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The Boys in Schools Program and the Schools and Community Team at The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle, offer a range of positive, strengths-based seminars which combine the latest research with practical ideas and suggestions for addressing the learning and social needs of boys and for strengthening school and community partnerships. We also offer ‘Success for Boys’ modules.

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- 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
- recognise the importance of school, parent and community collaboration to enhancing the educational outcomes of students
- develop practical strategies that can be implemented at a classroom as well as whole-school level.

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 literacy
- engaging fathers in educating boys
- increasing social-emotional skills
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See page 34 for details and Inside back cover for order form.

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See page 34 for details and In This Issue
Editorial

What a great celebratory edition to start 2006. The boys from Myrtyleford Secondary College are looking forward to their future careers as chefs or back to the experiences of men who are important to them in the Blokes Biographies project. Their teachers have used the boys’ interests and strengths to achieve great outcomes. There are two other articles about schools and classrooms that are really male-friendly, also resulting in great outcomes. The Manly Sea Eagles, usually more famous for rugby league skills than literacy skills, are inspiring young fellas to get into reading and writing, in the article by Suzan Hirsch. Kassandra Lorre describes a whole classroom makeover using the boys artistic and renovating talents.

Boys’ social and emotional skills are being enhanced by two programs described by Noel Boycott and Paul Edwards. Speaking about strengths isn’t it great when teachers get the recognition they deserve? Paul won an award for his implementation of the Rock and Water program described in his article. Don’t forget, if you want to know more or share about your implementation of Rock and Water, the first Australian Rock and Water Conference is coming up in Newcastle in October this edition, so register your interest now. There are details in the back pages of this edition.

My article in the research section develops the model I see emerging in the positive work in educating boys going on around Australia. We are beginning to define ‘Success for Boys’ and see quite clearly the approaches that will bring it to fruition.

The Family Action Centre has put out a new book, based on the papers presented at the fourth Working with Boys, Building Fine Men Conference, held in Melbourne last year. It’s called Educating boys: the good news, has a foreword by Steve Biddulph and contributions from over 40 academics and practitioners who have seen ‘Success for Boys’ with their own eyes and practice it with their own hands every day. I hope you get a copy. The articles in this edition of the Bulletin are a great taster for all the good work, which is some of which is documented more fully in the book.

We’ve had an overwhelming response to our call for boys’ art work to be included in this Bulletin. We would love to hear your stories so we can also have a very successful year. We would love to hear your stories so we can enhance this publication. Thanks to those who submitted. We’ll be using the inspiring pieces all year, and it has got us thinking about a whole edition devoted to boys’ creativity. I hope you and the boys you teach also have a very successful year. We would love to hear your stories so contact us if you would like to write about, draw, photograph . . . your success story.

Deborah Hartman
For the editorial committee

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Other than the Editorial, the ideas and opinions presented in this issue of 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.

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Editor’s Note
Many, many thanks to Matthew Bocchi, whose mixed media work Contemplating the Blank Canvas appears on the front cover. Also his teacher, Anne Harris, from Lake Joondalup Baptist College in Western Australia, for bringing his work to our attention.

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

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

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

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

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Contents

Practice
Renovation Blitz
A school space is not the only thing transformed by this inspiring art project __2

Reading, rugby league and role models
Hero-worship stimulates an unprecedented and sustained change in boys' reading habits_________________________7

Boys are cooking up a storm
An ambitious catering venture using purpose, responsibility and pressure as the secret ingredients _____________________________________13

Telling tales out of school
Creating a bloke's biography helps engage boys in literacy and oral communications __________________________________________________________________________17

Negotiating is better than arguing
Boys are being reintegrated into school settings by getting COOL (control of our lives)_________________________21

Between a rock and a hard place
Award-winner Paul Edwards is incorporating the Rock and Water program in his work with adolescent boys________________29

Research
And now for the good news . . .
An excerpt form our latest publication gives a strengths-based approach to boys' education ______________________________34

Bulletin Board
Good news for boys and teachers
A run-down on our latest resource _________________________________________43

Boys with attitude
A showcase for boys' creativity ___________________________________________44

Professional development
BEBOP: Boys' Education Boys' Outcome Project __________________________46
Specialised seminars and postgraduate courses in boys' education____________47
Rock and Water: tours and inaugural conference __________________________48
Order form __________________________________inside back cover
Latest conference & resource information ____________________________back cover
A giant dragonfly, a Mardi Gras fish and monkeys on skateboards are just some of the fabulous projects boys have created with the help of an inspired teacher. Kassandra Lovric tells her story.

It is 9 am, the start of lessons for the week, and the chill of the morning is even more noticeable in Room 17—a dilapidated, austere room with a grey outlook onto a grey courtyard. The Renovation Blitz class enters the workplace. There is Sam M hiding under his fringe and heading for his fringe-dweller niche under the grubby windows. Sam R is still yawning. Mark bounces in with his quasi-afro hair keeping time with the latest hip-hop beat. Justin slinks in, his shirt hanging out but conscious that he has avoided any possibility of a bad-hair day with the latest styling gel. Ben and Mitchell are de briefing about their weekend exploits as Tom, the 'Perfect Prefect', enters with his characteristic aplomb, the badges on the lapel of his blazer lapel dazzling everyone. Mr James strolls in purposefully, whistling a cheerful tune.

Liam, full of beans, asks with a twinkle of eager spontaneity in his eye: ‘So, what are we doing today, Ms Lovric?’ ‘First we’ll put our shirts on [Mitchell’s is the Hawaiian number, Jacob’s is the flanneley, James goes for the business Bisley Red and perfect Prefect Tom will exercise his sense of noblesse oblige and make a beeline for my paint-bespattered lab coat], we’ll roll up our sleeves, we’ll get our creative juices going, we’ll stir our paints and get it started in here.’

Who would have predicted that what began as a casual conversation in a corridor between two teachers in mid 2004 would turn into the hugely successful project that Renovation Blitz has been this year?

The idea was a simple one: students designing and making aesthetic and functional pieces for areas of the school. We envisaged a student space, designed and created by students for students. At the time, New Town High School—a public school for boys—had no space where student work could be showcased. Anyone who has visited the school will recall its rigid and fortified architecture clinging desperately to the past grandeur and style of the 1930s Art Deco period. The majority of the spaces in the school were impersonal, dowdy and crying out for help to transform them into areas that were alive, creative and actually reflected the interests of the current cohort of boys. Such spaces would be valuable and valued. To create them would be uplifting to the morale of the whole school.

Traditionally, New Town High School was a public boys’ technical school with an emphasis on developing skills in sport, academia and trades. The culture of the school has since shifted towards the arts, with a majority of students choosing to study subjects affiliated with the related arts. Consequently, it has been important to offer courses which appeal to the broader spectrum of student interest. And what better year to undertake this project than when a major redevelopment of the school (particularly in the arts areas) was taking place all around the boys?

The implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework (ELF) in 2005—with its overarching aims to ‘engage learners more deeply in their learning, to make learning more relevant and to interconnect and interrelate knowledge, skills and dispositions within and across the essential areas of learning’—opened the gateway for us to think outside the square and offer a course open to anyone who would enjoy a ‘hands-on’ creative experience.

The heart of the project was the creation of an ELF-based, transdisciplinary year-long course whereby a class of art students and a class of applied technology students in the senior school would work together on the same line of the
timetable to plan, renovate and transform a dowdy, run-down classroom into a visually dynamic, aesthetic and functional space to be utilised and enjoyed by all members of the school community.

The course was devised to immerse students in the particular forms of problem solving that artists, interior decorators and renovators face in their work briefs. As a member of a team, and in the true tradition of the popular TV renovation programs, the challenge would be to transform a space from the ‘very ordinary’ to the ‘creatively extraordinary’. Students would produce floor and wall murals, a gallery wall, free-standing and suspended sculptures, creative furniture for common sitting areas, lighting fixtures, menu and chalk boards for student cafés, and clocks. They would also restore classical pieces of furniture, giving them a modern makeover while showing understanding of the valued concept of recycling, reusing and revamping discarded furniture.

In 2005, the school focused on the ELFs to be assessed: Communicating — Being Literate; Personal Futures — Maintaining Well-being; and Being Numerate. We were a school in change so the teachers needed to continue to assist students to build ties of connectedness (well-being) to the wider school body and the community. A hands-on project such as Renovation Blitz drew on key guiding values such as creativity and responsibility. It allowed the boys to physically create a space which not only reflected themselves, now, but also where they saw themselves in the future.

In order to set appropriate goals as required by the ELF, we pay close attention to the guiding questions. The guiding questions set for the Renovation Blitz course were:
How are the key elements of design combined and manipulated to create desirable effects? What will help us create an effective design?

How do we work collaboratively to achieve individual and shared design goals? How can we best use the resources — human and financial — that are available to us?

How do historical and cultural contexts influence various design genres?

What processes can we use to design solutions to problems?

Let us return to Monday’s double lesson. The students have checked their design plans, rolled up their sleeves and set to work on a number of creative pieces. James is quietly constructing the giant fish in Pahang cane designed by Jacob, which Sam has named the Mardigras fish because of its glittering scales and adornments. It is a feast for a parade in its green chiffon and purple sequins. Sam M is painting the blue walrus with flecks of pink and orange and its come-cuddle-me eyes. Then there is the giant dragonfly designed by Vincent whose wings are a festoon of individual drawings on tracing paper to create the veiny translucence and fragility of insect wings. There are three murals featuring faces made up of cogs, imaginary skeletal fish and other bottom-dwelling sea creatures; a giant blue walrus; monkeys on skateboards, spinning basketballs; electric-guitar players. Each of these murals is painted in bright colours — hot pinks, bright oranges, turquoises, sunny yellows.

The brief for the cabinet makers is to design aesthetic pieces of furniture for the new school café. So we have Damian’s Kit Kat outdoor bench, and Jordan and Mark’s table like a giant donut, complete with rich chocolate icing and lashings of fluoro sprinkles. Codie and George have designed and created an octagonal bench, whose eight seats complete the octagonal effect. Justin and Josh have recreated the feel of an Italian café/bar in their tall table, just right for quickly downing a cafe latte before heading off to class.

While the lesson proceeds, Naomi — the resident artist with the whip-cracking, sergeant-major style of inspiring the boys — comes in fashionably late, pushing baby in the stroller jangling with accoutrements such as bottles, baby-food jars, swatches of fabrics, rattles, mobiles and other pacifying toys. We all associate Naomi with her hippy-style fabric bag and a brown suitcase dating from the 1930s — a veritable treasure-trove of acquired artisan’s tools such as a Japanese bamboo saw, secateurs, and masses and masses of black industrial-strength gaffer tape.

Naomi Marantelli has a background in teaching design and construction, community arts and furniture making. For the past five years she has worked full time as a community artist, travelling between projects and festivals, in particular facilitating large-scale projects involving students and community members. Naomi is well known for her murals, the construction of large-scale puppets and street parade imagery. Her experience and expertise has won praise and admiration in the coordination of community projects for events such as the Taste of Tasmania, the Hobart Christmas Pageant, ‘The Works’ Glenorchy Festival, and Spark Up at West Park in Burnie.

With the Renovation Blitz boys she has been inspiring and energetic, motivating them to achieve excellent outcomes. At times her ideas have conflicted with the boys’ vision of how youth should be presented. Naomi had decided that the mass of curls of the electric guitar player on one of the murals needed highlights and showed how to put these in. The boys did not approve because — as everyone who is up with pop culture knows — this is the jet black that comes out of a bottle so, they quietly asserted their artistic licence.
and blacked out all the highlights. Naomi’s advice has been appreciated by the whole Renovation Blitz crew and is reflected in the quality of the murals in particular.

The Renovation Blitz experience has been a wonderfully successful one. Monday morning classes have shown a harmonious, collaborative spirit and esprit de corps that is often difficult to harness for any length of time. It has taught the boys the vision and practical steadfastness to see a project through to its most satisfying conclusion. To see the usually disengaged and lethargic Josh working hard to keep up with ‘Perfect Prefect’ Tom and his diligent work ethic is one of the highlights of the course.

There were many examples of individual success: Josh turned the corner in his behaviour and ceased undermining the efforts of others; Mustafa, a timid ESL student, developed confidence and the ability to name colours in English; Tim learned some very useful strategies to work happily within any group; while Mark and Elliot learned that they had something to offer to the school.

Naturally, there were hiccoughs. The commencement of the redevelopment of the school added particular challenges from the outset, with the projects having to be modified, and supplies and work spaces moved on many occasions. The Mardi Gras fish was slashed and the group working on this project had to go back to the design board to fashion a makeover. The eye of the dragonfly was pushed in, but this was easily solved. Justin could not always cope with the freedom he was given in the preparation of the video documentary. Brenton would go through periods where he was feeling insecure. The class would be aware of such times because Brenton would do crop circles around the room. On one occasion, helping with a move enforced by the redevelopment, Brenton left his mark: he dropped yellow paint in great splats down one of the hallways. His trousers still bear a vestigial yellow spot of the incident. The event has gone into the anecdotal lore of this first group.

Support for the Renovation Blitz project was amazing, displaying the approval for the venture by the wider community. Each fortnight Mr James would have a fundraising venture proposed in the school newsletter. There were a number of successful raffles, several won by various members of Damian’s family. The boys sold mascara (the advertisement was a pretty-in-pink affair) and enjoyed the support of around 55 businesses and every AFL club. The class even feasted on donated pizza and chocolate milk to celebrate their work in mid winter.

To see the usually disengaged and lethargic Josh work to keep up with ‘Perfect Prefect’ Tom and his diligent work ethic is one of the highlights of the course.
Along with all the other skills developed, the boys gained a sense of how to go about raising the necessary finance for project materials and how to market their venture to garner community interest and support. Support also came in the form of mentoring in skill development. As part of the Renovation Blitz program a video documentary was made, and Elizabeth College (a senior secondary college in Hobart) provided much appreciated expert knowledge in its making. Josh, Tom, Justin and Marcus collaborated with Elizabeth College students Josh and Tim to effectively edit the video footage. Greg Brown, the Video Production teacher at Elizabeth College, generously gave of his time and expertise to ensure the success of this aspect of the Renovation Blitz project and provided the boys with a wonderful special and educational opportunity.

Will the project be repeated? Of course it will, as it managed to capture the imagination of the boys and the school community. As for the boys, we might listen to some of their comments. Sam M says he’ll do it again in 2006, Josh reckons he has actually learnt something and Tom, the ‘Perfect Prefect’, sums it all up when he says:

New Town High School has yet again offered a wonderful opportunity for students to develop their skills in an enjoyable, relevant and inspiring way.

Kassandra Lovric has taught 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 recent ‘Journey’ exhibition was highly acclaimed and testifies to Kassandra’s dedication to bringing out the best in her students.

