’t been diagnosed yet.

Now, when you look at a boy with autism who behaves badly (I am thinking of the time my nephew threw his mother’s keys into the dam when she wouldn’t let him drive the Suzuki) its not difficult to imagine that he has little control over how he reacts, and we have a lot of sympathy for him (or her). But when we come to the behaviour of boys who are not diagnosed with a condition such as autism then our approach is completely different. We not only assume that they have lots of choice over how they behave, but we think that they learned their behaviour, particularly when it comes to aggression. Of course there is learning involved. But it turns out that the assumption that we are born neutral with regard to how likely we are to kick and punch to get what we want is just that, an assumption. The role of genetics in the development of aggression is an important topic. It is an example of the need to consider biological as well as social influences on behaviour.

Does this sound like the nature–nurture debate, the one that used to be a standard essay topic in teacher training? Yes, it does. But these days we usually hear the topic dismissed by saying, ‘It is really both; yes, genes play a part, but so too does the environment’. In most academic discussion, as well as in many popular representations of social questions, both nature and nurture are recognised as important. Just as electrons are accepted to act sometimes as a wave and sometimes
as a particle, it is now accepted that both nature and nurture are involved in understanding behaviour. Except, that is, in education when discussing sex and gender. In discussing boys and girls in schools there is still a strong presumption that only one explanation can be correct, and that the correct view is that the environment explains everything. In Australia this view is usually carried within the concept of social construction. Recent submissions to the Australian Government’s ‘Inquiry into Boys’ Education’ made this claim explicitly. Submissions by state education departments, academics and union bodies to the inquiry used almost the same wording to argue that nurture, not nature, was the correct explanation. As the largest teachers’ union put it: ‘Where Federation uses the term gender, we are using the term to acknowledge that one’s masculinity or femininity is not fixed, nor is it determined by biology and that gender is socially constructed’ (NSW Teachers Federation 2000, p. 3).

In this paper I argue against both these positions. Not only do I suggest that biology as well as environment is important in understanding children’s development, but I also propose that the notion that ‘it’s a bit of both’ — and so no longer an issue — is also flawed. I will argue that both biological and social factors are important but, while we are unlikely to derive any simple model of development, our understanding of male- and female-specific hormonal, genetic and early experiences should guide our design of school regimes, educational offerings and efforts to generate positive school climates.

**Bringing biology back into the education arena**

It seems we are quite ready to accept that sexual characteristics happen differently in boys and girls. At puberty, it is well accepted, a rush of testosterone, progesterone and oestrogen develop breasts in girls and put muscle mass into boy’s shoulders. Thus, no-one really worries about pubescent boys getting pregnant or thinks that 14-year-old girls will exhibit significant facial hair. It is also common knowledge that we all begin with an undifferentiated set of reproductive organs and then, in the first weeks of life as a foetus, they differentiate into male and female. What is not generally appreciated is the influence of genetic and hormonal factors on the design and development of our brain. We seem to operate in the belief that hormones change our sexual organs and nothing else.

Brain structure is affected by hormonal and genetic influences before birth. The period of development that I wish to draw attention to is that period shortly after the sexual organs of the foetus are set on their path to development as either male or female. In this crucial period of development the brain is laying down some of the fundamental structural features, building masses of specialised cells to take information from different parts of the nervous system, and producing chemical messengers to maintain the integrity of the organism during development. It is this time, when its basic architecture is being developed, that the brain is flooded with sex hormones (Cahill 2005). (By ‘basic architecture’ I mean the patterning of connections in the brain, the way that the neurons are linked up to form the different structures and the networks linking the areas of the brain.)

On reflection, it is hardly surprising that hormones which are powerful enough to shrink some sexual reproductive organs away to nothing and to develop alternative organs would perhaps affect the brain chemistry as well. Our whole body, including our cognitive and social abilities, is influenced by the initial balance of masculinising or feminising hormones.

