



The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN



Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs

PRODUCED BY BOYS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM OF THE FAMILY ACTION CENTRE



Boys in Action

This issue features:

Tribes

A process for whole school change that engages boys in learning

More Than an Education

A Tasmanian research study identifies the key ingredients for dynamic school community partnerships

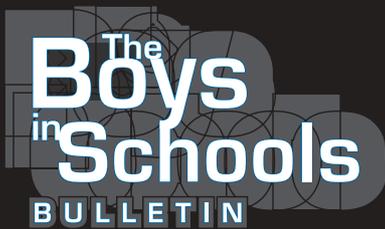
Also

Cooktown: pushing the boundaries to be a step head

Big Brother's take on truancy

Getting down and getting dirty – an answer to social isolation

Boys at risk get another chance



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The Boys in Schools Bulletin

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



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Editorial

Leading up to our 2003 Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships Conference, this first issue of the Boys in Schools Bulletin for 2003 brings inspirational stories of schools and communities working together to strengthen the capacities of boys and enhance the community in general. This will be a thread through all editions of the Bulletin this year.

In this issue, there are several stories of the amazing outcomes for boys that can be achieved when schools and communities form partnerships to develop programs to meet their needs. We hear what happened when the government pulled the funding on a successful Kids at Risk program for disengaged boys in secondary schools in western Sydney. The community did not take this lying down. We also hear about how a program in Cooktown in far North Queensland has evolved through the on-going commitment of the school and various sectors in the community.

At a Melbourne Catholic high school, the school is working with parents and boys to ensure that attendance is high and truancy almost non-existent. Also in Victoria, two schools are creating a new school culture based on respect and collaboration, through a program called Tribes. And a teacher's interest has created a gardening club that has been the way out of social isolation for a group of boys.

Our research section highlights the issue of leadership in school and community partnerships. And we hear from teachers across the top end of the Northern Territory who have seen plenty of action with their boys through the BEBOP program. Finding out how boys like to learn is still a big issue. Tony Butz tackles this one, and Craig Hammond looks at a resource for indigenous kids.

It's very pleasing to see the federal government has launched the Boys' Education Lighthouse schools programme, so don't forget to get your submissions in. It's going to be a big year for boys' education. Good luck with all your projects and I hope to see you at the conference.

Deborah Hartman for the editorial committee.

Stop Press

It's not too late to register for our conference. See page 48

Disclaimer

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

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Guidelines for Contributors

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

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

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

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

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Primary Section

Tribes: A process for whole school change

Fay Agterhuis, Principal of Point Lonsdale Primary School, talks about their choice of the Tribes Process to counteract school based issues in boys' education.



...you could see even at the end of Year 2 that that whole boy code thing was starting to kick in. You could almost see these kids turning off.

Point Lonsdale Primary School is situated on the shore of Port Phillip Bay about half an hour from Geelong and about one hour from Melbourne. It is a relatively small school with a student population this year of 187. Over the years the school has fluctuated from 140 to 200 students. In the past we have had a fairly high transient population because one-quarter to one-third of our kids have been drawn from Fort Queenscliffe which provided officer training for Australian and overseas defence personnel. We are running ten classes this year.

Boys and disengagement, boys at risk, a lowering of the literacy standards, boys being outstripped by girls: these are all part of the current educational rhetoric. When Fay began to unpack their own C.S.F. achievement levels and anecdotal records she could see these patterns being reflected in their own data.

Can you tell me how you developed your particular approach to boys' education?

Yes, I was first appointed here in 1999. At the end of the year I started analyzing the data and could see that there was a gap in boys' academic achievements, literacy particularly. When I started to unpack the data I could see that this group of underachieving boys were our local boys. They weren't boys that were moving in and out. By and large they had been here from Prep and obviously there was something that we weren't doing – we weren't quite hooking them in.