Michael James is a highly skilled teacher in the area of Materials Design and Technology. 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 — he whistles a happy tune as he works. 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. Michael is always concerned to deliver relevant learning programs which lead naturally to enhancing life skills. He has been the driving force behind ensuring community support for the Renovation Blitz program. Not a week passes without some advertising of what is being achieved in the workshops and without garnering new sources of support, financial and motivational.
Yawns and droopy eyes are par for the course during reading sessions with Stage 3 boys. Even those boys who secretly enjoy reading act as though it’s torture to avoid ridicule from their peers. As one boy explained, with acknowledgement from his male peers, ‘Reading is just a girl thing’.

This got me thinking. Is this a common belief amongst boys in our school culture? If so, at what age does it start? What can I do for these boys to show them that reading can be enjoyable? And so my mission began.

Where to start?
To begin my research, all the boys (K–6) at St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School, Asquith, completed an attitude survey which included questions that:

- addressed their feelings towards school and subjects
- investigated stereotypes of men and women
- focused on their self-esteem
- determined the characteristics of a ‘perfect teacher’
- allowed us to find out who they would like to bring to school.

After collating the results we found common trends and issues to address through a boys’ education project throughout 2005. When examining the boys’ responses for their favourite and least favourite subjects, the most common least-favourite subject was English. This was the trend from Kindergarten through to Year 6. All aspects of English were mentioned: writing, reading, spelling and grammar.

To begin the change of these negative attitudes the 2005 project focused on the Year 5 boys who identified reading as their least-favourite aspect of English. But before we began we decided to deepen our inquiry to fully understand the way the boys were feeling about reading at school. From my interviews and observations of these boys it was evident that they considered their past school experiences of reading to be boring, and so came to Year 5 with pre-existing negative attitudes towards reading. A notion that literacy is a feminine domain, one which jeopardises masculinity, came across strongly through our Term 1 research.

We further examined the responses in the attitude surveys, in particular the sections where the boys were asked to identify their male hero. The boys in this grade absolutely loved rugby, and so it was no surprise that the most common response was sportsmen, in particular rugby league players. It was at that point that the idea hit me. These boys love rugby league, despise reading and crave male

Reading, rugby league and role models

A new take on the three Rs

Reading and rugby league don’t usually appear in the same sentence. Thanks to the Manly Sea Eagles and an astute teacher, hero-worship has stimulated an unprecedented and sustained change in boys’ reading habits. Suzan Hirsch explains how.

The two prize winners in the sheds after the game with Sea Eagles

Captain Michael Monaghan.
mentors: why not involve rugby league players in our reading sessions? If I could organise high-profile rugby league players to participate in the Year 5 Guided Reading groups it would encourage the boys to associate reading with their favourite sporting heroes.

Making it happen
After writing letters and making phone calls to various National Rugby League (NRL) development officers, the Manly Sea Eagles agreed to come to St Patrick’s to participate in the groups during Term 2. The team was coming first on the NRL table at the time we received the news, and when we announced the team’s visit to the children they were in disbelief. I had never seen them so excited!

A note was sent home to the Year 5 parents to inform them about the reading program. The parents were positive and were surprised that the players were not bringing a ball or going to the park with the kids, but that they were coming to St Patrick’s to promote reading as a positive activity.

As the first week approached the boys anxiously awaited the arrival of the players. There was buzzing excitement in the air. The first Monday arrived and we received a phone call to let us know that the two players we were expecting had been selected to play in the City side team in the annual City versus Country competition. The players had to go into training camp and therefore we could not start the reading program for another week!

While we were breaking the bad news to the children, we received another phone call from the Manly Sea Eagles’ office to offer us four tickets to the Manly Sea Eagles versus West Tigers game that Sunday, and entry to the sheds after the game.

We decided that we would hold a competition to distribute these tickets. We asked interested children to write three to five questions that they would like to ask the Manly Sea Eagles players about reading. We were overwhelmed with entries from the Year 5 boys, and the standard of questions was excellent. After much deliberation we finally selected three winners that would accompany me to the game and to the players’ sheds.

The following Monday the winners recounted game day and their experiences in the sheds to the rest of the grade. The boys also reported on the players’ answers to their reading questions. Two of these winners are boys who normally would not do extra homework but these boys were delighted to prepare a presentation about the day!

For the first reading session, the children were placed in one of three groups based on interests, and therefore had a choice of three articles to read:

- rugby league video refereeing
- car rebuilding
- the cartoon character Sponge Bob Square Pants.

Articles in hand, the children organised chairs into groups, anxiously waiting to see who would arrive to read. When Manly Sea Eagles prop Daniel Heckenberg walked in the children were agog. On arrival I gave Daniel a sheet explaining what the sessions involved and why we had asked him to come to read with the kids. Daniel then introduced himself to the class. The boys suddenly became very quiet and were in awe. The group that had the rugby league video refereeing article read with Daniel.

The first paragraph was read by Daniel and then each child in the group read, one by one, around the circle. As the children read, Daniel complimented the children on aspects of their reading, corrected them and offered them strategies. Without prompting Daniel gave the children tips about reading and told them to sound words out, try the sentence again to see if the word they read fits, and told them to...
pause for a full stop. These strategies are all things we teachers say, but when a rugby league star they watch on television says it to the boys they really listen to the advice and put it into practice. At the end of the article Daniel discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the role of video referees in rugby league. Amazingly the boys in this group joined in this conversation and actually put their hands up, asking and answering questions.

Knowing that the students would want to ask the players other questions, I allocated a question time at the end of each session. This ensured that the reading was not interrupted, and allowed the children to ask any burning questions!

The boys anxiously looked forward to the next Guided Reading session. Throughout the week the boys asked if they could go on the class computers and read some information on the Manly Sea Eagles website. There was a waiting list of boys who had their names down to read the website and Big League magazine during daily silent reading. There had never been a reading waiting list before!

The second Guided Reading session soon arrived. We had two Manly Sea Eagles players arrive: Paul Stephenson (who plays centre or wing) and, once again, Daniel Heckenberg. The boys were thrilled that Daniel came back as they had been doing further research on video referees, which is what they read and discussed with Daniel the week before. Paul Stephenson had scored a try in a previous game the children had watched, and so they were extremely excited to now have Paul in our classroom reading! The children formed two groups — one with Daniel Heckenberg and the other with Paul Stephenson — and they began their reading sessions.

Daniel announced that he had asked the club if he could come back for the remainder of the sessions as he was enjoying them so much. The class cheered as he made this announcement. He also gave them a challenge. He told them that he wanted them to work hard on some interesting questions for question time the following week. The class agreed to the challenge and there our quest began. As soon as we had farewelled the two players, the boys wanted to start working on their questions immediately by looking up facts on the internet. I was amazed by their instant curiosity and eagerness. Throughout the week we focused on how to write good questions, and we examined and practised open-ended questions. The children then decided on their favourite questions in pairs and wrote them on a piece of card ready for question time with Daniel Heckenberg.

Once Monday had arrived, the questions were ready and they anxiously anticipated Daniel’s arrival. We continued with the Guided Reading sessions, where I was continuously amazed by the way the boys in Daniel’s group used the strategies that he had been teaching them. I was just as astounded at the way the boys’ hands went up throughout the discussion of the story. Question time followed and the class began asking their open-ended questions and Daniel responded to them. After question time, Daniel gave every child a Manly Sea Eagles sticker and a signed Manly Sea Eagles poster.

Daniel and Paul were given a poster, with their pictures and career statistics on them, and there were sections for them to write advice about reading.

Daniel wrote:

If having trouble pronouncing a word, stop and carefully review, before reading again.

Paul wrote:

Reading is just like sport: practice makes perfect.

The boys loved this quote; it linked the two elements of reading and sport beautifully.

The purpose of these posters was to display them in the classroom, allowing the boys to refresh their memory of the experience throughout the rest of the year. It was vital that the program was referred to throughout the year so that the boys didn’t dismiss it as a one-hit wonder. The posters were displayed surrounded by pictures for the rest of the year so that the boys had visual reminders of the rugby league players reading.

Throughout the five weeks of reading with the Manly Sea Eagles, valuable scenes were captured on DVD. Sections of the Guided Reading groups in action were...
recorded, as well as the boys’ reflections of the program. Two boys from Year 6 were invited to be journalists on the DVD. Their task was to interview all the Year 5 boys about the Manly Sea Eagles reading experience, their gains from this, and their feelings about reading and sport. This section of the DVD shed light on how successful the reading program was in changing these boys’ attitudes to reading.

One lunch time a group of boys approached me and asked if they could organise a thank-you party for Daniel after his last session. I thought this was a lovely idea and agreed. The boys organised to make a book by getting one page from each person, a card, a bookmark, a Vampire Book and a St Patrick’s school sports shirt signed by the kids. On the party day, six boys had written heartfelt speeches and two boys wrote and performed a song about the reading program before we indulged in a pizza lunch (Daniel’s favourite food). The boys had put so much effort in their own time for Daniel, it was touching and also a true indication of the rapport the boys had built with Daniel, and their appreciation of his presence.

What changes did we see?

During first term I kept a tally of the number of times the boys raised their hands compared to the girls during Guided Reading discussion sessions. The same thing was done whilst the players were there, during second term, and I am pleased to report that there was an increase in the tally of every boy. As the boys developed a bond with Daniel Heckenberg (who came in every week) their tally increased further, with all the boys putting their hand up at least once in every session. Throughout this project, video footage was recorded of the reading experiences so that there was evidence of the boys’ increase in raising their hands to ask and answer questions, as well as changes in body language and participation.

An interview with the boys, recorded mid-way through the project, gave me great insight into the way the boys felt about reading with the Manly Sea Eagles, about reading itself, and about the mix of reading and sport. The interviews were very positive. It was evident that the boys had gained a great deal from the experience. The message came through loud and clear that they now realised males can be good at both reading and sport. This view was very different to the view these boys held about reading and sport prior to this program.

The boys were surveyed to gain direct feedback, rather than just relying upon teacher observation and anecdotal records.

As Figure A (above) shows, three boys did not pick the happy face when they found out the players were coming. In contrast, however, Figure B shows the results of the next question which asked them if they enjoyed the program; every boy but one chose the Happy Face. The one boy who didn’t said that he would have preferred a different team to come. (As a fellow St George Dragons fan I could empathise with this boy!)

The boys were also asked what they had learnt from this reading experience. The results below show that the boys had positive comments about what they had learnt.

- A sports star can be a good reader.
- I learnt that reading is the most important thing in life.
- I have learnt a lot reading from the Manly Sea Eagles, Daniel gave me good advice.
- I have learnt that books are not bad and that you can’t judge a story by its name.
- I learnt that reading is also very important as sport. Paul Stephenson said reading is like...
That reading is a big thing because in sport you have to read strategies.

I have learnt that you can read and still play sport.

I have learnt heaps from Daniel’s comments like you can be good at reading and play sport at the same time.

I have learnt that you can be good at both sport and at reading. It does not have to be a really long text to be reading.

That reading is an important part of life, that you can’t give up reading.

I have learnt more about reading. You can be good at sport and at reading.

I have learnt that reading is important and if you can’t read you would miss out on opportunities.

I didn’t learn anything different, as I have always liked reading.

The boys not only wrote these responses but also put them into practice. Eleven of the thirteen boys felt they had read more at home over the five weeks of the program and 11 of the 13 boys ticked that they now felt more comfortable reading around their peers at school.

There was also a difference in the boys’ responses during Guided Reading, their increase in self-confidence when reading with their peers, a change in attitude towards the link between sport and reading, and an increase in their voluntary reading at home. There was also a change in book work. The boys’ responses were longer and they began to take pride in their work, asking if they could photocopy the photographs and stick them in and, without being required to, they would colour a border around the pictures.

The depth of the activity responses of the boys also changed. When given a choice in Guided Reading activities from the Blooms Taxonomy Chart they began to choose the longer activities that they used to avoid. On a class list I began taking notes on their book work each week and, sure enough, every boy had an improvement in bookwork presentation, and the quality of work improved between Term 1 and Term 2. During the Guided Reading sessions the boys would show the players the Guided Reading activities that they had completed throughout the week.

The same survey which was given in Term 1 was held again in Term 4. Once again the results were collated but this time there was a huge difference: 90% of the Year 5 boys had put English as their favourite subject instead of their least favourite! This result was overwhelming, particularly as this survey was completed in Term 4 and their reading program with the Manly Sea Eagles was held in Term 2. The message and the enjoyment was not lost after the players stopped coming.

Exploding the myths for young and old

In our community many people attach a tough, macho stereotype to rugby league sports stars. When I shared these project details with people, many were surprised that the players could actually read. I was horrified with these reactions and realised that these are the messages sent to our boys, so it is no surprise that they too believe these
stereotypes. I was so pleased that I could break that myth, at least within the school community. Daniel Heckenberg and Paul Stephenson were absolutely outstanding and went out of their way to make a difference to these Year 5 boys at St Patrick’s.

The boys read articles during these sessions with the players from Big League magazine, stories from the school magazine, and comics. Between visits the boys had opportunities to log onto the internet and go onto the Manly Sea Eagles website. It was important to show the boys that reading does not necessarily mean reading a ‘thick novel’, but that reading can be the internet, magazines, comics, joke books etc.

Many parents came to me to give positive feedback about the reading program and explained the changes that they saw in their boys:

What have you done! My son has never wanted to read anything and now we can’t walk past a newsagent without my son wanting a rugby league or car magazine to read.

My son loves reading but he hid this from his friends because he feared that he would be teased so he read at home. He now is confident enough to take his novel to school to read at silent reading time!

When we watch the Manly Sea Eagles play on television my son tells the whole family what Daniel said about reading that week and tells us about the vampire book that Daniel had read and told the kids about. His eyes actually leave the screen to talk about reading.

From classroom observations, surveys, interviews, video footage, parent comments, change in book work, increased reading at home and a waiting list on my board to log onto the computer to read about the Manly Sea Eagles, it is fair to say that over the five weeks there was a change in attitude towards reading by Year 5 boys. Further, the results have lasted well beyond the project itself.

The girls in the class were involved in the program and also benefited from it. It was important for the girls to also see Daniel and Paul read so that they could help break the myth that reading is a feminine activity. Although the class is boy heavy, the girls dominated the Guided Reading discussions throughout Term 1 and it was interesting to see their reactions when the boys started to contribute.

A multi-literacy approach to reading has also been the focus for the year and this has also contributed to the continual success of the Manly Sea Eagles reading project as this has aided the engagement and enthusiasm.

There is a severe need for good male role models to be incorporated into school life, and this project has been a great way to involve males and also enhance literacy among the Year 5 boys at St Patrick’s. The belief that reading is a feminine domain, which jeopardises masculinity, is exacerbated by society and the media. We as educators need to provide opportunities for these myths to be challenged and changed. As a staff we will continue to involve male mentors in literacy activities in 2006 at various grade levels.