To take a simple example, the length of your fingers is determined
What is not generally appreciated is the influence of genetic and hormonal factors on the design and development of our brain. We seem to operate on the belief that hormones change our sexual organs and nothing else.

at about the same time (by the fourteenth week) that your sexual organs are being designed. There is a reliable difference in the ratio between the length of fingers in men and women, and this is related to the levels of testosterone and estradiol circulating in your body at that time. Specifically, the ratio of the second finger (the ‘index’ finger) and the fourth (the ‘ring’ finger) is lower in men than in women (Beech 2006). The second-to-fourth digit ratio (2D:4D) is close to one in women and usually less than one in men. Now, because it is formed at about the same time that the foundations are being laid for your brain structures and your bodily organs, the 2D:4D ratio is a reliable indicator of other features once you are an adult. For men, for example, the lower the 2D:4D ratio, then the higher your sperm count, and the higher your spatial ability in certain cognitive tasks; the down side is that you get heart attack earlier and are more likely to be diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome (Lutchmaya et al. 2004).

Antenatal androgen levels and education

The effects of circulating androgens on the brain might be of interest scientifically for many reasons. Obviously, our health is affected by our body chemistry, so health research has, understandably, been keen to investigate the links between foetal environment and later health effects. But for educators one of the first discussion points to arise from the early research on brain development and behaviour was the possible influence of biology on the cognitive abilities of students, particularly the idea that boys find it easier to recognise spatial relationships and girls are more verbally fluent (Kimura 1992).

Brain structure interacts with relationships to influence behaviour

One of the complexities in researching sex differences is that, by the time we see children in preschool, we know that they have been greatly influenced by their social environment. When we see the boys head for the trucks and the girls head for the dress-ups we allow for the influence that their parents and friends and the media have already had on their aptitudes and interests.

Recent research has tried to tackle this dilemma in two novel ways. In a maternity suite in Britain, babies were presented with two stimuli: a female researcher’s face, and a mobile made of a ball with scrambled features matched for skin colour and density to the face but which moved with a mechanical motion. The eye movements of the one-day-old infants were videotaped and coded. Some infants watched both equally, some watched the mobile more often, and others spent more time watching the face. At one day old the boy babies watched the mobile more often, while the girl babies, on average, watched the face more often. This is taken as good evidence that neurological factors influence interests, not just socialisation (Connellan 2000).

In support of the evidence from babies, researchers from Texas have found that vervet monkeys, when presented with a group of toys that they had never seen before, also responded in sex-typical ways. When the monkeys were presented with a selection of toys — including rag dolls, trucks and some gender-neutral items such as picture books — they found that male monkeys spent more time playing with the trucks than their female counterparts did, and female monkeys spent more time interacting with the rag dolls and playthings typically preferred by girls. Both sexes spent equal time with the picture books (Alexander & Hines 2002).

Because the issue is so complex, even very suggestive evidence from small groups of infants does not answer the many questions that arise in trying to decide if hormones...
can really influence such varied behaviours as playing with trucks or being interested in dolls. For examining the effects of the male sex hormones, long-term studies are required that track development over years or decades. The most interesting research of this type has been done on girls.

In the USA, mothers enrolled in a health plan in the San Francisco Bay area between 1960 and 1963 had blood samples taken during the second trimester. These routine blood samples were frozen for 30 years and then assayed for testosterone availability. The daughters of these mothers were then tracked and interviewed when they were 27 to 30 years old to determine how strongly they had developed feminine preferences. ‘Feminine interests’ were measured by the things they did — having children, getting married — as well by their responses to a number of gender-role questionnaires and by how they managed their current or most recent relationship in terms of who drove the car, who cooked etc. When the femininity score was compared with the testosterone levels 30 years previously the analysis showed a clear connection between the two. As predicted, lower testosterone was linked with higher femininity.