So in 2000 we decided we would set up what we called our Boys Project to look at addressing those inequities in their literacy learning in particular and we'd hook in at the Grade 3 level. I have a belief that the middle years schooling is too late. It is almost learning suicide if you haven't got them at Year 3. You need to be proactive so you don't lose them.

In Victoria the Early Years of Schooling programs are really strong learning and the impact of the teachings is huge. We had these highly enthused kids at the end of Grade 1 and 2 but something was happening to some of them at the start of Year 3. You could see even at the end of Year 2 that that whole boy code thing was starting to kick in. You could almost see these kids turning off. So in 2000, we started to look at ways of addressing boys' learning in a way that literacy wasn't seen as one of those passive teacher-pleaser sorts of activities. We came up with what we call "Making it real to make it work." We started doing lots of active learning and giving kids, particularly the boys, ways to make their learning real, so that it was seen as a transferable skill rather than something where you wrote a story and had pretty borders or you read a book and that was it.

At the same time we had an international teaching fellow placed at the school, Lisa Hall, who had come from Utah and she was actually a Tribes Trainer. We didn't know much about Tribes other than what she'd been emailing us. We'd been talking about inclusive curriculum via email in the six months or so before she got here and she was saying, "Well I'm a trainer in Tribes and the process really fits with your thinking."

So we decided we would try the Tribes process in part of this Boys' Project trial. Jeanne Gibbs developed the Tribes process in the U.S.A. and combines academics, social skill development, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and problem solving approaches to support schools in shaping a learning community, which maximizes learning and human development.

By using the inclusion strategies and really focusing on the quality of relationships - getting to know the kids and really starting to unpack what made them tick and also letting them unpack what made us tick - we could see that we were making some connections. They could see that they had some choices; they could look at their ways of learning. The teachers did some work in learning styles and it all happened from there, but I have to stress that the classroom teachers are the people that made this happen. I have a group of highly motivated teachers who got this happening. It wasn't me sitting in the classroom.

What changes did you begin to see in behaviour?

We always collect our mid year data and by the time we ended up looking at the data and the anecdotal stuff, we had a peer mediation program happening in the play ground to solve the minor play ground disputes. We found that the kids in the trial group weren't using those mediators because as part of the process you teach conflict resolution, so they had the skills and the strategies to mediate their own problems. So we could see things happening.

I'd see these disengaged boys going to the library and borrowing books and they'd come up and say "Hey Mrs A, you ought to read this book it's really gross and you'd really like it!" One of the units the teachers planned was based on a mini economy where they had an interchangeable currency across the three rooms. Rather than just do money as one of those maths programs, where you cut out magazine pictures and you trade them, they had to actually come up with the concept design, market it, make it and then they had a two day Market where they could trade their goods using this fake currency. So there was actually something real coming out of it.

The idea grew so that we had this group of boys, who created their own little mini-business called The Beadie Boys, making necklaces and bracelets and selling them at the school market. So they were putting their learning into real practice. That has now become part of the school culture and at least twice a year we have student markets. It's a bit like a hawkers' market in South East Asia. The central area in the school between buildings is all set up with the kids stalls and they have to meet Health Regs. and Quality Control and all the rest of it.

The first year they sold stuff and they were allowed to keep the money, the second time around they donated 10% of their profits to a local charity that the Junior School Council designated. Last year they donated everything to a family, who had been associated with the school through the Army in P.N.G, to support some medical needs they had. So the impact of the boy's stuff and the Tribes process has supported student initiated tasks as well.

There were also changes in conflict resolution. We were teaching cooperative learning strategies, doing lots of group skills and using the Tribes agreements: attentive listening, mutual respect, appreciations / no put-downs, right to pass and our own, personal best. You actually teach the agreement. You teach kids how to listen and you teach what mutual give appreciations and how to solve problems and all these sorts of things. So it was becoming part of the language of the school community.

I'd see these disengaged boys going to the library and borrowing books and they'd come up and say "Hey Mrs A, you ought to read this book it is really gross and you'd really like it!"