Suzan Hirsch has a true passion for making schools a better place for boys. She has completed her Masters in Educational Studies, specialising in Boys’ Education, through The University of Newcastle. As well as being a full-time teacher on Stage 3 and a coordinator, Suzan has undertaken a number of boys’ education initiatives at St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School, Asquith, over the last four years. At the end of 2004 she was asked to lead a Boys Education Committee Project throughout three schools in the Diocese of Broken Bay throughout 2005. This project achieved such remarkable results that Suzan has been asked to implement boys’ education projects in 11 schools throughout the diocese in 2006. Suzan can be contacted on 02 9477 3800 or email shirsch@stpatsasquith.dbb.catholic.edu.au
A small town in Victoria’s north-east, Myrtleford lies at the gateway to the high country and snowfields. Situated in a lush, picturesque valley, the town is far from affluent and has remained predominantly blue-collar in spite of considerable affluence in the surrounding area. In town, many are reliant on the timber mill for work. Further out are farms producing various crops, including tobacco and grapes. There is a large Italian community in the valley.

Myrtleford Secondary College (MSC) is very small, having around two hundred students. Many young people do not see themselves pursuing tertiary study and, in Years 9 to 10, begin considering their employment options or leaving school early.

I began working at this school at the beginning of 2005 as a teacher of Food Technology and English. From the first I found that the students, almost without exception, were welcoming and keen. A second-year teacher, trained in English and SOSE, I am also qualified (and, more importantly, experienced) as a commercial cook. When I began teaching Food Technology for the first time this year I at last started to feel at home in the classroom. I had real knowledge to share. It felt legitimate!

Almost the first thing I remember was attending the Engaging Boys professional development workshop. (Around six different schools were represented, including all of our staff at Myrtleford.) I came away excited by the ideas which it generated, but unsure as to exactly what I would do, or how. Although all staff at MSC were obliged to develop and deliver a project, I procrastinated. I managed to equivocate for some time; in fact, until it was announced that the ‘people from Newcastle’ were coming back to see how we were going with our projects. Heck! Time for action!

I had identified the need to provide some ideas and options for students to broaden their horizons in terms of employment possibilities. Initially, I had thought that visiting a few clubs, restaurants and cafes in the area might give them some fresh ideas and provide role models within the industry. Then two boys, both disengaged and showing challenging behaviour, mentioned to me that they wanted to be chefs when they left school. This really determined the direction of my project. I put up a poster for Future Chefs (see right).

I had already decided to target Year 9 students for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I particularly wanted to include those two ‘difficult’ students in my project. There were also a number of students in this year level who were anticipating leaving school but had not had access to courses (like VET Hospitality, for example, which begins in Year 10) which would help them to develop skills suited to the workplace. Secondly, younger

Khy Grayling created a catering venture to capture the imaginations of disengaged Year 9 boys using purpose, responsibility and pressure as the secret ingredients. And, as they’ll tell you, ‘It’s all good’.

**Boys are cooking up a storm**

With a recipe for success

students would not really be clear yet on where they wanted their paths to take them.

From the very first, students were the real source of momentum for Future Chefs. It was obvious it was not something that would go away. Every time I passed them in the corridor they wanted to know when we would be doing ‘that thing’. In fact it has since been made a part of the timetable, but they still ask!

We officially have two periods per week together, but when we have a large or important undertaking students are released from class. What this means is that on several occasions I have had two classes running concurrently in the same kitchen, and often have to use my preparation time to work with them.

All students who attended the initial meeting were accepted into the program: four girls and six boys. Since then two girls have left. One moved school and the other decided it wasn’t for her. I issued all students with folders and notebooks so that they could keep a record of their attendance and activities. The idea was to keep track of the types of cooking they were doing, with an eye to using this as evidence for employers and also potentially for qualifications such as VET or TAFE, which can require a set number of hours practical work. Even the most dishevelled students maintained these folders with pride and decorated them with personal logos; not always writing in their notebooks, but at least keeping them in good nick!

I also attached a contract which, in brief, required them to respect themselves, their team mates and the food they produce. Of the group there is only one student who is there because he is a ‘doer and a joiner’. The rest I would rate, affectionately, as misfits.

I have to admit that Future Chefs has been more of an evolutionary process than a grand plan. At first I was unsure of how to proceed. Engaging the students, it transpired, was not the problem. Knowing what to do with them was something else.

What really got the ball rolling was an announcement to the staff at our morning briefing. ‘Please,’ I said, ‘if you have any need or occasion for these kids, let me know. We will cater for weddings, parties, anything! Just ask.’

Our first few ‘gigs’ were small: a couple of afternoon teas . . . then we became adventurous. We decided to put on a lunch for all of the staff as the group needed the experience of producing larger quantities to a deadline for a real client group.

I was extremely proud of the food, which was of restaurant quality. The Future Chefs produced a three-course meal, with a choice of three different main courses and masses of vegetables. Sure, the chocolate semifreddo got a little runny, none of the actual cooks got fed and some of the group had pressing engagements about halfway through the clean-up, but essentially it was a major success. The Future Chefs had established themselves in the eyes of the school and they were glowing with their achievement.

I have lost track of the exact order of events since then, but we have catered a VCE art exhibition opening at a public gallery; numerous afternoon teas; a couple of lunches for fellow students; a day-long Careers Fair; the school’s thirty-year reunion; and (our most ambitious effort) a three-course, two-menu dinner for around ninety-odd people to celebrate Father’s Day and the launch of the Blokes Biographies (another Engaging Boys project). Between the time of writing and the end of the year, we will also accompany the school’s team in the RACV Energy Breakthrough Challenge on a four-day camp as their personal chefs, cater another art event, the school council’s final meeting, a fiftieth birthday and . . .

The Future Chefs have been relentlessly enthusiastic. Whatever I propose, the answer is always ‘wicked’ or, the latest, ‘It’s all good’, which pretty much sums us up.

The potential for criticism makes praise more meaningful.
I would attribute the success of this program to purpose, responsibility and pressure, all of which students need to experience to have an authentic taste of what kitchen work is about. It is coincidentally what I believe will turn boys into fine men (and girls into fine women). It works because it is always clear exactly what our objectives and timeline are. Students benefit from knowing that their audience is more public than just the classroom; that is, what they create will go into another arena to be judged and appreciated by outsiders. The potential for criticism makes praise more meaningful.

As an English teacher I have noticed that a great deal of what we teach requires the suspension of disbelief. Trying to convince these students that Shakespeare is relevant to them requires a leap of faith on their part which many are unwilling to take. Even getting the point across that a job application may need correct punctuation does not carry water. But the fact that what they make now will be consumed and enjoyed by others later today, gives the learning process an immediacy and purpose, not to mention the fact that it is manual work. I have learned over time that briefings where students sit at desks and listen are generally frustrating. They go into class-mode and tend not to listen. Far easier to get down to the business of cooking and talk to them as we work.

With the boys, I always emphasise the manly qualities of the work. ‘You’ve got big hands, you should be able to knead this really well.’ ‘Come on, put your shoulders into it, I want to see you sweat!’ On that note, I have also encouraged them to go to the gym as hospitality can so often be connected with an unhealthy lifestyle.

While the atmosphere is informal, my students know that the standards are not. A little bit of cursing is fine, but a product which will make me curse is not! I believe this is part of establishing trust and credibility. They know where they stand I do not patronise them with false praise, though I do pull punches.

Although the atmosphere has been relaxed and I cultivate a sense of shared responsibility, I am not one of the gang, nor do I want my students to see me that way. The fact that they seek me out to tell me that they have a job interview, or work experience, tells me that they know I care.

I have been aware from the beginning that there was a clique within the group and one particular outsider. I have always maintained a zero-tolerance approach to ‘sledging’ and petty bickering. While the outsider is still not accepted, there is a truce during these sessions which
I, along with the student and their mother, rate as a significant achievement. During a parent–teacher interview, both the student and parent remarked that they felt much more confident and accepted at school since working with Future Chefs. Brilliant!

Another student was on the verge of expulsion. He has recently managed to restrain himself far more, having been suspended only once since Term 2. Obviously I am not taking the full credit for his turnabout, but I like to think I have helped. His stepmother told me how he too has changed. He has even had two weeks’ work experience at a major Melbourne hotel. Another success!

While Future Chefs has been demanding and, in addition to my regular workload, at times overwhelming, it has also been hands-down the most fulfilling thing I have done all year. The satisfaction I have from building relationships with my chefs has been profound. Call me sentimental, but I very much doubt that any program which follows will have the same success.

Future Chefs began as a rogue program for rogue students, both operating outside the conventions of the curriculum. Where the future lies is unclear. It has become a bona fide subject to be offered next year. I admit this fills me with dread at the prospect of bureaucratisation: the need to document and justify the activities of the group, not to mention its budget! Losing the ability to eject those who are not performing willingly may ironically produce some of the types of behaviour problems which it was created to circumvent.

I have not achieved all that I set out to. I would really like to have visited restaurants and cafes around the area. I didn’t get there, but I have bought some of the industry into our kitchen. The current crop of chefs has a justifiable sense of ownership of the program which they will reluctantly relinquish — mostly on the promise that I will create a catering business within the school next year where they can use their skills. Never a dull moment!

On the whole I feel that for a group of Year 9 students whose commitment to school had been waning, they have risen to the challenges set before them with maturity and perseverance. I don’t know that they have reflected on their achievements, except to say ‘It’s all good!’

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Food has been a long-term love and interest for Khy Grayling: she took her first steps toward her present career when she started working in kitchens during her university years. She loved the lifestyle and was excited by the food.

Following completion of her arts degree she spent the next year at TAFE where she completed Certificate II in Commercial Cookery. She has since worked in restaurants and cafes in Melbourne and regional Victoria. This year she became fully qualified with Certificate IV in Commercial Cookery, and will start teaching VET Hospitality next year. Khy is especially interested in provenance — self-sufficiency, bioregionalism and organics — which bring us closer to food sources and are healthier for us and the planet!

‘I hope that students leave my class more confident about themselves and their abilities, and able to prepare food for themselves and their families which they can enjoy and be proud of.’
Telling tales out of school
Creating biographies to engage boys and fathers

Inspired by a Boys in Schools’ BEBOP presentation, Bernadette Fraser and Jill Shennan took up the challenge to involve fathers in the school environment. In the process they engaged boys in literacy and oral communication and, more importantly, celebrated male achievement.

To commence the project at Myrtleford Secondary College, three English/LOTE teachers planned a unit for the two Year 9 English classes, focusing on oral information gathering and presentation skills. Fundamental to this theme, was the focus on personal identity, in particular relationships between young people and significant males such as fathers, stepfathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers.

As both classes included several restless boys, we began a series of varied tasks designed to develop multiple language and communication skills. At the same time, we hoped that these activities would stimulate reflection, self-awareness and empathy.

Stimulating reflection about identity and significant relationships

Working together to sequence activities for boys’ engagement, we began with the film Looking for Alibrandi. While the central character in the film is an adolescent girl, the themes of growing up, self-awareness and relationships between young people, their fathers and extended family, stimulated spirited discussion.

Short tasks after viewing included a quiz based on content and a family and relationships concept map. This same concept map was then completed by the students for their own family and significant relationships to provoke personal reflection about where they ‘fitted’, who was important and why.

Students then undertook a series of short and reflective writing tasks from Kate Grenville’s The Writing Book to trigger memories and emotions. One particular task incorporates some ‘hands-on’ activity with reflection, discussion, writing and sharing: useful ingredients to assist concentration and engagement.

Prepared strips with key words and reflective triggers were distributed one at a time to students and pasted into their writing journals. With teacher guidance for the reading of each quality, as well as the sharing and discussion of memories, students wrote a paragraph or two about their personal recollections regarding eight qualities such as ‘. . . a time when they were most embarrassed’, ‘jealous’, ‘proud’ and in ‘love’.

This activity worked best when each feeling and memory trigger was discussed in pairs and voluntarily shared with the whole group at a time, as some students — especially boys — need abstracts linked to experiences through oral language to make meaning and understanding.

Writing creatively about ourselves/autobiographical writing

Some adolescents find writing about themselves and their connections to family difficult as they are still grappling with who they are and identity is fluid, shifting and changing according to where we are and who we’re with.

Two short poems provided useful imagery relevant to our students’ lives and rural location. Autobiograffiti by Peter Goldsworthy and Woman of the Future by Cathy Warry also provided the kids with a structure to record language about themselves and their lives. After distributing copies of the poems and reading them aloud, we provided students with a ‘skeleton’ version of each, where key words and phrases had been left blank. Drawing on the ideas modelled and stimulated by the originals, students completed

When Hayden documented his Opa’s life he discovered that this grandfather had been in the Dutch resistance during WWII. This was exciting stuff, and his biography highlighted their close relationship and respect for one another. Lovely work.

The Boys in Schools Bulletin 17

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two poems about themselves, choosing language for the gaps that evoked images of personal qualities, interests, values and relationships.

All the students completed at least one poem. There were some wonderful pieces written by boys who usually struggle to complete ‘creative writing’, let alone a poem about themselves.

**Being male:**
**Significant relationships with boys and men**

The Boys in Schools’ *Being a Man Photopak* was used to challenge assumptions and stereotypes about males. This comprehensive pack of black and white photos illustrates a large number of boys and men in many different settings, and is a valuable resource for discussion and writing.

We asked students to work through the triggers on the prepared handout to establish a character and short story about one of the males in the photos. This guided approach, as in previous activities, was designed to assist students to reflect about males, personality traits and their relationships with others through narrative.

As the images include boys and men in familiar and non-familiar roles and contexts — such as a young man proudly holding a newborn child — the students’ perceptions about male roles and relationships could be evoked, developed and, for some, even challenged.

**A bloke’s biography**

Students were asked to choose and write a letter to a significant male in their lives, requesting their permission

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**Let’s Get Physical** *(with grateful thanks to Peter Goldsworthy)*

I was born in a small town
With a large graveyard.
There were two pubs and two churches.
There was a beach. It was the best beach in Australia
Each morning we would wake up to waves crashing
The mail arrived in our cream letterbox
In my house there were nine beds and TVs and food
Outside the fields were always green and gold
The sky was endless blue over the sea
My brothers and sisters used to take me to the beach
And to the markets
I wish we still lived there.
*Adapted by Callum — 9A*

I was born in a small town with one pub and three churches,
There was a graveyard and a football oval.
We walked to the shop to buy milk.
Parcels arrived at the post office.
There was a TV, VCR, DVD player and couch.
The footy oval was across from my house.
We didn’t go there.
*Adapted by James — 9A*

**Man of the Future** *(with special thanks to Cathy Warry)*

I am a child
I am a child of all things from my past
I am the eyes from my mother’s face
I am the height of my father.