The capacity of the level of hormones before birth to affect life choices 30 years later strains our notions of development, especially as educators or parents who see the influence that we have on a week-by-week and year-by-year basis. Of course, parents and teachers do have an effect, but integrating a biological with a social perspective means acknowledging that even though parents and teachers have influence some students will be easier to influence than others, or some may require different sorts of influence, due to their biology.

The daughters in the San Francisco study were also interviewed when they were 15 years old and asked how much their mothers tried to influence them as children. They were given a list of 26 parental behaviours encouraging male or female behaviour and asked which behaviours their mothers encouraged them to do. Masculine items included ‘repair things around the house’ and ‘have an interest in math’, while female items were ‘have an interest in sewing’ and ‘plan to have children’. As you would expect, those mothers who tried to influence their daughters to be more masculine had an effect. The more male behaviours that the mother encouraged, the lower the femininity score of their daughters. The more female behaviours she encouraged, the higher the daughter’s femininity score (Udry 2000).

However, the androgen levels also had an effect. If the daughter was exposed to low levels of testosterone before birth, and so was already disposed to be feminine, the mother’s influence had a big effect. Mothers of low testosterone daughters could double their femininity score by encouraging female behaviours. However, if the daughter had high levels of testosterone before birth then the mother’s encouragement of female behaviours had no effect, or even a negative effect, so that the harder the mothers tried to make up for their daughter’s lack of femininity the more the daughters drifted toward more masculine pursuits (Udry 2000). At the conclusion of his article Udry speculates that, if high antenatal testosterone means that daughters are less likely to be responsive to pressure to be more feminine, then conceivably it will also have the same effect on boys. He states: ‘if males, by being males, are highly immunised against feminine socialization experiences, the attempts at feminising their socialization would be less effective’ (Udry 2000, p. 453).

At present this question, and others pertaining to the influence of antenatal testosterone in boys, are unanswerable. Investigators cannot obtain routine measures of boys’ testosterone because a male foetus produces its own androgens in the testes. By comparison, the mother’s testosterone is insignificant, so that using the routine screening of mothers is not an option. This prevents the large-scale studies of male antenatal androgen levels.

There are small studies, for example mothers carrying male foetuses who undergo amniocentesis — a test which is only done for clinical reasons — which then provides a measure of the androgens impinging on the male brain. When these small studies have been done they do show interesting results.

Boys with high foetal testosterone followed until they are four years of age have lower social skills and...
restricted interests compared to boys with lower testosterone levels before birth. But these results are not generalisable because the boys are a special population (Knickmeyer et al. 2005).

A second, larger study of play adds to the picture of how testosterone levels in the antenatal period can alter later behaviours, especially social behaviours. This study involved both boys and girls, but found the effect of mother’s testosterone on boys was negligible. From a cohort of 13,998 women who were pregnant during 1991 and 1992 within the geographic area of Avon, UK, a sample of 679 were selected. Maternal blood samples obtained during routine antenatal care were analysed for testosterone, and sex-linked behaviour was measured at 3.5 years of age when the child’s mother or primary caretaker completed the Pre-School Activities Inventory (PSAI). The PSAI uses 24 items to assess behaviours associated with toys (guns and jewellery account for seven of the 24 items, activities such as ‘playing house’ account for 11 items, and characteristics such as ‘avoids getting dirty’ account for six items). It has been standardised on children in the UK, the Netherlands and the USA and can clearly differentiate between boys and girls as groups as well as within groups of boys and girls. Boys on average score significantly higher on the PSAI: boys’ mean score is 61.66 (SD=9.40), while girls’ mean score is 38.72 (SD=9.66) (Hines 2004).

The main finding of the study was that the androgen levels among the mothers did impact on the observed behaviour of the girls but not on the boys’ behaviour. A statistically significant, linear relationship was found for testosterone levels and PSAI score among the girls. The higher the maternal testosterone, the more ‘boyish’ was the girl’s behaviour. Other variables, such as family composition and parental adherence to traditional sex roles, were also examined but none of these factors was significantly correlated with sex-role behaviour. This result is noteworthy because of the dose-response relationship.