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At one time we looked over and there was a table of our teachers in tears.

We have had students in Grade 4 and 5 who have run Tribe activities for 80 plus students and they will just stand up and do it.

So how did you go about training the staff in the Tribes process?

We had a trial of three classes, which we used as a model. We were going to use Tribes to underpin what we were trying to do in boys' education. It was a 2-3 class and two lots of Grade 3-4 classes. Three teachers worked together to plan the units and the activities, which I supported. We'd often be in the staff room talking about what we were learning and what the kids were doing. We were talking it up, we weren't beating anyone over the head about it. We also started talking about this being the first time a Tribes Trainer has ever been in Australia and how we could possibly be the dumbest school in the world if we didn't make the most of this opportunity.

Lisa was due to return to the States in December. In August we made a commitment that we would train the whole staff. Staff training is fairly costly and we did some interesting deals that I won't quote! In Victoria we are only entitled to four curriculum days a year and we had already used our quota.

By that time staff were so focused that this was the way to go because it really fitted into the notion of shifting the school culture. Because the officer training was moving to Canberra, it was the last year that the Army was going to be a real force in the school. So the timing was right. Staff committed to what we called two curriculum days so they worked a Friday and a Saturday and then a few weeks later they worked a Sunday and a Monday, so staff gave up two days of their own time in addition so that they could do the training.

The training is an interesting process in itself because as a training group you actually go through the process in a compacted form, just as the kids in your class do. So the groups that get trained are like the trainer's class. You muddle them around as you do in your class and see who works with who and where they gel and you physically put them in tribes. At one time we looked over and there was a table of our teachers in tears. I talk about it as 'luxury training' because you really do get to know where people are coming from and that really builds the quality of relationships. That's just so important for boys because they can understand where everyone in their particular Tribe is coming from. So it really builds tolerance and acceptance and inclusion. The spin off for our staff has been amazing because we know where everyone is coming from and it just makes a huge difference. If you've got equality of those relationships with your staff, and the staff's been through it, they know how valuable it is for the kids, and so they work through it.

It just has a life of its own now. I think because the agreements are such common sense agreements it spills over into the family beautifully. It's not something that boys think, oh you know "this is really wanky sort of stuff, I don't want to have to deal with this" because it does make sense for them.

The kids are very good at reminding people "Is this attentive listening?" or "That's not mutual respect" and it become part of the language of the community. You have parents come in and say "Well I'm not happy about this, because it is not showing mutual respect." So it has impact! We have had anecdotal feedback from local cricket and footy that at the end of a match you hear these kids giving appreciation to each other or to the coach. So it really is boys' stuff.

And it's changing the whole dynamic of the personal interaction?

Yes. It is about re-culturing schools in a sense. It's not 'do as I say not as I do'. The kids expect the quality of the relationship to be different. If you ask the kids here what is the difference, some of the boys in particular, will say the relationships are more equal - that we know you will listen to us. We talk about things like reading the situation to know where the line is. The kids are far more articulate now. The boys especially are a lot better able to talk about how things are impacting on them or what they want to do, they are able to empathise with the fears and concerns of others and are okay about showing this "softer side". In general students are skilled and they have got a very strong sense of themselves, they could speak to the Minister of Education and could answer the questions. They invited her to come to open the mosaics that we've got for the Tribes agreements.

One of the teachers is planning a student leadership conference this year and these kids are quite happy to come back and talk to other staff. We have had students in Grade 4 and 5 who have run Tribe activities for 80 plus students and they will just stand up and do it. So it gives these kids confidence. They don't have to be the best and the brightest because it is inclusive - everyone gets to chat and the boys don't stick out. I don't know how many kids we have on the disability impairment program but you are hard-pressed to work out which kids they are. We have had one of our kids who is now attending a local special school elected as a house captain. So it shifts your culture and it enables the boys to be OK about having a go at the less boy focused or boy code sort of stuff. It is a really equalizing, inclusive process that makes everyone a winner.