I am all I see . . .
The posters on my wall
My guitar in its case
CDs all over my desk
Leads lying on the floor
The cupboard with my clothes
The roof over my head.

I am all I hear . . .
‘Look after your brother’
‘Tidy your room’
‘Wake up!’
The sound of my guitar
The waves crashing on the beach.
I am all I feel and taste . . .
The pen I’m writing with.
Ice cream, lasagna, sun,
the table I’m sitting on.

I’m all I remember . . .
Living in Myrtleford
Kindergarten,
Riding a bike for the first time

I am all I’ve been taught
‘If you drink and drive you’re a bloody idiot!’
To look after my brother.
I am all I think
Getting out of school
Going to bed.

I am all these things.
I’m like a tiger
And these things are my shade.
But one day I’ll run my way out and be free because
I’m the man of the future.
*Adapted by Alex — 9B*
to write a biography detailing important aspects about them and their lives. We also wanted the kids to discuss an important object cherished by their bloke and, if they wished, to write a separate piece about it and include it in the biography.

A letter model was provided with good quality paper and envelope. Students were expected to deliver or post their letter and contact their ‘bloke’ to arrange an interview time.

Although we were hoping that students would interview significant adult males in their lives — such as fathers, stepfathers, uncles or grandfathers — some students (boys and girls) balked at this, choosing younger or older brothers. There were different reasons for this choice; some may have found it easier to talk with siblings rather than fathers and older relatives for logistical reasons (shift work or leisure choices), while some were not comfortable to talk with an adult male because both would find this too hard.

**Information gathering**

Typical questions were brainstormed and recorded by students and interview times established. Students were encouraged to use a tape recorder but few did, most writing answers down briefly below the questions while talking face-to-face or over the phone.

Many boys (but not all), found this stage the most difficult, with the dual challenges of needing to get organised and to talk to their chosen bloke. These students kept putting their interview time off, fudging with excuses. Some took up our ‘offer’ to talk to their chosen bloke and to assist with support for the interview.

Victoria Clay and Deborah Hartman of The University of Newcastle’s Boys in Schools Program spent some time at Myrtleford working with us and on other projects. Their suggestion to use the significant object owned by the bloke as the basis for discussion worked well as the guys found it easier to discuss dad’s first car, record or sporting trophy. Examples from three boys’ biographies are given here.

**My Dad’s Jeans**

My Dad always wears a pair of blue jeans and they have grease and crap all over them. They have a heap of holes in them and they are like 20 years old. He always wears them everywhere.

*Brad — 9A*

**My Dad’s Favourite Object**

I think my Dad’s favourite thing is probably his laptop because he’s always on it and loves playing it. He bought it from Sydney over the Internet. It cost $3000. It is easy to carry around and it’s filled with fun. Its brand is DELL. My Dad normally plays his laptop on the table in our lounge room. The laptop is special to my Dad because he does his work on it and if he didn’t have it, he would be bored. My Dad cares a lot for his laptop. His laptop is important to me because it is awesome and I play my games on it.

*James — 9A*

**Untitled**

Opa’s most significant object is his model of a street organ that he made all by hand.

He even put a tape deck in the back of it to play organ music. He likes this so much because his parents used to take a big street organ down the street in parades and play music to the crowds. Even though the street organ is important to him, Opa values his family above all else.

*Hayden — 9B*

**Organising and presenting the biographies**

Students could choose a form from the range discussed: a photo collage, bound booklet, poster, PowerPoint presentation or storyboard. Photos were encouraged, and the school’s two digital cameras made available. Juggling of rooms to allow computer access and teacher supervision became difficult as many students did not have memory sticks and, in some cases, home computers. One-on-one teacher–student time was important to assist students in the sequencing of information gathered at interviews, and concept maps were a useful tool here.

Proofreading and editing is a challenge for most of our Year 9s at the best of times and also required considerable teacher–student time. However, these times were rewarding as we not only gained insights into individual language strengths and needs, but their values, experiences and relationships. This became a powerful ‘glue’ to build, restore and deepen positive relationships between the teacher and student for future learning.

**Celebrating the kids’ work: biographies as a window to diversity and achievement**

Teaming up with two Year 9 teachers from the Community Learning and Future Chef Programs, we decided on a Father’s Day dinner to launch and celebrate the biographies. Almost all the students were involved in preparing the three-course meal or setting up a large dining area and display of the biographies at the local football club rooms.

Fathers, the subjects of the biographies and other family members were invited to form table groups with staff members and partners. Deborah and Victoria’s
follow-up visit coincided with the dinner, and they joined with us for the celebration.

The PowerPoint biographies were organised by some of the Year 9 boys to be shown on a large screen on stage with an action-packed film made by the same boys. The school’s visiting guitar teacher, Howard Kovesy, and an associate provided live music throughout the evening.

It was a wonderful evening, with delicious food prepared and professionally cooked and served by the Year 9 Future Chefs. The biographies were visited and read by dads, mums, younger brothers and sisters, teachers and support staff, parents chatting together about aspects described and laughing at exaggerated and humorous details.

The celebration of the biographies through such a special occasion gave the students a sense of achievement and pride, bringing real meaning to their writing. To see their work valued by their families and teachers — in effect by the whole school community — was powerful evidence of how language, learning and significant relationships can enrich our lives. Some important points were:

- Using visual, text and aural examples from other people’s lives allowed for different learning styles and helped to focus and engage the students to make links to their own life-shaping experiences and relationships.
- Creating a scaffold for autobiographical writing and communication tasks prior to actual writing of the biographies provided the reflective time necessary for the identification of significant male relationships. Writing models stimulated language use, especially when recording abstract qualities and feelings.
- Discussing sharing and recording their personal experiences modelled some of those key moments and experiences in a person’s life that are fundamental to biographical writing.
- Integrating IT galvanised creativity, and visual communication with photos, graphics, colour and music used to convey and enhance print text and finished product.
- Having a real audience to read the biographies via a school and family celebration demonstrated significant achievement for students.

When asked what they liked most about doing their Bloke’s Biography, students acknowledged some aspects of the learning process described above: ‘Putting it all together’ (Alex); ‘I found out things that I didn’t know about my Pa’ (Ashleigh); ‘Seeing a lot more of Pa’ (Tim); and ‘It was a fun activity and the same time, you were learning and having fun’ (Michaela).

Jill Shennan (top) and Bernadette Fraser have been teachers at Myrtleford Secondary College for more years than they care to remember and are stunned to realise that they are now teaching the adolescent children of the adolescents they taught in the 1980s! Apart from backgrounds in English, their qualifications for this project with rural boys includes first-hand experience with blokes (sons and husbands) and unpaid work on small farms. The Bloke’s Biography project was an attempt to make English more relevant to boys’ lives and somehow cajole them into writing and communicating about real and personal experiences without feeling threatened. Inspiration, spurred on by last-minute desperation, drove content selection, tempered by knowledge of a particularly nice, but noisy, group of boys. Needless to say, the girls responded positively and ‘ran’ with the activities.

The most rewarding aspect of the project occurred at the Fathers’ Day presentation dinner as the young biographers proudly guided their families around the display of their work. On the other hand, the truth was out when partners revealed that fathers, too, lie about their age and sons are not averse to creating histories that don’t exist!
Negotiating is better than arguing
How to get COOL (Control Of Our Lives)

Speech pathologist and psychologist Noël Boycott specialises in group work to resocialise and reintegrate students into school settings. Noël describes her work with Year 7 and 8 boys in a Catholic boys’ school and provides the plans developed with Rollo Browne as part of the program.

‘How to get cool’, as one group of boys called the program, is a three-term program of group work that aims to get boys to manage themselves better at school and to re-establish relations with targeted teachers. At the beginning I was asked to assist a Year 7 boy, suffering brain injury following a car accident, to reintegrate into school. He was frustrated with teachers, found classes stressful, annoyed the hell out of other students and was very unhappy. The school didn’t know what to do. I realised he needed a group to build up the relationships essential to school life. If you are going to socialise someone you can’t do it with one other adult, such as a therapist. So at the beginning I told the school we needed to form a group around this student. We targeted other students who had similar difficulties and who would benefit from a small group on social communication skills.

Initially the program was for students who had frequent suspensions and were definitely tracking towards expulsion. Over five years working in a range of schools, but particularly in a single sex boys’ school, Rollo Browne and I have developed a program to use when students need to learn to deal with their teachers satisfactorily, or if there is a problem relating to their peers.

A number of writers have pointed to the lack of social development, as being central to the ability of some boys to achieve academically. This program focuses primarily on the social development then helps the boys apply the skills to reclaim the relationships they need for learning. No other program I am aware of does this explicitly. Research into behaviour change by Ed Schein produced the following principle: You cannot make a person change their behaviour (without the constant threat of violence). The most you can do is get them to do more of what they already value.

In the case of these boys that means assisting them to see the values they hold, and then showing them how they can get more of what they value. At school these boys’ needs are relatively simple: they want to have a good time, be stimulated, belong, have fun, be respected, and have some choices about what they do. They know how to fight and argue really well. What they don’t know is how to negotiate so that we all can have some of our needs met. The core of the work is to assist students to take charge of their choices at school. This means they build sufficient relationships with teachers so they can negotiate their needs. This requires maturity. However, simply teaching negotiation skills is not effective unless the boys also develop a sense of identity and perspective about who they are, what matters to them and what they are trying to do at school. The first part of the program builds the group to the point where there is sufficient purpose and ownership to be able to negotiate meaningfully.

If they can get a good experience in a group, then their ability to manage themselves for the next stage with teachers is higher.

Learning-development programs don’t work unless a student has a positive working relationship with the teachers. However, if students don’t have the capacity to manage themselves, then the social context to support self-management needs particular attention. These boys aren’t sufficiently attuned to being a group member. In Glasser’s (1984) terms, they don’t have a group that will keep them safe, provide a sense of belonging, and include elements of fun without humiliation. If they can get a good experience in a group, then their ability to manage themselves for the next stage with teachers is higher.

An effective group is six to eight students. If it is any bigger than that, too much time is spent managing the survival dynamics of boys who are having difficulty relating to each other and to school except in a disruptive and rebellious way. This doesn’t help; it just reinforces problems. You can help
# Four-Term Plan

## Term 1: Forming the group and defining purposes

### Activities list

| Session 1 | i) Welcome | Brief and to the point. 
|           | ii) Purpose and name of group | Teachers and then students individually. 
|           | iii) Why you? | Question: Who's in control of your life? Respond by standing on a continuum from 0–10, where 0 means 'None at all' and 10 means 'Total control'. Follow up questions: Do you choose what you eat? When you get in trouble? To obey the law? 
|           | iv) Choices | 
|           | v) Wrap up and housekeeping | 

### Sessions 2–3

| i) Agreements | Group from hell/paradise. 
|              | 5–6 workable agreements. 
|              | Eyeballing and signing. Guess which one being rated on (10, 20, 30 minutes). 
| ii) Predictions | Group self-rating versus teacher’s. 
| iii) Goal setting | Based on number of detentions/merits etc. so far this term, calculate number and consequences by end of year. 
|                  | Photo-language: Choose a photo of when school is going well. Chose another of how school is going now. Then speak to three questions: 1. What do you see in your picture? 2. What does it say about you? 3. What do you feel? (may need to brainstorm feeling vocabulary and Iceberg). 

### Session 4–6

| i) What is required to get there? | Set concrete steps in twos and threes with teachers. 
| ii) How do I know when I’m there? | Detention/merit rate, marks, school report. 
| iii) Check ins | One thing I am proud of/not so proud of. Highlight/lowlight. 

### Session 7

| i) Review | Progress line: Stated goal at one end and start of term at other. Where am I now? What steps did I take to get here? What is my next step? 

## Term 2: Building negotiation skills

### Session 1

| i) Review of progress in group | Assessment worksheet. 
| ii) Assessment of teacher relationships | 

### Session 2

| i) Introduce the ‘5 Steps of Negotiation’ | ‘5 Steps’ list. 
| ii) Introduce ‘Chart of Learning to Negotiate’ | Chart. 

### Sessions 3–6

| ii) Continue self-ratings | 

### Session 7

| i) Review | Negotiating a solution worksheet. 

## Term 3: Teacher–student negotiations

### Session 1

| i) Check in and check progress on negotiation chart | 

### Sessions 2–4

| i) Run individual negotiations | Meet as group once a fortnight to hear each others’ stories and encourage those still to go. 

### Sessions 4-7

| i) Renegotiations | SO-SO technique. 
| ii) Transferrability | Corridor opportunities. 
| iii) Continue monitoring self-ratings throughout term | 

## Term 4: Consolidation and celebration

### Session 1–3

| i) Check in and goal for the term | Work sheet. 
| ii) Negotiations and reviews | Data graph. 
| iii) Individual data and self-report to parents | 90-second talk work sheet. 

### Session 4

| i) 90-second talks | Presentation object. 
| ii) Review and celebrate | Food and drink. 

them in a smaller group. The more students, the more complex the social relations, and it becomes harder to build a group that works successfully, rather than one that reproduces the same old problems. The largest group I’ve run was 12 students. It was a mix of girls and boys. There were three adults: the Year Master, an assistant teacher and myself. We did quite a few exercises breaking up into small groups of four with a teacher in each and then coming back into the main group. This worked well.

We asked the Year Master (the person responsible for pastoral care and welfare for that year level) which boys were consistently being sent to them for problems in the classroom. The formation of the group, its composition and purpose are very significant. This group has to meet the boys’ needs in a way that doesn’t happen for them in class.

The roles of the Head Teacher Welfare and Year Adviser are central in selecting the students, modelling a positive authority relationship and providing a reality check for the boys reporting on their weekly experience at school.

It is important that the Year Adviser does not run the group: he or she is a member. I run the group, but a critical part of the success of the group is the Year Master (or delegate) who attends consistently. The Year Master is a very important person in the boys’ lives in the Catholic school system.

Finally, the Learning Support Director attends when they can — especially at the beginning of the group to help with logistics. In the above example his role was twofold. Firstly, he was the reality checker; he knew exactly what had happened during the week with those students, whereas I didn’t. Secondly, he was an important role model. As a woman, I really wanted as much as possible to have a man there, a mature man, to speak from his own experience on some of the ideas and concepts of how to manage yourself.

We wanted each boy to develop his ability to manage himself and survive better at school. The real purpose of the program was to provide a safe environment where these boys could develop their maturity and skills to manage their own behaviour and relationships needed for learning. This included knowing who to ask for help when they weren’t coping, and how to get their message across so that the other person was valued and without resorting to old acting-out behaviour. The critical thing was that they discussed things that were problems for them and worked out solutions with the people in their lives.

The program elements are outlined in the section ‘Four-Term Plan’. However, the map is not the territory. The leaders have to be flexible enough to respond to whatever challenge the boys raise and realign the work of the group in a way that the boys learn to see what is going on, understand what their behaviour means, and therefore better manage themselves. It is immediate, relevant, linked to ‘me’ and interactive. It requires structure, firmness, honesty, active leadership and the spotlight is on the boys making sense of themselves and their relationships.