These specific examples from the research demonstrate that hormonal activity during pregnancy not only sets the sexes apart in reproductive terms but influences the ways that boys’ and girls’ brains develop, and their behaviour. These examples, however, do not do justice to the enormous weight of research evidence of male–female differences in brain development which can be found among the neuroscience, psychiatry and psychology journals. This body of evidence helps us see the connections between the biological and the social and leads us to question what we are and could be doing to enhance boys’ outcomes in schools if we took more account of both the biological and the social. In the next paper in this series, I take up the issue of the biological and social implications for emotional regulation in boys, and the part that male role models play in this important factor in school success.

Richard Fletcher is a researcher in the field of men’s and boys’ issues. He is a member of the Family Action Centre’s Engaging Fathers Project at The University of Newcastle.

References

Note: This is a two-part article; a full list of references will accompany part two.


NSW Teachers Federation 2000, Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training.

Success for Boys Professional Learning Programme — Applications for Grants for 2007

A great professional development opportunity for your cluster!

The Success for Boys Professional Learning Programme provides individual schools and school clusters with grants of around $10,000 per school to undertake a professional learning program on boys’ education. This national program is funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training and managed by the Curriculum Corporation. This year, in Round I, 800 schools are implementing the program.

On 3 July 2006 applications for Round II will open for funding for the 2007 school year. Schools funded for 2006 are not eligible to apply.

Applications must be lodged by the applicant school using the online facility between 3 July and 21 August 2006. Schools can receive advance information by sending an email to: successforboys@curriculum.edu.au

The Success for Boys professional learning materials consist of five printed learning guides and an accompanying CD-ROM with activity sheets, slides for group presentation, and related resources and readings. Schools can order an advance copy of the materials by sending an email to: successforboys@curriculum.edu.au

Further information about the program can be obtained from www.successforboys.edu.au or by calling the Help Desk on (03) 9207 9600 during business hours.

The Boys in Schools Program has 10 years experience in conducting professional development and action learning projects with schools. We are currently acting as consultants to support many of the current Success for Boys schools. Please contact Leah Pringle at Leah.Pringle@newcastle.edu.au or phone 02 4921 8739 or Victoria Clay Victoria.Clay@newcastle.edu.au if you would like us to be involved in your school professional development program.
Rewards bring rewards

Social and emotional skills are the building blocks of a positive identity and of a productive classroom.

The 6 Pack of Strengths offers a systematic and fun way to notice, reinforce and reward the important social and emotional skills we want boys to develop. Consisting of a bright, modern classroom poster, stickers appealing to middle-school ages, a set of reward cards, very fashionable silver tags and trophies, and cool greeting cards featuring boys art work, the 6 Pack of Strengths offers a great classroom or whole-stage system for developing and rewarding positive behaviours.

The pack is made up of six parts:

- A wall poster: a reminder of strengths-based actions
- 320 colour-coded ‘Spotting Strength’ stickers
- 50 colour-coded action reward cards
- 12 totem tags: reward medallions students can wear
- 4 totem trophies: publicly acknowledge great strengths
- 12 gift cards to spread the ‘Strengths’ message

Price:

Price: $155.00 COMPLETE 6 PACK
Price: $77.00 MINI PACK: Poster, 320 spotting stickers and booklet
Price: $27.50 TOP-UPSTICKER: 320 spotting stickers
Price: $25.00 POSTER: for classroom wall
Price: $121.00 5 x POSTERS (save $3 per poster)
Price: $220.00 10 x POSTERS (save $5 per poster)
Price: $396.00 20 x POSTERS (save $7 per poster)

Note: all prices include GST
Review

The 6 Pack of Strengths
Kate Goldman, Hunter Sports High School

I have been using the 6 Pack of Strengths with my special education class which consists of students from Year 9 to 12, with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. I have 14 students in the class, nine boys and five girls, and I see the class for at least two periods a day, but often more.