You talked about anecdotal feedback, have you evaluated it formally in any way?

We have just bought a formal Tribes Evaluation package to use. We have done a bit of student survey sort of stuff but we really need to get some long-term data. Most of our stuff - the hard data - relates to the academic where we've closed the gap with boys and girls learning but that is also attributable to changing teaching practices which are inherent within the process. In terms of specific Tribes data it is more engagement, attendance and things like that.

What's the key to implementing tribes successfully?

If you don't get the relationships right you are not going anywhere. Take your time to work on the relationship and build relationships with the students.

You wouldn't put kids in a group in tribes probably until half way through Term 2 so you have got a real chance for you to know them, for the kids in the class to know them and as a teacher you have moved them and shuffled them around to see who works with who and what the challenges are. You don't stay in your tribe all day every day but it is a long-term group. You are put in your tribe and you are in it for the year. You can't say, "I don't like them, I'm going to go somewhere else." You have to learn to solve the problems and the issues and agree to disagree and the like. That really works because the kids come to know each other really well.



If you don't get the relationships right you are not going anywhere.





Different teachers will use the Tribes differently. Some will have kids work in Tribes once a day, for others it might be a couple of times a week. It's not how often you meet, but the strength of the tribe ties that's the important part. As a tribe member you need to know that if you're having a rough day outside you can go to someone in your Tribe they'll give you a bit of TLC or say "Come and play with us" or help you solve the problem.

The same goes for the staff. The quality of the relationships is absolutely critical to have a common view. But that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to train your whole staff all at the one time. What we have recommended to schools as we have gone out and trained people is that if you start off with a team of two you can watch the filter effect because other people will want to buy in. And I think that is really important – you are not bludgeoning anyone with it but it is very easy with a couple of people trained to make a commitment to it.

It is very much multi-layered. Every time we run a training session, something else will click and one of us will do something a bit different and you'll think "Oh that's what that means" or "I could do it this way."

So initially you might start off with just wanting to improve the relationships by introducing and working through the agreements. *Appreciation / no put-downs* is the easiest one to introduce because everyone likes a pat on the back. Kids love it, parents love it and you know in the early stages

parents will say "What are you doing? We're sitting down to dinner and so and so is saying before we start can we just thank Mum for the lovely dinner we're having." Another one was when a family were all in their car on the way to Melbourne and one of the children said "Now just remember this is a no put-down zone."

When you get that sort of feedback you can really start looking at the social interaction. We did that with the agreements and shifting the way we were teaching, just looking at learning styles. We talk about teachers as designers of curriculum. Because they know the kids they can design curriculum that suits the needs of their group. Next we started layering on multiple intelligences and now we're moving toward productive pedagogy models, big picture planning with the deeper understanding. So you just keep layering on, moving from the family out to the broader community and it just layers all the time.

Fay Agterhuis is Principal of Point Lonsdale P.S. Victoria. Her previous experience includes classroom and integration teacher P-8 and consultant in Literacy, Special Education and Effective Learning across all school sectors. She is also a Tribes Trainer.

Fay stresses that the success of Tribes depended on her team, especially Sharon Hill as the key teacher in making this happen. Sharon was the first Victorian teacher to undertake training as a facilitator and did so because she was passionate about Tribes and the difference it was making both within her classroom and across the school. For further information about Tribes and tribes trainings please contact Fay Agterhuis or Sharon Hill at Point Lonsdale P.S.

Barwon South Western Region has 3 Tribes Trainers the third member of the team is Sue Gorfine at Newcomb Secondary College. Sue is also a parent of a student at Point Lonsdale P.S and has experienced first hand the difference a Tribes approach can make in connecting students to school and hence their learning.