Right from the very beginning of the group, the Year Master should be asked to be part of the group. There are some critical steps in the program, one of which is goal setting using photographs (Photolanguage from NSW Catholic Education Office). The Year Master should set his goals in exactly the same way as the boys do so that he experiences what they are experiencing. Another critical step is working out how much control you have over your life. I use a line on the floor from ‘none at all’ to ‘complete control’ and ask the Year Master to put himself on that line, and to answer why he is there. I may challenge him, just like I challenge the boys.

In fact, three of the essential steps in the first term are goal setting, understanding how much choice I have in my life, and the Year Master modeling how these things are still relevant to him too. Thus, the boys know that a person who has a big influence in dealing with them at school takes it seriously.

The first critical event is the initial meeting, where we give a very clear introduction about why everybody is there and what the purpose of the group is. Each boy is then asked to share why they think they are in the group. From the very beginning it is clearly a group where each person is expected to contribute what they think.

I then invite the Year Master to add to what the boys have said. For instance, if a student says ‘I think I’m in this group because I had a fight with Mr X yesterday’, the Year Master might add ‘And also remember what happened on the soccer field last term and the suspension you had earlier this year’, and so forth.

In later sessions we have a ‘check in’ time where the boys describe, ‘One good thing I have done this week and one thing I could have done better this week’. Often the session may develop around that ‘check in’ or around a particular
issue that came up, such as ways of dealing with that problem and how it could be done differently. The boys are all expert survivors and willing to share their strategies. This is one of their strengths.

For example, after I had taught them about Glasser’s concepts of basic needs in life — love, power, freedom, fun — if a boy says at check in that he swore at a teacher, I might say, ‘Okay, what were you trying to get or achieve by swearing at a teacher at that point?’ The boys are challenged to be truthful and to reflect and say something about their own life rather than just blame it on everyone else. This is the beginning of them knowing themselves by speaking up and being truthful about their behaviours. Until they can do that, there is not much chance of change.

The second part of the program focuses the boys on developing better relationships with the people they need in order to get something out of school: the teachers. As this occurs you will notice the profound effect on teachers as they begin to see these boys differently, as the boys lift their own maturity and realise that there is a way to make some difference in their lives.

Our working definition of maturity is the ability to do those things listed under the ‘5 Steps of Negotiation’ opposite. These include ‘recognise my own behaviour’, ‘drop my own agenda and trust that it won’t be lost’, and ‘know what it means to make and keep a personal commitment’. These are social and emotional intelligence skills and are woven into the program in such a way that the group itself supports the development of a mature awareness, and consequently more

Another critical part of the work is having the boys collect and chart data about their behaviour and their learning. Without collecting data on their performance and behaviour there is no reality check or guide for them to see how they are progressing. Later in the program they collect data on themselves. The feedback from students in past years is that collecting the data on themselves is really helpful and useful. Sometimes it’s a self-rating on their own performance, such as, ‘How much I am learning in each of my subjects this week’. It may also be the number of merits and detentions that week. This is usually introduced by session three or four of the first term. We graph that data for the term.

Checking in is when they are actually being heard instead of just flicked over. It is essential for them to feel worthwhile (Glasser’s core concept of the need for power). Along with self-rating, checking in is one of the most valuable of the group activities.

I have learnt through experience to be very skilled in asking questions rather than telling students what they are doing. One student, Nathan, constantly spoke over all the other students. He loved to talk. I would say, ‘What are you doing right now? Maybe you can look at the agreements and say which of these agreements is a problem for you at the minute. What is the effect on the others? Have a look around’.

I am not asking for explanations, I am asking him to pay attention to something. How I ask is important. I am a naïve enquirer (not blaming). Sometimes I’ve had to be a boundary setter: ‘This is what is going on here — this is not okay by me’.

Sometimes I say, ‘What I see going on here is anything but doing the work as a group’. Even if the boys are provoking each other, trivialising everything, buddying up and undermining others, freeloading onto the initial disturbance — all
the usual tactics — I say the same thing to the group or one person: ‘Okay, what’s going on? What do you see happening now?’ Usually it’s about saying ‘Okay, this group is really good at avoiding the work’ or ‘Jimmy, tell me one way you see people avoiding the work’. In this way I can cut through the actual behaviour and ask them to become more observant.

Often there is one clear voice (not always the same student) making observations such as, ‘Well Miss, it’s actually that we have come in from lunch and that’s always a difficult lesson, you know, after lunch.’ They can and do make these kinds of observations when asked, and this is the beginning of developing social maturity. Maturity includes roles of being an accurate observer and namer of what’s going on.

The Year Master may initially find this very difficult because he wants to correct the boys’ behaviour, tell them off or tell them what to do, but this won’t promote self-development or maturity in the boys. The year masters often say that my style of getting the boys to reflect is very different from a normal teacher’s approach, and I think that sometimes it’s a hard one to live with. Some Year Masters get on board within one session, and some never do. With these boys it is the only way I know that builds their maturity. Some teachers just can’t work like that and their success with the boys suffers greatly.

The challenge is to link the socially mature behaviour that the student uses in the small group to the student’s behaviour in class. We target particular skill sets to build up to negotiating with teachers. We’ve chosen the five steps in negotiation outlined in The Responsible Thinking Classroom. The five steps are very clear:

1. Admit any mistakes or wrongdoing.
2. Acknowledge the other person’s feelings.
3. Explain your view of the problem.
4. Listen to the other person’s point of view.
5. Agree on a solution or plan. ‘Sorry’ is not negotiation.

The boys learn the steps, imagine a teacher they want to talk with, write down what they want to say in each of the first three steps, and role-play with each other in the group. They video the role-play so they can watch themselves and make adjustments accordingly. This is especially good for becoming aware of body language. Research from my background as a speech pathologist shows that if you video teenagers who stutter, talking very fluently, it has a huge influence on maintaining fluent speaking. It’s the same with these boys — if they see themselves negotiating really well, then they have a powerful role model in themselves. So that’s what we aim for in term two.

We ask them to select a teacher they believe they have half a chance of improving their relationship with — not the teacher they have the most difficulty with, and certainly not a teacher they have no problem with. The boys’ selection of teachers is usually spot on. They are indeed teachers who are willing to improve the situation but just haven’t known how to do it.

Most students get cold feet, and are scared of actually doing a mature adult discussion with a teacher. They enjoy the role-plays and the videoing — nervous at first but it’s okay. Then the moment comes when we are actually going to do the real thing — with the real teacher. They encourage each other to go ahead with the next phase.

Either the Year Master or the Learning Support teacher will contact the teacher. They are given a short introduction about what the boys have been working on, and state that this teacher has been selected as someone the boy would like to improve their relationship with. The teacher is very strongly reassured that it’s not because they are their worst teacher, because that is often their
### Matching Activities to Skills in Social Maturity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Steps of Negotiation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Admit any mistakes or wrong doing</strong></td>
<td>What activities will develop the relevant skills?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognise own behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reflect on self</td>
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<td>• Realise I choose my behaviour</td>
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<td>• Drop blaming others</td>
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<td>• Assess self accurately</td>
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<td>• Be honest about myself</td>
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<td><strong>2. Acknowledge the other person's feelings</strong></td>
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<td>• Imagine the other person's world and the effect of my behaviour</td>
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<td>• Observe the other for evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have vocabulary for feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Accept others are as important as me</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Explain your view of the problem</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Articulate own needs as valid</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not be ashamed of my own needs, e.g. learning difficulties — recognise my own limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have a purpose in explaining — be bothered to do it.</td>
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<td>• Accept that the relationship is important</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Listen to the other person's point of view</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Able to drop my own agenda and trust mine won't be lost</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have a purpose/be bothered to listen</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Accept that the other person is important</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We can do this together (role of collaborator)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Agree on a solution or plan</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Include other person’s concerns with my own</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Know what it means to make and keep a personal commitment — integrity and trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be goal-directed and evidence-based</td>
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<td>• Be realistic</td>
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<td>• Be practical</td>
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major fear! Then an appointment for a negotiation is made.

The student, the teacher and a mediator/facilitator (either the Learning Support teacher or myself) are present at the negotiation. The facilitator introduces the five steps of negotiation to the teacher, steps back to allow the student to complete the first three steps, then encourages the teacher to reply. The facilitator also assists them to come up with a workable plan, which is written down and signed by all parties present. Everyone has a copy.

We have had 100% positive feedback about the negotiation meeting from both students and teachers involved. As far as subsequent behavioral change in class, I’ve learnt that you have to have a follow-up meeting two weeks later as the plan is often far too ambitious and impractical on both sides and needs to be revised. After the follow-up meeting, I’d estimate that two-thirds of the students and teachers manage to maintain a good working relationship. The remaining third maintain a good working relationship but the boy’s behaviour is still a problem.

I haven’t coached the teachers up until now, but some teachers are so keen to teach and help that they talk too much! It is actually self-defeating because the student ‘switches off’ again. That’s part of the role of the facilitator: to limit the amount of talking. We are experimenting with coaching the teacher with a simple instruction such as, ‘If I give you a signal this is the time you stop talking’, or perhaps a simple written reminder on a card to keep talking to two to three points at a time.

In the second term we track how each student is going in their preparation, their scripting, their meeting and their follow-up meeting, and collect data on how they are going. Now the graphing kicks in. It is really important at this
point because you can often track on the graph when they had a negotiation because inevitably there is a shift. For example, there has typically been a downward trend in how much they are learning in the targeted class towards the end of term. If the negotiation happens in week seven you’ll see a corresponding change of direction and an increase in learning again. It’s the relationship that needs repair prior to the learning recovery rather than trying to address the student’s difficulties with a particular subject. The first steps are to repair the relationship. Often it’s not until the follow-up meeting that the teacher gets an ‘ahha’ about the relationship. The student can then say, ‘Yes, that would help a lot, and I can help by not sitting next to my best friend.’

This is likely to be the first time that the boy has had an adequate negotiation to settle into a class where he is not getting on well. It’s new for him, groundbreaking for him; also for the teacher to know the boy isn’t a dropkick. The main feedback from the teachers is that it was really satisfying to have a good conversation with the student, and to reach an understanding of how this student really is. Rather than thinking, ‘I have to manage this boy’, the teacher can adjust to, ‘I just have to keep along side him and highlight what he is doing’. It’s a big shift.

The last term is spent in making sure all students have had an opportunity to do at least one negotiation with a teacher and a follow up. Some students ask that they do a new negotiation with a different teacher they would like to improve with. For others, there are reviews. It’s a 10 to 20 minute meeting between the original teacher and the student to review the revised plan they had made at the follow-up meeting. I teach the boys how to actively listen to the teacher for these reviews, known as ‘SOSO’ (Summarise Other — Speak your Own).

We have a graduation ritual and celebration. The ritual is about reviewing the year, how far they have come against those original goals, what steps they have taken and what the next step might be. Then we have a presentation of a little memento, such as a key ring tag with the name of the group and their name. Then snacks and soft drinks all round.

The group decides its own name, such as the ‘COOL’ (Control Of Our Lives), the ‘School Survivors’, ‘TAG’ (The Advantaged Group), and the ‘Tszyu group’.

In the case of the Tszyu group the boys were asked to identify a person who had the qualities they admired. Boxer Kostya Tszyu was chosen because he was disciplined, resilient, strong, gutsy, well respected and liked in his community. He also trained locally. The boys wrote to him and asked to visit him at his gym, which he generously agreed to before a big fight. He invited the boys to train with him as he answered their questions as he couldn’t stop his routine to talk! It was at the end of the school year and a highlight. One of the exchanges went like this:

Boy: Would you hit someone who hit you in the playground?
Kostya: Yes, of course you must defend yourself. [Cheers from boys, groans from teachers.] BUT do not embarrass yourself.

Boy: What do you mean?
Kostya: Never embarrass yourself by hitting someone you know you can beat. And certainly don’t embarrass yourself by hitting someone who can beat you.

(Silence as everyone thinks about it . . . there’s not much in between.)

It takes a long time for some of the boys who have a lot of difficulties with social maturity. Originally, I thought perhaps eight sessions. Now I know it is usually a two-to-three term process.

It’s the relationship that needs repair prior to the learning recovery rather than trying to address the student’s difficulties with a particular subject. The first steps are to repair the relationship. Often it’s not until the follow-up meeting that the teacher gets an ‘ahha’ about the relationship. The student can then say, ‘Yes, that would help a lot, and I can help by not sitting next to my best friend.’ This is likely to be the first time that the boy has had an adequate negotiation to settle into a class where he is not getting on well. It’s new for him, groundbreaking for him; also for the teacher to know the boy isn’t a dropkick. The main feedback from the teachers is that it was really satisfying to have a good conversation with the student, and to reach an understanding of how this student really is. Rather than thinking, ‘I have to manage this boy’, the teacher can adjust to, ‘I just have to keep along side him and highlight what he is doing’. It’s a big shift.

The last term is spent in making sure all students have had an opportunity to do at least one negotiation with a teacher and a follow up. Some students ask that they do a new negotiation with a different teacher they would like to improve with. For others, there are reviews. It’s a 10 to 20 minute meeting between the original teacher and the student to review the revised plan they had made at the follow-up meeting. I teach the boys how to actively listen to the teacher for these reviews, known as ‘SOSO’ (Summarise Other — Speak your Own).

We have a graduation ritual and celebration. The ritual is about reviewing the year, how far they have come against those original goals, what steps they have taken and what the next step might be. Then we have a presentation of a little memento, such as a key ring tag with the name of the group and their name. Then snacks and soft drinks all round.

The group decides its own name, such as the ‘COOL’ (Control Of Our Lives), the ‘School Survivors’, ‘TAG’ (The Advantaged Group), and the ‘Tszyu group’.

In the case of the Tszyu group the boys were asked to identify a person who had the qualities they admired. Boxer Kostya Tszyu was chosen because he was disciplined, resilient, strong, gutsy, well respected and liked in his community. He also trained locally. The boys wrote to him and asked to visit him at his gym, which he generously agreed to before a big fight. He invited the boys to train with him as he answered their questions as he couldn’t stop his routine to talk! It was at the end of the school year and a highlight. One of the exchanges went like this:

Boy: Would you hit someone who hit you in the playground?
Kostya: Yes, of course you must defend yourself. [Cheers from boys, groans from teachers.] BUT do not embarrass yourself.

Boy: What do you mean?
Kostya: Never embarrass yourself by hitting someone you know you can beat. And certainly don’t embarrass yourself by hitting someone who can beat you.

(Silence as everyone thinks about it . . . there’s not much in between.)

It takes a long time for some of the boys who have a lot of difficulties with social maturity. Originally, I thought perhaps eight sessions. Now I know it is usually a two-to-three term process.