Having the 6 Pack poster on the wall helped the students and I to focus on what they were doing really well in the class. The students really appreciated me pointing out to them the behaviours they were doing that helped the whole class stay on track.

I found that having a classroom chart where I could display each student’s name and add the reward stickers worked well for my class. The students were able to compare themselves against other students, and didn’t have the responsibility of looking after their own charts.

Originally I found that I was giving out lots of stickers because the idea was fresh in my mind. However, I did find that I tended to forget about handing out the stickers on different occasions.

The students in my class definitely got a kick out of receiving a sticker, and actually became quite competitive. I found myself always explaining what each of the colours represented, but that wasn’t a bad thing, as I always had the poster to refer back to. I was surprised that more students didn’t pick up on me missing occasions where I could have awarded a sticker for certain behaviour.

What also worked best for my particular class was to use the Action Reward Cards at the end of about a five-week period. As a class we reviewed the chart to see who had done the best in each area, and that person was able to randomly select a Reward Card. I found that some of the cards weren’t appropriate to my class, such as the ‘Choose a Seat’ card, as we don’t have allocated seats in the room. The majority of the Reward Cards were relevant, however, and the students enjoyed having the power to implement them in our class group when they desired.

Overall, I feel my class, both the boys and the girls, has benefited greatly from the use of this program, and the students have enjoyed being rewarded for their efforts in a different way. It hasn’t been very time consuming to implement, and it has shown that every student in the class can be valued for different reason.

What other teachers have found useful about the 6 Pack
- The design of the poster and its language.
- The children like to be rewarded.
- The language on the poster is useful to target desired behaviour.
- You can discuss why unwanted behaviours need to be changed.
- You can celebrate individually or as a group when a desired behaviour is achieved.

Things to think about when using the 6 Pack
- With any rewards system there is the potential problem of not noticing children who do the right thing. We often concentrate on the very best or the very worst, and not the kids in the middle.
- Individual class teachers can decide what kinds of rewards best suit their students.
- Alternative rewards can to be devised in order to reduce costs.
- A whole school can use the language on the poster as the statements can be used to achieve certain behaviours relevant to everyone.
Good news for boys and teachers!

Conference publication out now

In April 2005, 960 educators gathered to share our best thinking and practice in working with boys at the fourth Working with Boys, Building Fine Men Conference. We listened to boys themselves, and to researchers and teachers who represent some of the best current research and practice in educating boys well.

A selection of papers delivered at that conference has just been released in our latest publication, Educating Boys: The Good News. These papers exemplify some principles of practice in educating boys and an emerging positive model of educating boys. They provide evidence that a new approach to boys in schools is effective in supporting boys to achieve the best academic and social outcomes possible along their pathways to being fine men.

The papers are organised around the themes of identity, relationships and learning. Each section has a paper with an academic, theoretical or research-based discussion of the issues followed by some practical examples of school programs exemplifying the practice in that area.

As Steve Biddulph says in his foreword to the book:

Over the past 10 years we have been building a view of life that says boys and girls are equally precious, equally able, and equally deserving of all we can give them. The Family Action Centre has been at the heart of this work, melding action research, pragmatic strategies, and the human element that all boy-educators know is the vital spark. I suspect Richard, Deborah and their team have had more influence for good in schools than has ever come out of a university department in this country before. This hefty book in your hands testifies to that.

For purchasing details please see the order form on the inside back cover
The Boys in Schools Program is a not-for-profit program. We provide research, support programs and resources to educators throughout Australia in order to showcase boys’ strengths and their creative talents, and assist schools to harness boys’ irrepressible energy and humour in positive ways. Fees from our professional development activities and sales of resources help us to continue this work.

What’s all the fuss about boys? What is behind boys’ behaviour? How do boys love to learn? What motivates boys to read?

The Boys in Schools seminar program offers answers to the above through a range of personal and professional staff development activities for teachers, school leaders and parent representatives.