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Tribes In Action

With 177 students, Portarlington Primary is quite a multicultural school with many different economic groups. It used to be quite an older persons area - lots of retirees – but these days new families are moving in so there's an increasing range of kids from different sort of backgrounds. Located in a small bayside community right on the bay the school enjoys great community support. Many parents and grandparents help out in the Prep. to Year 6 classes. This year the school faced a change in student demographics. A data survey showed that they have a higher proportion of boys enrolled, to the tune of a 55/45 split, which is above the national average gender balance.

Teacher at Portarlington Primary, Marnie Lunnon-Johnson describes how she is introducing Tribes at the school, having experienced the process at Point Lonsdale Primary. Marnie is also a student enrolled in the Graduate Certificate specialising in boys' education.

Do you have any particular boys education strategies in your school?

We are just starting them, in fact one of my assignments in the Graduate Certificate is to draft a policy. Despite the lack of formalized strategies, the teachers are all aware of the different needs of boys and during the year we are going to continue to do quite a bit of PD about what different activities we can focus on for boys' learning.

The notion of Tribes will form part of this strategy, so how will you phase that in?

Tribes is a process, which is instilled into the whole school - be it the whole community, the parents, the teachers, office staff, all the students. I trained in the Tribes process at Point Lonsdale then brought it to Portarlington. It's been included in our school charter for the next three years and I'll be trained as a trainer at the end of the year and will then train the staff after that.

At this stage, many of the children know about Tribes because I had Grade 1 and 2 last year where we used the Tribes process. Now I have Year 5 and 6's so it is slowly going through the school. I do give little hints and ideas to the staff each week about what sort of things they could do to make it more 'Tribesy', to promote inclusion in the classroom. When I'm trained I will be doing parent information sessions, community information sessions, all the staff will be trained including SSO people, integration aides etc so we will all be working toward a common goal.

Can you explain the process for us?

The process involves the Tribes Pathway, which is made up of three stages: inclusion, influence and community.

Inclusion commences when you give the young learners the opportunity to introduce themselves. They do many things about 'me,' like expressing their expectations, their hopes and their goals, which is really good for the older students and it's just a nice way for them to be acknowledged in the classroom. They are part of the classroom; everyone knows them. It is really good for new students too because once you get to Year 5 and 6 the kids know each other very well but it is a nice way for everyone to get to know them with a bit of a deeper knowledge of each other.

The influence stage is valuing the differences amongst people and that's where you do a variety of goal setting, conflict management and decision making so we are really celebrating the diversity of everybody in the grade. That's when we get the children into Tribes, which are groups of 4 or 5 children. In that tribal group they will do different activities, not all the time, they won't for every activity that we do, but it is just a nice basis for the kids that they can trust the people they are with. They all know the Tribes process and they feel confident in speaking and asking questions in their Tribe.

At the community stage it all sort of clicks together. By then we are all working creatively together, doing a lot of group challenges, supporting each other, learning and using social skills that we've have talked about and sharing responsibility within the Tribe. This is a really good chance to give the Tribe a mini project to do so at the end they have all done their own bit and they can really celebrate what they have done and it is a real group effort. It is really nice for all the kids to be sitting there going "I did a part of that" "That was me" "That was our Tribe" "Look how well we've done!"

So that's the trail. It is just following those steps and sometimes you do need to go back. For example if you are in the influence stage, sometimes it is necessary to go back and try inclusion again and do a couple of activities just because some kids forget what is expected of them and what is expected of others.

How would you organise the kids into tribes?

After we have completed the inclusion activities you monitor which students have different personal attributes and you create Tribes. You don't want to put all the fantastic writers in one group and all the fantastic maths students in the other - we're mixing up their abilities. You tell the children to write down seven names and of the people that they would like in their Tribe and you can guarantee that there will be one or two of those people in their Tribe. So they do have some power in choosing but you actually make the final decision. It's best to make them up with as much mixed ability as possible because you will find that some learners are fantastic at one thing and maybe not so good in another and the other students can bring them up.