I’ve learnt that I need to be quite tough and firm in my manner, not in ticking off the students but in holding the agreements and holding the line of the work of the group — that it’s not a bludge. I also need to let them know when I am concerned or unhappy or upset about their behaviour or what they are doing. How it affects me.

The year masters are very important too. Although Year Masters often think they are not doing enough, the fact that he/she consistently turns up, is genuinely sharing, listens, does not criticize and is realistic, is invaluable.

I have run groups without a year master, but I never run a group without anybody from the school there. Never. There has always to be a key person from the school. It may be the Learning Support Director, or a key teacher delegated by the Year Master. The Year Master may turn up at the beginning, middle and end sessions of each term to lend their support to the boys’ work.

Most of the research on behaviour modification programs shows that the transfer back to the classroom is poor and the transfer mechanisms, if they are not paid attention to, usually undermine the program’s success.

The program worked well in a Catholic school. The school I worked in followed Edmund Rice’s principles.
where every child has a right to
education and needs to be given the
opportunity. The principal at that
time was very proactive in looking
after students in this way and
definitely not dealing with
difficulties by expelling students.

This program is not a quick fix. The school would know that these
students had come to the crisis point, but over months or years, not
suddenly. To teach the skills that
they need is going to take a little
while. They are not going to
suddenly see the light and be
grateful.

But the reality checks are there to
see — the detention rates decrease,
the merit rates increase — the school
data. The teachers report that the
students are less disruptive in class.
The student’s school reports show
improved marks and comments.
These are all good indicators of
improvement.

It is my experience that at least
three-quarters of the students show
these changes, maybe a quarter
don’t. This is because there are
problems much bigger than school
in the boy’s life which this program
can’t address. This is not the answer
but part of it. It’s really worth
putting the effort in to actually
address some of the social
relationship issues for the students,
and they do love it. The teachers are
amazed at how the student can
come back from the edge.

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She has worked with a range of schools — both
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co-educational — from Years 6 to 10. Programs have at their core
small group work with students, plus involvement of one or more
key teachers. She also works with learning support staff to develop
their skills in repairing student–teacher relationships when needed.

Noël Boycott and Rollo Browne have worked together for five years
refining the use of group work and action methods with boys and
working out how the gains made with boys can be embedded in
existing school structures to maximum effect. An important part of
the development of the program has been regular supervision
sessions with Rollo on what happens in the room and what to do
about it. This program has met with significant success, and part of
the refinement has been in working out the essence of what makes it
work.
Australia, like many other countries, has experienced a dramatic increase in mental health disorders. The increase in rate and complexity is coupled with a growing worldwide recognition of a lack of resources and expertise to adequately address the demand. Child and adolescent mental health services in the United States, Great Britain and Australia have been challenged by the increased demand from young people with aggressive behavioural patterns. This pattern is reflected on the north coast of NSW in an audit I recently conducted of referrals to the Coffs Harbour Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Over a five-year period from 1999–2003, 46% of referrals for males between the ages of 10 and 17 years identified anger and/or aggression as the main presenting problem.

Like teachers, I work with young people, interacting with them daily in a variety of settings. My role as a Clinical Nurse Specialist means that I see young people in paediatric units, accident and emergency departments, psychiatric units and schools. When I visit them in the community it’s usually their very first contact with a mental health service. In my personal life I have three young sons and participate in my church’s youth ministry team, helping to run a two-hour weekly program for 50 to 70 Kindy to Year 5 children.

My week provides variety to say the least. I might assess a 14-year-old suicidal boy or a 15-year-old female who has self-harmed and taken an overdose. This might be followed by a 12-year-old girl depressed about being diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes or a psychotic 16-year-old who is convinced that he is being monitored by aliens. I might see the child who is terrified of needles or germs or crowds and I might be playing ‘duck, duck, goose’, losing on purpose to the laughter of a joyous young crowd.

For many years I have been frustrated by our limited ability to work with adolescent males. We know that adolescent males are extremely reluctant to seek out any kind of help and that when they do it is usually only for one or two sessions. Despite the vast differences in individual circumstances, there are usually similarities in their stories: a broken home, exposure to domestic violence, limited connection, to a positive adult male role model, and extreme difficulty in the school environment. The common thread for almost all these boys involves problems associated with anger or aggression, which become the straw that breaks the camel’s back for the boys themselves, their school and their families.

In psychiatry we talk about a ‘negative cognitive bias’ or ‘an insecure attachment style’ or any number of terms that describe the way in which many adolescent males struggle with the basics of prosocial skills and why. I regularly see adolescent males who have caused havoc at home and/or at school. Yet when they are given the opportunity to sit in a quiet office and talk with someone who has the time to listen, the majority describe
Time and time again I see these great young guys who gain real insight into their behaviour but can’t contextualise these learned skills to real-life situations.

a real sense of shame about their actions. They know what the problem is but feel there is nothing they can do about it, saying ‘It’s just how I am’. Time and time again I see these great young guys who gain real insight into their behaviour but can’t contextualise these learned skills to real-life situations.

Because I work in different contexts with youth I come across people who draw on a variety of strategies from their bag of tricks to engage young people. During the inevitable conversations with colleagues, the same frustrations emerge in regard to this problem of adolescent male anger. Some maintain that we’ve always had these problems, which may be true to a degree. However, the increasing rates of youth crime, substance abuse, schoolyard violence and acute mental health problems testify to an increasing problem that society has failed to address.

Over the years I have been disappointed with literature related to working with adolescent males. It seems to talk a lot about the why, but rarely about the practical aspects of working day-to-day with these young guys and what sort of interventions make a difference. To my great relief as my search continued, I discovered a number of Australian teachers and educational researchers that were really at the forefront of examining the very issues that I had been facing. I could relate to their material and knew that the common sense motivating their individual searches was firmly grounded in a practical working knowledge of the needs of adolescent males.

In about 2001 I developed a program for young people experiencing depression and anxiety, which incorporated exercises I had learned studying tai chi. When I circulated the program for feedback from colleagues, one mentioned the Rock and Water Program. In researching the program I was extremely motivated to find out more as it seemed to directly address the deficits in adolescent males in a fun, practical way and, most importantly, through action and physical activity. In 2004 I changed jobs, becoming part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Statewide Network (CAMHSNET) where I was supported to pursue preventative programs relating to the issue of anger in adolescent males. As I had commenced my doctoral studies in the same area it seemed a great chance to do some research and include Rock and Water within the process.

After completing a three-day training course with Freerk Ykema (the person who developed Rock and Water), I talked with a number of school counsellors through our school-link meetings to determine whether there was enough interest locally for such a program. Several counsellors had heard positive feedback about the program, but were unable to trial it because of limited resources. Resources were also problematic for me, so I approached my managers to propose forming a partnership with a local high school to implement the program.

A university media release in early 2005 regarding my proposed research project generated an amazing level of interest with articles appearing in 16 newspapers nationwide and generating seven nationwide radio interviews. This confirmed for me just how passionate people are about the issue of adolescent male anger and how it is impacting Australian society. It reinforced what my colleagues and I are experiencing locally, as well as what is appearing in the literature from around the world. This is a real issue that society wants to address, but is confused and frustrated about what to do and how to make a difference.

The implementation of Rock and Water at Toormina High School in Coffs Harbour was a true partnership in every sense of the word. The principal, Elizabeth Donnan, and school counsellor, Annie Harman,
were very supportive and prepared to be flexible so that we could make it work. Getting an appropriate venue was the biggest challenge. As you will be aware, space at high school is a valuable commodity and usually booked well in advance. I also had specific requirements regarding the appropriateness of the venue that limited our choices. We needed a space large enough for 20 Year 8 and 9 boys in a safe, private, low-stimulus environment that was consistently available.

Providing a safe adult-to-student ratio was the next challenge, and again the school was supportive in allowing Annie, Jim Murdoch (head teacher, welfare), and Rob Mill (Year 9 adviser) to be involved. All gave up free periods and were willing to do some serious negotiations with their timetables to support the implementation. I was also thankful to two female colleagues from the Innovative Health Service for Homeless Youth (IHSHY) for allocating time in their busy schedules to become involved. All that was left was to purchase some equipment that the boys would need during the program and, thanks to a grant from the Coffs Harbour Youth Suicide Prevention Committee, we were in business.

We initially commenced the program with two separate groups of 20 boys from Year 8 and Year 9. Each session included myself as facilitator, a male teacher, the school counsellor and the two female IHSHY workers. Sessions ran for 75 minutes and the program consisted of 10 sessions, with one session per group per week. Having this level of adult supervision was extremely helpful during these first groups as we had bugs to iron out and some adapting and evaluating to do. What’s working? What isn’t? After each session the adults involved would discuss and note any strengths or weaknesses of the program, including my delivery, and resulting changes were incorporated as necessary.

As I am awaiting ethics approval to commence research with the program, the only evaluation conducted was a pre- and post-self-report for the participants as a quality improvement activity. Results were extremely encouraging. The boys rated the program very highly and demonstrated improved scores in relation to ‘getting on better with teachers and family members’ and improved scores for having strategies to deal with conflict at home and at school. For me, the most encouraging aspect was the informal feedback: parent letters of support, teachers saying that the boys are more communicative, boys coming up and asking when they can do Rock
Boys love the action-oriented focus of Rock and Water.

and Water, and the amount of requests from other schools and services for information about Rock and Water. I have also been extremely encouraged by the comments on the feedback sheet from the boys. To date there has not been a negative comment. The following are typical responses:

- Rock and Water helps me to control my anger.
- Rock an Water is fun and I would recommend it to anyone.
- Rock and Water is a fun program for boys.
- Rock and Water is cool.
- I really enjoyed Rock and Water.
- Rock and Water is good for boys who are angry or who have ADHD.
- Everyone should do Rock and Water at our school.

As further encouragement for our efforts in implementing Rock and Water I was awarded (thanks to a great team) the 2005 NSW Mental Health Association Mental Health Matters Award for outstanding excellence and commitment to mental health promotion in the youth category. This recognition has helped me advocate for further partnerships and to continue building upon these initial steps that must be supported if any positive change is to be sustained or improved.

Exposure to a 10-week program is not going to lead to sustained behavioural changes, but it is a start. Rock and Water has demonstrated that adolescent males do enjoy learning the skills associated with conflict resolution, body language and awareness, personal boundaries, self-reflection, breath strength and mental strength, if taught in a way that they can relate to and experience for themselves. I recently completed a third group at Toormina High School, this time including 20 participants from both Year 8 and Year 9, and have almost completed the first Rock and Water group at Bellingen High School. Results and feedback have again been very positive, with plans to expand Rock and Water to include four high schools in 2006 (already confirmed with principals).

As part of a longer-term plan I attended the Rock and Water advanced training with Freerk Ykema in October 2005. This was a great experience, networking with other professionals from around Australia, all passionate about the cause of adolescent male health and education. On return to Coffs Harbour I circulated a letter asking for expressions of interest for a one-day Rock and Water workshop, with places limited to 30 participants. The workshop filled in less than a week, with a waiting list for a second. This workshop took place in November 2005 and was attended by a diverse range of professionals including police, teachers, Department of Community Services staff and managers, Aboriginal health workers, CAMHS clinicians, youth refuge staff, juvenile justice staff — the list goes on.

We have been encouraged by the large percentage of Koori participants in the program. In healthcare we have major issues related to trying to provide more appropriate services for Indigenous Australians. Our local CAMHS rarely engage with Australian Indigenous adolescent males and we owe it to ourselves as a service, and as
Australians, to ask why. I have a lot of respect for our Koori workers, especially those who work with our youth, and I am pleased to say that a number were represented at the November workshop where we continued to discuss innovative and respectful ways of collaborating.

Boys love the action-oriented focus of Rock and Water. As facilitator I’ve had to be very flexible in my delivery, dependent upon the mood of the group on any given day. Knowing the material and being prepared has been critical (as per any class or group work). I usually find that the participants want to check me out and test the boundaries in the first couple of weeks. That’s fine, because after all they are adolescents and this provides opportunities to introduce the main learning objectives for the sessions. With the last two groups I have reduced the adults present to myself as facilitator, the school counsellor and a male teacher. The teacher is extremely important and is responsible for talking to any of the boys who are struggling to control their behaviour.

We have a specific risk-management plan that includes the steps if any participant is overly disruptive. By week three the boys are usually into the competitions and are very aware of the rules and structure of the sessions. Out of approximately 80 boys who have been involved to date, only one had to be walked back to class due to his behaviour; however, he returned the next week and became one of the most successful participants.

I realise that there are no quick fixes for the majority of problems faced by our adolescent males; however, Rock and Water provides a means whereby we can teach young men a dialogue for many of their emotional experiences and reactions beyond the limitations of ‘I’m angry’. It also helps adults to think more practically about how to address the deficits of young men and how punitive methods are reinforcers rather than deterrents. Boys learn by doing; they learn to communicate through physical means. They sometimes struggle to articulate their feelings and may have difficulty empathising with others. Can they learn these skills? Of course they can, but it does require commitment from the government and non-government sectors to actually support the partnerships that they so enthusiastically call for.

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About 15 years ago, when educating boys first hit the headlines, ‘problem’ was definitely the word we heard most: boys causing problems, boys having problems, boys as problems. You would have thought by the tone of the discussion in the media and by many academics that to be born male was to ensure that you lacked almost everything socially useful and were destined to be a problem to yourself, your parents, your teachers and society at large. Much has been made in the media of generalisations about boys’ lack of academic success, lack of motivation, lack of respectful behaviour and general lack of direction. This problem-focused, sensationalist approach has created unnecessary fear amongst the public. In a media context most of the information regarding men was about the unacceptable or dangerous behaviour of young men and of men generally. Much has been made in the media of generalisations about boys’ lack of academic success, lack of motivation, lack of respectful behaviour and general lack of direction. This problem-focused, sensationalist approach has created unnecessary fear amongst the public.

The findings of the federal government’s inquiry into the education of boys were published in 2002 (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training 2002). This report represented a change in the tone of the public discussion. It acknowledged that the best and most practical work on this issue has come from the ground up, with parents and teachers forcing the issue onto the agenda of departments of education and other systems that had been reluctant to take it up. That’s not news to some of us who have been advocating for reforms for 10 years or more. But the recommendations from the report were good news. The report clearly established the major areas of concern in educating boys that are shared nationally and internationally, and also offered new directions for better meeting the needs of all boys while simultaneously meeting the needs of girls.

This report was followed by the national Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Programme (BELS Stage 1 and Stage 2), which funded a number of schools across Australia to investigate their unique boys’ education issues. The report on Stage 1 of BELS made specific recommendations about how schools can best tackle boys’ education. It outlined examples of programs and strategies being tried by individual teachers and schools (DEST 2003).