Seminars cover three key areas that have been identified as crucial in successfully addressing boys’ educational issues: identity, relationships and learning.

The staff development activities:
- can be full-day or half-day workshops
- are tailored to the needs of your school
- offer a strengths-based approach to engaging boys and promoting a positive male identity
- place an emphasis on interaction and drawing out staff experience and expertise
- develop practical strategies that can be implemented at both a classroom and a whole-school level.

Seminar topics include:
- An introduction to boys’ education issues.
- Planning for a whole-school approach to boys’ education.
- Effective teaching and assessment strategies for boys’ learning styles.
- Effective behaviour strategies for boys.
- Boys and literacies.
- Engaging fathers in educating boys.
- Increasing social-emotional skills.
- The Rock and Water program (one-day workshop).
- Boys Business: tuning into boys in the middle years using music and the arts.

What we can do for you!
To take your school further on the journey to improve boys' educational outcomes you can become part of BEBOP. The project enables schools and/or groups or clusters of schools to systematically develop their approaches to boys' education over a 12- to 18-month period, supported by research staff from the Boys in Schools Program at The University of Newcastle. It involves a series of professional development seminars in school-identified priority issues in educating boys, coupled with supported school-based action research tasks for school staff. Topics for seminars and action research projects are negotiated individually with schools and/or clusters.

Involvement in the project enables schools to:

- identify and prioritise their school-based boys' education issues (e.g. boys' literacy, self-esteem, behaviour)
- gather school-based information and develop boys' education benchmarks
- develop and implement effective strategies for teaching, assessment, behaviour and welfare of boys
- develop effective school-based structures for enhancing boys' outcomes in parallel to outcomes for girls
- document school-based approaches through comprehensive policy and strategy documents and case studies
- evaluate, monitor and adapt school-based boys' education strategies and programs.

The BEBOP process

1. Consultation visits from the Boys in Schools team of specialist researchers/practitioners
   Up to four visits per BEBOP project (over 12 to 18 months). Each visit consists of two days of workshops or individual consultations conducted by the Boys in Schools team of specialist researchers/practitioners.

2. Research and preparation
   Each staff development workshop and project topic is carefully researched by the Boys in Schools team to provide the latest information on the topic, including theoretical perspectives and some case studies of successful programs operating in schools.

3. Action research assistance between consultation visits
   Once a school or cluster commits to the BEBOP process, specialist project staff are allocated to a cluster depending on the topics selected. Any participant can email or call project staff to discuss their project and seek advice and support. Our research team can seek out new information to send to projects, conduct analysis on school data, or act as a ‘critical friend’, offering trouble-shooting advice on project processes or content.

4. An efficiently administered project
   Projects are well managed and communication between projects and the Boys in Schools team is smooth and efficient.

What does a school or cluster have to do to ensure a successful BEBOP project?

- Commit to the process and allocate time to it (particularly teacher release time).
- Select relevant topics and organise workshops and visits by Boys in Schools staff.
- Set up and support teams of interested teachers.
- Set up meeting structures and stick to them.
- Appoint a school leader who is responsible for keeping the process going.
- Regularly contact Boys in Schools staff.
### Specialised seminars

The Boys in Schools team also conduct specialised seminars in:
- Boys and literacy
- Resilience enhancement
- Fathers and Schools Together (FAST)
- Taking a strengths approach with boys in your class.

### Our postgraduate program

Interested in postgraduate study in boys’ education?

We offer Graduate Certificate and Master’s level programs 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 primary, secondary, single-sex or co-educational schools.

### Course details

The program offers flexibility for busy teachers. At least three courses are offered each semester and students can begin in semester one or two. On completion of the Graduate Certificate graduates can apply to continue to complete the Masters 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 Master’s 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 at

- contact Michelle Gifford on 02 4921 8739
- email Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
**Inaugural Rock and Water Conference**

16 October 2006
Newcastle, NSW

See back cover for details.