How have you found that works, particularly with boys?

Well, I love small group learning because the teacher is more of a facilitator and with the Tribes agreement, the students know what is expected and they actually become quite responsible for their Tribes. It works really nicely and the children know that if someone is giving them a put down then they need to make 'I' statements and they can respond well to it. The boys work really well because they know what is expected, so in their Tribe they have certain responsibilities of not giving put-downs.

At the start of the year they make their flags and we have a little Tribe party each week when they bring their party food and things. They really feel important and they feel a nice attachment to their Tribe as well. It's good for those students lacking in confidence or abilities.

Can you expand on those five main agreements?

Attentive Listening: we always say listen with your eyes, ears and heart. I explain to the kids - that means everybody. If someone is talking and sharing their opinion in their Tribe we should only hear one person talking.

Appreciation / No Put Downs: that is really hard to get the kids to do consistently because lots of kids use sarcasm which is a kind of a put down but they don't even realize they're doing it. So we do a variety of activities to explain to the kids what a put down is. We actually even have a funeral for put-downs. We write them all down and put them in a box then we get rid of them. You can put them in a dumper, bury them, put them in a compost etc. so they are gone. No name-calling, no negative remarks and even body language we talk about. It is really hard though for the kids. What I'm learning now though with the 5 and 6's is to instill that in them, this applies even when they are outside playing in the playground. Sometimes it's just second nature to them but slowly they realize, "hang on that is a put-down." There is a thing that I did with the Grade 1-2's, which they just love, called a Warm Fuzzy bag. Every Friday we used to write nice things about people and mail them in the bag then pop them out and everyone would have a Warm Fuzzy saying something like 'I really appreciated how you helped me with my writing yesterday'. It's anonymous so they really understand that "yeah we love appreciations more than put downs."

I always put in Warm Fuzzies myself. If there is someone who is having a bit of a down day or something is not going right you can whisper to one of the kids like "I'd really like you to do a Warm Fuzzy for Bob because he is having a bit of a down day. Is there something that you can think of or a reason why you could give him one?" And they always can, they always come up with something because they always do nice things and it is just a matter of pointing them out and appreciating them.

Another one is a *Right to Pass*, which is having the right to choose when and to what extent they want to participate in activities. Sometimes I take the right to pass away because you have the kids saying pass, pass, pass, pass but certain activities where the kids might feel under a lot of pressure I'll say to them "look you have the right to pass" and some days I do say I have to take the right to pass away on this activity just because you have the same kids who will say pass. But you know they sort of learn that once they have participated it feels better than being one of the odd ones out.

The last one is *Mutual Respect*. We do many activities at the beginning of the year on valuing differences in people and understanding that none of the differences are better or worse than each other. Today I was sitting on the computer with one of the kids and they said something about who do you barrack for in football? And I said "The Demons" and he goes "Oh, well that's ridiculous!" and another kid said "Hey, that's not showing mutual respect to Mrs Johnson." So the kids really pick up on what they should be saying and what they shouldn't be and knowing that it is OK to be different.

We have added *Personal Best* into the agreement, where you commit to always doing your personal best and doing your personal best for your file and your folder and things like that.

Marnie Lunnon-Johnson is a teacher at Portarlington Primary School, Victoria, and is also an enrolled student in the Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Boys' Education) at the University of Newcastle.
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Getting Down and Getting Dirty

Jacqui Todd explains how a gardening club has provided a constructive outlet for socially isolated boys and beautified the school in the process.



Overall awareness of boys' needs I think has been highlighted since I've been doing the Graduate Certificate.



Carrington Primary School is located in the South Eastern suburbs of Melbourne and has an enrolment of 320 students in classes from Prep to Grade 6. It has a very stable staff and has only recently had beginning teachers appointed to replace retiring staff.