The response to parent and teacher concerns by states has been less consistent, but at the same time that this specific boy-focus occurred federally, many states embarked on system-wide curriculum reforms and state-wide pedagogy or quality teaching projects investigating teacher practice generally, as well as a focus on boys. These projects have been driven by the clear research findings that, of the factors fully within the power of the school to influence, the teacher–student relationship within the classroom is the most significant factor (Rowe 2000). In short, in school, it is the teacher that makes the most difference to successful student outcomes. This evidence, and the various state curriculum and teaching reforms, have had an important influence on approaches to boys as, contrary to what we might have previously thought, relationships with adults as well as with peers are crucial for boys’

And now for the good news . . .

Educating boys is no longer a problem

In this excerpt from the newly released Educating boys: the good news, Deborah Hartman gives an overview of the changing attitudes to boys’ education, an introduction to her model ‘boys doing well’, and the strengths-based approaches being adopted in schools, nationally and internationally.
motivation to do well. However, until recently there has been little consensus in the theory or practice around educating boys, and it is still a highly contested area for both academics and practitioners.

Sharing the knowledge
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. The papers delivered at that conference have been compiled into a book, Educating boys: the good news, which exemplifies some principles of practice in educating boys and an emerging positive model of educating boys. These works 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 depending on their main focus in this positive model: identity, relationships or 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.

This paper is an excerpt form the introductory chapter, which outlines the principles underpinning successful approaches to educating boys and describes the emerging positive model of success for boys. It also discusses how the contributors’ papers highlight aspects of it. The approaches outlined here represent an enormous shift in the thinking and practice of educating boys. They show an approach to gender that will be likely to enhance positive gender relationships between boys and girls and lead to positive outcomes in school and in life for both boys and girls.

Principles of success: Strengths-based, data-informed, solution-focused
These principles apply to the wide variety of contexts of Australian and New Zealand schools although, as schools vary greatly, the implementation of them also varies appropriately depending on the school and community contexts.

Strengths-based
Schools that are having success in improving both the social and academic outcomes for boys are adopting strategies that could be characterised as strengths based. This concept, more familiar in community development (Kretzmann & McKnight 1997) is now being applied to education generally and particularly to the education of boys. Barwick (2004) shows how the emerging strengths-based, male-focused approach to boys is informing youth work in New Zealand. Evidence from New Zealand also suggests that some schools are having more success than others in educating boys and that those schools are also more successful with Maori students (Education Review 2000).

Recognition of differences, and developing ways to accommodate and celebrate these differences in a complementary way, seems to be a key to success.

A strengths-based approach begins with identifying what’s already going really well in a school. Schools identify the strengths of the teachers and the community and the strengths of the boys. A strengths approach to boys does not mean that teachers are naively sweet about boys or the difficulties that some boys present, but there is an acknowledgement that every boy, no matter how difficult, has strengths to be capitalised on and extended. Our job as teachers is to draw out those strengths so that he can grow into the best man he is capable of being.

This approach to educating boys implies that the solutions to the
difficulties of boys partially lie within those boys and within the schools and communities in which they live and grow. It is a positive approach that lends itself to collaborating with the boys and the community and finding shared solutions to any problems or difficulties. It is a creative approach where solutions are found as part of the process, and may take us to some unexpected places. Solutions to literacy difficulties, for example, are not necessarily found in a remedial reading program, but in a program that draws on the strengths and interests of the boys in their real lives, such as working with motors. These solutions are often ones that the community can contribute to in a meaningful way.

The evidence of the strengths or assets of the boys, the school and the community is an important data set. Schools interrogate a broad range of school-based data to give them clues about where they are going really well with boys at the moment and where they are not going so well. They use this data to identify their priority concerns and to inform their interventions before they start. In this way they use local data to inform their actions, rather than be driven by system-wide priorities.

Data-informed
One reason why it has taken so long for a degree of consensus to form about approaches to educating boys has been a lack of useable data. National, state and school-based research was slow in coming. National data collected across all states was very important in establishing the need for changes in educating boys. It provided benchmarks on which to base any further actions. Recent research has now confirmed the groundswell of parental concern for boys and anecdotal teacher evidence that many boys are not doing as well as we would hope. There is now no dispute that boys are over-represented in the lowest academic streams and remedial classes. Boys’ literacy levels from Year 3 onwards are of particular concern, especially in the area of writing. While boys still excel in the very top levels of some subjects, there has been a deterioration of achievement levels for boys over the past 10 years in many academic subjects. This trend, while more obvious amongst rural, Indigenous and low socioeconomic boys, cuts across and holds true for all social groupings of boys (ACER 2002, 2003; DEST 2003; Rowe 2000).

However, as Peter Cuttance rightly cautions us, we must be careful both
about the data we collect and the interpretation we put on data. Systems, schools and teachers collect large amounts of data on students and report on their progress in a variety of ways. Often the data is not collated in ways that provide a coherent picture of both the academic and social progress of particular students. Sometimes gender is ignored altogether or outcomes are not tracked across years. Many schools are first alerted to the persistence of boys’ poor achievement when school-wide statistics on a range of criteria — such as class literacy and numeracy levels, leadership activities, detention slips and school awards — are collated and analysed.

School-based data takes many forms. An important issue in data collection is whether the data provides adequate information to develop successful interventions into boys’ education. A related issue is the range of criteria used to determine whether boys are successful in school and whether schools are successful in meeting the needs of boys. The criteria schools choose to document are revealing. Recent research (Fletcher 2000, 2005; Browne 2000) clearly links academic success with social outcomes. Boys are over-represented in the ‘hard’ end of school discipline procedures, including exclusion from school. They are also over-represented as early school leavers. There are strong links between early school leaving and mental health and social issues, such as depression, drug abuse, unemployment and criminal activity. Yet many schools do not track the social well-being or connection to school of students in any systematic ways.

Concern that many boys do not possess the academic skills or personal qualities they will need to succeed in a modern workplace is a common theme in writings on boys’ education. While many argue that only certain groups of boys are affected, all participants in the discussion acknowledge the need to address the issue.

Two relevant questions that data may reveal are:

- **Which boys are experiencing the most difficulty?** This data informs school strategies that will support improvement for the most disadvantaged or under-achieving boys and would lead towards parity of outcomes between boys who cluster at the tail of our achievement scales and those who are currently achieving well.

- **How can we enhance the learning experiences of all boys?** This data, such as behaviour statistics, attendance, truancy and retention rates, informs school strategies which lead to positive changes in school culture that move towards deeper engagement, and therefore improved outcomes, for all boys and towards parity of outcomes between boys and girls.

Academic criteria, such as literacy and numeracy levels, are the core business of schools. Yet even these are often not systematically analysed to reveal gendered or other patterns within the school population. Subject choices are often very revealing of gendered patterns of interest and of views of acceptable male or female identity.

Attendance levels, awards, participation in leadership and co-curricular activities may all be considered criteria for engagement of boys in the life of the school. Chris Sarra described at the conference how one Indigenous school completely changed its appalling attendance pattern by rewarding complete attendance. The number of unexplained absences improved by 94% in the 18-month period following the implementation of a reward program for attendance. This in turn led to greater academic success among the students.

Many schools are now acknowledging not just the end point of achievement but the qualities of perseverance, cooperation, organisation and effort that could lead to success. Boys may well demonstrate these qualities in different ways to girls. How does the school acknowledge and reward students? Who gets acknowledged for what kinds of activities and by whom? Do schools currently collate, distribute and analyse these records in ways that give you a clear picture of all boys, groups of boys, or individuals? Can you make comparisons between girls and boys or between any groups with the data currently available to you? Would you be able to use this data to plan meaningful interventions? These are questions schools are asking themselves when they systematically begin to address boys’ education issues.

Many schools are developing benchmarks against which success is measured. A pre-intervention level is determined from current information. A goal of an acceptable level is decided upon before a program begins, and then measured against regularly to evaluate the progress. Benchmarks can measure progress of individuals or groups of boys. They are a useful tool in tracking changes and in evaluating the intervention programs of the school.

The BELS Stage 2 project has a strong emphasis on evidence-based action and program development. Participating schools are basing their boys’ programs on the evidence of need gathered within their schools. Many of those schools are developing a much broader approach to the issues identified through their data gathering and are developing solutions that can be tested over time.

**Solution-focused**

Schools doing well with boys in many contexts identify the main issues facing all the boys or particular groups of boys within their school. They also use the information about the strengths of...
the boys, the teachers and the community. These two data sets should inform the programs they put in place to address their concerns in ways that will be successful with the boys. For example, schools often investigate the learning preferences of the boys and compare these with the girls. They identify the learning strengths of the boys, the girls and individuals and groups. They then look at levels of community involvement at the moment. Do they involve any dads? What do they invite men and women to do in the school? This information supports schools to develop priorities for their interventions and take a systematic long-term approach starting with their most urgent needs. It often leads to very innovative approaches that come from the boys themselves or build on the resources of the community.

The Family Action Centre (FAC) at The University of Newcastle has been working with and advocating for men and boys for the past 10 years. We have been instrumental in practice-based research that raised awareness of issues facing boys in schools and have supported teachers and parents to find solutions to these issues. Over the past four years the Boys in Schools Program of the FAC has conducted action research in conjunction with groups of schools in a variety of urban and rural locations in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Schools in the project are taking at least 18 months to gather data, identify their boys’ education issues and to come up with and test possible solutions. Based on an analysis of their own school-based evidence, schools go through several cycles of identifying their issues, planning, acting, observing what works, reflecting on that and then re-planning.

Through this long-term work it has become clear that there is a consistency in the types of issues raised, patterns of learning preferences, and interests. These reflect differences between boys and girls, common themes in the concerns of the boys and common notions of approaches to address the issues successfully. This has lead to a model of practice, (Hartman 2004) that enables us to take a holistic approach to a boys’ development and a whole-school approach to boys’ success. The model links male identity, learning and relationships in ways that acknowledge that success at school involves a complex interaction of these three aspects. It provides a framework for intervention that addresses many aspects at once: for the boy, it addresses physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects; for the school, it allows interventions simultaneously in pedagogy, curriculum, pastoral care and school organisational structures.

This approach leads schools to interrogate their school culture and climate, and to examine the attitudes and behaviours of the boys and girls, teachers (both male and female) and mothers and fathers. Issues of male identity and other social identity factors come to the foreground. Participants make the connections between the academic and the social; between the personal, home, community and school lives of the boys; between the teachers and the students; and between the boys’ and the girls’ experiences of school. This is a whole-school approach, rather than a one-off program.

**A model for boys’ success**

**Male identity**

A strengths-based approach to educating boys includes an acknowledgement that male identity is an important and legitimate aspect of development. In short, it does matter that boys are growing up to be men (not just people). A positive self-concept is an important aspect of male identity. Boys from all family backgrounds actively seek to fashion a male identity they are comfortable with. This is a lifelong process. It is not a static entity.

Individuals and society change over time. Socioeconomic status, ethnic and geographical situations are important factors in this process as they form the background for individual identities. The task of growing up to be a fine man is neither straightforward nor predictable. Schools doing well with boys in a variety of different geographical and socioeconomic circumstances are taking male identity into account in the education of their boys.

This element of the model implies that it is important that schools need to take a positive approach to supporting boys to develop a strong, secure yet flexible male identity. School communities, including the boys, can be involved in discussions of what it means to be a fine young man in order to clearly articulate shared values about male identity. To support a positive male identity it is important that boys have both male and female role models in their lives, including at school.

Once again, the example of Chris Sarra is instructive. In his discussion of Cherbourg school Chris outlines the important role of Indigenous men in creating a school culture that included high expectations of school success and behaviour, ensuring that Indigenous boys had a positive sense of Indigenous male identity, rather than colluding with negative perceptions from the wider society of Indigenous males as delinquents. Teachers at the school also needed to reassess their expectations of Indigenous boys to ensure they created a climate of high expectations of academic excellence.

In a moving personal account of her research in New Zealand boys’ schools, conference delegate Celia Lashlie discusses the social and emotional strengths that boys develop through adolescence and the ways that schools and parents can support them on their journey towards manhood. And also from New Zealand, Michael Irwin encourages us to ask the boys before
we embark on any program designed to meet their needs.

Richard Fletcher argues that current state education policies and theoretical perspectives hinder the research on the relevance of the gender of adults who interact with boys. The significance of male teachers is a feature of the discussion. Many advocate for more of a gender balance in the teaching profession and in leadership positions within schools. Richard argues that there are important reasons for schools to include males in a systematic way, and that schools can identify the qualities in males that they want to model for the boys.

Many schools have developed programs to include adult males as role models or older role models to boys as a strategy for supporting the development of a positive sense of male identity for boys within school. Paul Tracey from Hunter Sports High describes the camp at the beginning of the year for Year 7 boys, which includes male teachers, older male students, fathers or father figures and some women teachers. This school has a parallel program for the Year 7 girls. The school attributes the dramatic decrease in violent incidents by Year 7 boys to the positive climate that is created during this camp and continued by other strategies throughout the year. Other schools have significant events, including work experience, where boys are given opportunities to work with and develop significant relationships with older males.

Andy Kay describes the ways that boys disenchanted with school can connect with mentors at Typo Station, a residential program for boys to learn the skills necessary to return to the mainstream.

While the role of men is very important, it is also argued that all teachers need to analyse how their teaching programs and school structures send positive messages to boys about male identity, and equally to girls about female identity. I have previously analysed how women teachers can successfully work with boys to support a positive male identity. (Hartman 1999).

**Relationships**

It appears that schools who are doing the most to educate boys well take into account the complexities of boys’ lives and the challenges that face them as they actively seek to form a secure yet flexible gender identity, learn in ways that suit them best, and develop strong, meaningful relationships.

Evidence from the FAC projects and the BELS schools suggests that, while teachers are the key to success...
for boys, it is rarely pedagogy alone, or any one intervention that makes a difference. This model, emerging from the data-informed, strengths-based, solution-focused approach of the FAC indicates the need for a shift away from a relatively narrow focus on particular gender-specific problems towards a more comprehensive focus on the differing yet complementary educational and social needs of boys and girls.

The development of the social and emotional intelligences necessary to build resilience and to regulate their behaviour is also an important developmental task on the path to manhood. Don Edgar stresses how important these skills are for men in the modern workplace. Freerk Ykema, in discussing the development of his award-winning Rock and Water program, clearly articulates the different challenges that boys and girls face in developing these skills.

All of the other conference papers gathered in the section on ‘Developing Social and Emotional Intelligences’ showcase programs where boys’ male identities are specifically taken into account in the teaching of the skills necessary for boys to develop in this area of their lives.

An important aspect of strategies adopted by many successful schools is an acknowledgement that good relationships do matter to boys. The explicit inclusion of social and emotional aspects of intelligence into teaching and assessment strategies appears to be very effective for boys. Relationship skills and expectations need to be explicitly taught. These strategies are supported by clear research evidence that social and academic outcomes are linked and that good relationships between teachers and boys are vital for success.