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**Rock and Water**

**Workshops? Courses? Conferences?**

*Here are the answers!*

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**One-day introduction**

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

This is a great way to familiarise staff with the Rock and Water principles in your school/organisation. A 30-participant workshop costs $2300 (inc. GST) plus any travel and sundry expenses. (Extra participants, above 30, cost $77.00 each.) 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 14 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. Cost for the three-day workshop is $685.00 (inc. GST).
The Boys in Schools Bulletin

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Editor’s Note

Our cover features a work by Joel Fuller titled Portrait of a Boy (inspired by Canadian artist Jeff Lyons — used with permission). Joel was a Year 10 student at Tabour Christian College when he created this painting last year. Many thanks, Joel, for allowing us to use your painting to make such a vibrant cover.

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).

Articles don’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 to get the guidelines and talk about it.

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Boys’ identity: biological, social and diverse

In this edition we’re really picking up on the visual and physical skills of boys and showing you some products of the incredible diverse talents of boys. And we challenge you to look at your perceptions of where those talents come from. Is it biological or is it learnt? Or could it be both? That hoary old debate just won’t go away. In the first in a series of research articles, Richard Fletcher shares his insights into the complexities of the links between biology and the social realm — and delves into boys’ brains along the way.

Teaching values to boys is an important aspect of developing male identity. Several articles in this edition show how school values can be enacted and a positive male identity developed when boys’ strengths and talents are harnessed. The boys at Reddam House use their artistic talents to give back to the community, from the beginning of primary school, when the school enables the boys to enact school values of ‘giving back’ through art. In Boys singing their heart out’, Steve Gaul lets us in on the positive results that happen when a rugby coach opens the door to other performance arts — it’s good for the school and the boys! And at Hunter Sports High School, the school is developing a positive, cooperative male culture from the moment the boys begin Year 7.

Boys like to have responsibility for real projects and to do real work. Furniture restoration’ shows how engaged boys can become with their learning when there is a real job to do. ‘Drawcards for dads’ shows how the older primary children created a fun day that really drew dads into Haylebury Primary School.

Of course, it’s not that easy for all boys to develop and use their talents. The ‘Typo Station experience’ tells about an alternative education setting in Victoria that helps boys keep on track. ‘The journey project’ shows how boys can develop the strength to stay focused for the long haul — until the job is done.

And for you hard-working teachers who deserve good professional development: two pieces of good news. Firstly, the inaugural Australian Rock and Water Conference will be held in Newcastle on 16 October this year. See the back cover for how to register and get in early for early-bird prices. And the next round of Success for Boys funding can be applied for from 3 July (go to www.successforboys.edu.au). We at the Boys in Schools Program can act as go-betweens to help you with this great professional development program. For those of you who have been patiently waiting for Educating boys: the good news to be published — the wait is over. You can order and receive your copy of this important volume now. Available as CD-ROM or hard copy, it has contributions from over 40 academics and educators. The DVD Boys’ World (made by boys and giving their views on schools) is a great accompanying resource.

Hope you enjoy this edition.

Deborah Hartman
For the editorial committee

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Disclaimer
Other than the Editorial, the ideas and opinions presented in the Boys in Schools Bulletin are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the ideas and opinions of the Boys in Schools Program or the Family Action Centre.

New Resources

Educating Boys: The Good News (Book $45.00; CD-ROM $25) $45.00

Nuts & Bolts of Kids & Schools: A Course for Dads $66.00

6 Pack of Strengths $176.00

6 Pack of Strengths — Men’s Pack: Poster, 200 spot stickers & Booklet $77.00

6 Pack of Strengths — Teen-Up: Poster Pack 300 spot stickers $127.50

2 Days That Matter — Building Your Father-Son Relationship $29.95

Boys Business (book & CD-ROM) $88.00

Bringing Fathers in Handbook $77.00

Resilience Identification Resources $60.50

Boys World DVD — Boys’ views on learning, literacy & identity in schools $55.00

What Kids Want DVD — How 8 boys & girls interviewed about their vision of an ideal school $55.00