David Shores’ program supports teachers to look at their own emotional regulation when dealing with boys so they can be effective role models. Brian Senstock tackles the difficult issue of homophobia for boys in a rural community. It has been argued that homophobia is a limiting factor for all boys, restricting their behaviours and choices, as well as having devastating effects on students who either do or may like to identify as gay (Plummer 2000).

Learning
Martine Delfos discusses her research on learning differences between boys and girls that are evident from the earliest days of life that may be the key to why some approaches — particularly activity-based learning — work better with some boys than others. Martine clearly links genetic pre-dispositions with social learning in ways that are very helpful to teachers trying to understand boys’ learning needs. She argues that there has been a negative attitude to boys’ learning preferences in the past that has not been useful. Gurian (2001), Nagel (2005) and others support Delfos’ emphasis on understanding fundamental learning differences between boys and girls. They suggest that it is crucial that differences are taken into account when determining the learning programs for boys and girls. Research into learning differences — and in particular the practical implications of new brain research — is controversial and in its infancy. A longitudinal study may shed some light on the effectiveness of some of these new approaches. It seems that practice is leading theory as many schools are exploring learning differences as part of their pedagogical approaches to boys, with great success.

Many schools are testing their intuition about boys’ learning styles by using scales that measure learning preferences. Multiple Intelligences Checklists (McGrath & Noble 2000) are one way to determine the self-reported learning preferences of the boys and girls. Schools using these, such as Hunter Sports High, report that consistent
patterns emerge with kinaesthetic or physical learning styles consistently ranked as a first preference and verbal skills consistently ranked as last preference by the majority of boys in their school. In contrast, verbal intelligence is consistently ranked highly by many girls.

Boys’ interests and talents are an important part of their male identity. Many school programs have utilised the interests and talents of the boys in order to expand their options or indeed, for some boys, to keep them interested enough to stay at school long enough to achieve their employment goals. Bob Smith’s Boys’ Business program links boys’ interests in music and high-energy activity with social and behavioural goals. His boys’ only program and teaching approaches appeal to boys who have not previously opted to join a mixed choir or other school music opportunities. In the Netherlands, boys’ learning preferences and strengths are even taken into account in driving courses, as Lauk Woltring explains in his paper.

Schools in all states have emphasised the importance of teacher pedagogy in teaching boys well. Many of the boys’ initiatives overlap with school-based pedagogy or quality teaching projects. For example, in NSW schools are investigating boys’ interests to ensure that the significance of school knowledge is made explicit to boys and, in the process, discovering exactly what a quality learning environment or intellectual quality may mean for boys. Research that emphasises the links between brain development, biological characteristics and social learning may go some way to explaining why these universal principles of pedagogy may be absolutely crucial for boys.

The emphasis on authentic instruction and assessment, interactive activities and tasks that link with real life seem to be effective with many boys, particularly those who have learning difficulties or are likely to leave school early. For example, in the Mirani cluster, conducting a BELS project, a group of boys are engaging in community-based repair of small engines to develop literacy and business skills. Glenmore Park High School began by making a curriculum unit more ‘boy-friendly’ and ended up in a real-life marketing campaign.

**Literacy**

In his paper on factors influencing literacy development, Ken Rowe emphasises teaching practices as a key factor. He argues that inattentiveness by boys in the classroom may be caused by an inability to achieve early literacy and suggests that the key to early literacy attainment is good teaching practices (Rowe 2000).

Debates about particular literacy methodologies are always current. Wheldell and Beaman (2002) stress that phonemic awareness is one of the necessary building blocks to effective literacy. All of the papers in the literacy section favour an eclectic approach which can encompass many different literacy strategies, including phonemic awareness. Glenda Raison describes her research which concludes that a range of collaborative approaches can engage boys in literacy. The common theme in the papers on literacy is that, for boys especially, reading is a social practice, not just a mechanical or a solitary one. So the content must be relevant to their real lives, they must be able to see the purpose for their effort (such as having an audience, or the chance of winning a prize), and it must be radical enough to be engaging to them. Victoria Clay offers a framework based on boys’ interests which is a useful tool for teachers wanting to vary their approaches to engage boys. Chuck Marriott talks about the many ways that low-progress readers can be encouraged towards success. Games, team competitions, and tracking your personal best are all ways that basic skills can be made fun for boys.

Annette Peach and Peter Hughes from Gordonvale State School in Queensland describe their program where older boys mentor younger boys in literacy. The theme of male role models for literacy is taken up by Stephanie Tranter taking about the FAST (Fathers and Schools Together) Program, where dads come into primary schools to work with the children in fun literacy activities.

Paul van Eeden and Colin Thompson describe boys making radio programs and DVDs using literacies for the 21st century. They argue that literacy has changed dramatically with the introduction of new technology. Boys are leading the way with new literacies and can help teachers keep up by working together on collaborative projects. The DVD, *Boys’ views*, is one such collaborative project that gives a boy’s perspective on schooling.

**Towards a new theory and practice**

The papers in *Educating boys: the good news* represent some of the best thinking and practice in educating boys today. They show we’ve come a long way in 10 years. We are moving away from a problem focus towards a more comprehensive theory and practice based on positive notions of male identity, learning and relationships. This approach begins to address the complexities of male identity, its inter-relatedness with other factors and its links with school success. Schools represented in the book, and many others who could not be included, are developing comprehensive practical and theoretical approaches that are data-informed, strengths-based and solution-focused. And the evidence is they are having great success with their boys.

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Deborah Hartman has been an educator for over twenty years. She has taught primary aged children in Queensland, NSW and the Northern Territory of Australia, where she worked as a teacher, teacher educator and curriculum developer with Aboriginal communities. Deborah is the mother of two fine young men in training and is currently the Manager of Research and Dissemination Co-ordination at the Family Action Centre and the co-ordinator of the Graduate Certificate and Masters Programs in Educational Studies at the University of Newcastle. She is particularly interested in women’s work with boys and the relationship between the social and academic outcomes for boys and those for girls. She believes that child-care and school settings offer us important opportunities for developing wonderful, equitable relationships between boys and girls and for assisting both boys and girls to reach their full potential.
Conference publication released

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 depending on their main focus in this positive model: 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.
Late last year we emailed schools to ask whether your boys were doing creative artwork and, if they were, to send us copies so that we can showcase their talent in the Bulletin. We have been overwhelmed by the response, and are still busy cataloguing the submissions.

Boys of all ages and backgrounds have sent in copies of paintings, prints, photographs, and sculptures. Boys from urban and rural areas, state and private schools, single-sex and co-ed schools, wealthy and disadvantaged areas.

The range and complexity of the material has been astounding and reflects the enormous talent of our boys.

We will certainly showcase some of this work in our issues this year but we are also contemplating other ways to promote the work of boys.

Many thanks to the teachers who made this a possibility and please keep them coming. The process is fascinating.

Artwork credits (clockwise from top left): Ben Lake, Reddam House; Daniel Bassett, Calvary Christian College, Brisbane; Rohan Stephens, Smiths Hill High School; Keith Glindermann, Calvary Christian College, Brisbane; Matthew Brown, Northern Territory Open Education Centre.
What we can do for you!

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.

Staff development workshops and seminars

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 (including behaviour) 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.
- Rock and Water (one-day workshop).
- Boys Business: tuning into boys in the middle years using music and the arts.
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 twelve- to eighteen-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 twelve to eighteen 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 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.
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

www.newcastle.edu.au/courseinfo/handbook.htm
or
contact Michelle Gifford on 02 4921 8739
or
email Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
Inaugural Rock and Water Conference

Newcastle, 16 October 2006

See back page for details.

Information and Discussion Group

If you would like to join the Rock and Water Information Group please send a blank email to join-rockandwaterprogram@edna.edu.au

This email list will keep you up to date with tour dates, conferences and general Rock and Water information.

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 will also include 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. Maximum of 30 participants per workshop. Total cost: $2300.00 (inc gst) plus any travel and sundry expenses. Price includes 15 starter manuals, one basic exercise video and one perspective theory book and is presented by our qualified instructors. (Extra participants $77.00 each.)

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).

Rock and Water Workshops for February–May 2006

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<td>23–25 February 2006</td>
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| 1–3 May 2006  | Newcastle, 16 October 2006

See back page for details.
Editorial

What a great celebratory edition to start 2006. The boys from Myrtleford Secondary College are looking forward to their future careers as chefs or back to the experiences of men who are important to them in the Blokes Biographies project. Their teachers have used the boys’ interests and strengths to achieve great outcomes. There are two other articles about schools and classrooms that are really male-friendly, also resulting in great outcomes. The Manly Sea Eagles, usually more famous for rugby league skills than literacy skills, are inspiring young fellas to get into reading and writing, in the article by Susan Hirsch. Kassandra Lorrice describes a whole classroom makeover using the boys artistic and renovating talents.

Boys’ social and emotional skills are being enhanced by two programs described by Noel Boycott and Paul Edwards. Speaking about strengths isn’t it great when teachers get the recognition they deserve? Paul won an award for his implementation of the Rock and Water program described in his article. Don’t forget, if you want to know more or share about your implementation of Rock and Water, the first Australian Rock and Water Conference is coming up in Newcastle in October this edition, so register your interest now. There are details in the back pages of this edition.

My article in the research section develops the model I see emerging in the positive work in educating boys going on around Australia. We are beginning to define ‘Success for Boys’ and see quite clearly the approaches that will bring it to fruition. The Family Action Centre has put out a new book, based on the papers presented at the fourth Working with Boys, Building Fine Men Conference, held in Melbourne last year. It’s called Educating boys: the good news, has a foreword by Steve Buddulph and contributions from over 40 academics and practitioners who have seen ‘Success for Boys’ with their own eyes and practice it with their own hands every day. I hope you get a copy. The articles in this edition of the Bulletin are a great taster for all the good work, some of which is documented more fully in the book.

We’ve had an overwhelming response to our call for boys’ art work to enhance this publication. Thanks to those who submitted. We’ll be using the inspiring pieces all year, and it has got us thinking about a whole edition devoted to boys’ creativity. I hope you and the boys you teach also have a very successful year. We would love to hear your stories so contact us if you would like to write about, draw, photograph... your success story.

Deborah Hartman
For the editorial committee

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

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

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The Boys in Schools Bulletin

Focusing on practical initiatives in schools

Puts teachers in touch with others who are trying 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

Published by
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.

www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/boysinschools

NEW RESOURCES

Educating Boys: The Good News (Book $49.50; CD-ROM $25)
Nuts & Bolts of Kids & Schools: A Course for Dads
Pack of Strengths
6 Pack of Strengths — Mini Pack Poster, 500 spot stickers & booklet
6 Pack of Strengths — Top-Up Sticker Pack: 300 spot stickers
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 — How 8-11 boys & girls interviewed about their vision of an ideal school

OTHER RESOURCES

The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — Single Set: Printed format = 1 copy of each issue
The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — Combo Set: 1 copy each of Printed + CD format
The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — School Set Printed format only = 3 copies of each issue
The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — School Set Printed format only = 1 copy of each issue
The Boys in School Bulletin 2006 — School Set Printed format only = 3 copies of each issue
Boys in Schools — addresses, real issues, behaviour, values and relationships
Boys & Families: Literacy—Strengths Resources
Fathers & Schools Together (FAST) in Literacy & Learning: A resource manual
Games for Growing — Wilson McQuilkin — game, 163 A4 pages
I Can Hardly Wait Till Monday — women teachers talk about what works for them
Leadership in Boys’ Education — results from a national forum held in 1999, 16 case studies
Mar’s World: A Game for Young Men (suitable for high-school age only)
Our Scrapbook of Strengths — 42 cards to explore strengths that bind families & communities
Sometimes Magic — 33 colourful laminated cards
Strength Cards for Kids — strength-based resources for primary school-aged children

POSTERS

Boys Rule posters
Boys to Men posters
13 Ways to Be Involved As a Father poster

ROCK AND WATER RESOURCES

The Rock and Water Approach Manual (2nd edition)
The Rock and Water Perspective: Theory Book
Rock and Water Activity Reaction video (English subtitles, high-school age only)
Rock and Water Basic Exercises video
Rock and Water Basic Exercises DVD
Rock and Water polo shirts

INDEPENDENT RESOURCES & ENGAGING FAMILIES

Indigenous Fathers Posters — set of five A2 colour posters
Young Aboriginal Fathers Report
Indigenous fathers posters, DVD and report: Special package deal
Fatherhood Research in Australia (report)

Subtotal

$127.50

Postage & handling (add 15% to max $30)

TOTAL

$150.00

Make cheques payable to: The University of Newcastle (ABN 15 753 767 735)

Contact name:

Postal address:

Order no:

Phone no:

Fax: Email:

Please invoice our organisation (Australia only)

Enclosed is my cheque for AUD

I wish to pay cash

Please debit my credit card

Bankcard

Visa

Mastercard

Subtotal

$127.50

Order Form

Family Action Centre Resources

The Boys in Schools Program, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308

p: 02 4921 8730 f: 02 4921 8666 e: a health Boys'n'schools@newcastle.edu.au

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 the NewSIS 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.
New from the Family Action Centre

Good News for Boys and Teachers

Conference Publication Out Now!

See page 34 for details and inside back cover for order form.

Boys in Schools Seminar Program

The Boys in School Program and the Schools and Community Team at The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle, offer a range of positive, strengths-based seminars which combine the latest research with practical ideas and suggestions for addressing the learning and social needs of boys and for strengthening school and community partnerships. We also offer ‘Success for Boys’ modules.

The professional learning 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
- recognise the importance of school, parent and community collaboration to enhancing the educational outcomes of students
- develop practical strategies that can be implemented at a classroom as well as whole-school level.

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
- Rock and Water (one-day workshop)
- Boys Business: tuning into boys in the middle years using music and the arts
- developing resilience in your school community
- developing and strengthening school and community partnerships.

Rock and Water Conference 16 October 2006 (Newcastle)

Do you want to find out more about Rock and Water in boys’ education and hear more about:
- implementing Rock and Water in your school or centre
- evaluating your Rock and Water program
- and much much more?
Then come to the first Australia-wide Rock and Water Conference.

Express your interest in attending now

☐ Yes, I would like to attend the Rock and Water Conference, please send further details
☐ I am interested in attending the one-day introductory training and conference
☐ I am interested in attending the three-day training and conference
☐ I have previously completed a one-day introductory workshop
☐ I have previously completed a three-day training workshop
☐ I have not completed any training at this stage

Name:
__________________________________________________________
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Postal address: ____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
Postcode: __________

Email __________________________________________
Phone ______________________ Fax _______________________

Please return this expression of interest to Boys in Schools Program, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308
Phone 02 4921 8739 Fax 02 4921 8686 Email Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au

See page 34 for details and Inside back cover for order form.

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