Bring Your Boys to Work Day — Single Set: Printed format = 1 copy of each issue $95.00

The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — Single Set: CD format = 1 copy of each issue $90.35

The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — Combo Set: 1 copy each issue of Printed + CD format $80.00

The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — School Set (print format only) = 3 copies of each issue $138.15

The Boys in School Bulletin 2005 — Single subscription = 1 copy of each issue $45.00

The Boys in School Bulletin 2005 — School set subscription = 9 copies of each issue $110.00


Boys in School — addressing real issues: behaviour, values and relationships $28.00

Boys & Families: Literacy Strengths Resources $55.00

Fathers & Schools Together (FAST) in Literacy & Learning: A resource manual $37.00

Games for Growing — William McCartney — game, 163 A4 pages $44.95

I Can Hardly Wait Till Monday — women teachers talk about what works for them $33.00

Leadership in Boys’ Education — results from a national forum held in 1996, 16 case studies $33.00

Mary’s World: A Game for Young Men (suitable for high-school age only) $12.00

Our Scrapbook of Strengths — 42 cards to explore strengths that bind families & communities $49.50

Sometimes Magic — 52 colour laminated cards $46.75

Strength Cards for Kids — strengths-based resources for primary school-aged children $49.50

Boys’ identity: biological, social and diverse

Please note: Resources cannot be purchased on approval

Overseas customers: Please pay by bank draft in Australian dollars

Make cheques payable to: The University of Newcastle (ABN 15 736 176 735)

Contact name: Organisation:

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Boys in Schools Program, The University of Newcastle,
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www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/boysinschools

The Family Action Centre is a not-for-profit organisation. Supporting us by purchasing our resources helps us to develop further resources and continue our research and development in many programs. Thank you.

Contact information above will be added to our RDP database that is used to send out promotional material about relevant resources and events. If you do not wish to be added to this database please tick here.
The inaugural Australian Rock and Water Conference
16 October 2006
Newcastle City Hall, Newcastle, NSW

Conference themes
- Implementing Rock and Water in different contexts
- Evaluating Rock and Water programs

Who should attend
- Primary and secondary teachers
- School leaders and policy makers
- Youth workers and parents
- Implementers of Rock and Water
- Anyone interested in implementing Rock and Water

Hear from these keynote speakers
- Freerk Ykema: Author and founder of Rock and Water
- Deborah Hartman: Manager of Research and Dissemination at the Family Action Centre
- Dr Wes Ivens: Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Program, National Research Manager

Presentations by
- Freerk Ykema, Gadaku Institute: The Rock and Water program
- Suzan Hirsch, St Patrick’s College: Using Rock and Water to enhance self-esteem and develop anti-bullying strategies for primary schools
- Alan Tolley, Richmond River High School: Bedrock of the school: Rock and Water as a highly effective element of an integrated student leadership and support initiative
- David Nohl, Child Youth and Family Services: Rock and Water in alternative care
- Paul Edwards, Child and Adolescent Mental Health: Engaging and working with angry young men
- Jean Blighworth, Djarragun College: Rock and Water — the journey at Djarragun College

Plus many, many more

What is the Rock and Water program?
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 within the three-day training workshop include: intuition, body language, mental power, empathic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Discussion topics within the three-day training workshop include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

Registration fees
Early-bird fee $275.00 (closes 31 August 2006)
Standard fee $330.00
Also available: pre-conference one-day introductory workshop and post-conference three-day workshop (additional fees apply).

Full program and registration forms available from June 2006
Michelle Gifford, Events Coordinator
Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle
Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
Phone: 02 4921 6830 Fax: 02 4921 5512

Boys’ identity
Where it comes from and how to explore it by:
- understanding its origins
- building on boys’ strengths
- including their dads
- building racial harmony
- using music and art