The way we run our school is in CFS levels so we have four levels across the school. In actual grades we have Prep Grade, (levelOne) and then the Grades 1-2 work together as Level 2, the Grades 3-4 work together as Level 3 and the Grades 5-6 work together as Level 4. At the moment we have two Prep Grades, four Level 2 Grades, four Level 3 and four Level 4. So there are fourteen Grades altogether.

Does your school have a specific approach to boys' education?

Not specific, but it has become a higher priority since I have been here. This is my third year and I my interest has mainly been in the middle years of schooling as I am more involved with the upper school. Since I got involved in boys' education and because I am a Leading Teacher I am better able to drive it. For example, we now have the Gardening Club, we have published within the school a boy's magazine and at the moment we're in the process of establishing a Boys' Writing Club to promote the literacy side of things a little bit more.

Overall awareness of boys' needs I think has been highlighted since I've been doing the Graduate Certificate. All students in levels three and four set their own individual goals – what they are going to work on improving or developing for the whole term. These are actually written out or typed out by the children and laminated on their tabletop so it is always right in front of them. At the end of each term they evaluate their own aims and decide whether they need to choose more or put in extra effort. Throughout each term the teachers talk with them about how they are progressing towards achieving their individual goal/s – some might be social, some might be academic. That's been really good because one of the things that I did find was that a lot of the boys were just floundering because they didn't really have any direction. So having the individual goals has helped tremendously.

And can you see a difference with the boys once they set that direction?

Yes, I believe you can because you can say to them "Now what were you working on this term? What was going to be your particular aim? Do you think you are achieving that? Are you working towards that at the moment? What can we do to help?" And the other children too will say, "You're doing really well at this. You have really improved!" So it is helping keep them focused and on task to improve something that they have got control over. I feel that has been very successful.

What about the Gardening Club - how did that come about?

That came about firstly because our gardens were in a pretty bad state and I'm quite a keen gardener. There were a lot of kids just walking around quite isolated, a lot with problems, so as they whinged I said "How about coming and helping me and we'll get together with gardening?" And the next thing, it was like opening the floodgate. I had kids coming up asking "Can I join the Gardening Club?" And I said, "Of course you can!"

We started off by having the Grade 6's or Grade 5's recording the children's names but it got too big for that so we just said, "Whenever you want to join us you can come and join us, if you don't wish to - if you wish to go and play, well that's fine too."

So a few friendship groups actually sprang up from working in the Gardening Club and then they would go off and play. I only had it two lunch times a week, purely because I didn't want the children to rely on that. I wanted them to establish their own friendships but in times when they need to, they have something that they can go to that's safe and secure and I am there with them too.

So what kind of activities do you do together?

I've had a few really keen parents that bring up lots of plants for planting. One afternoon it was like we were in Asia with all the children squatting planting all these seedlings. This mass of children - it was just gorgeous! But there is a lot of planting and weeding. We get big piles of mulch delivered every few weeks. A guy comes past with a truck and keeps dropping off a truck load of mulch. We don't know when it's going to come but we've always got heaps. The boys just love getting on the wheelbarrows, doing the edges with shovels and getting down and cleaning out the garden gutters.

So, when the kids turn up how do you organize it?

I just say "Who wants to do what?" Sometimes we get too many (we have it on a Monday and a Thursday) and I just don't have enough tools and I have to say, "You have to come back next week. If you are here on Thursday, I'll make sure that you get a turn." With the arguments over the wheelbarrows I

got the kids to draw up a roster so it was fair for all the children who wanted to have a turn and they stuck to that. Sometimes they turned up just to get their turn at the wheelbarrow. We have had a few problems with some of the older boys getting a bit bossy, but they've learnt to step back and let all the younger ones have turns at things - not take over but guide the others.

A lot of kids brought their own shovels and keep them in the gardening shed. Some take them to class but I encourage them to leave them in the gardening shed. But they'll all take off and work in an area. We've got nice grounds now with quite a few garden beds so there is enough room for them to spread and I just wander around and say "Oh this is great, what about taking these weeds out?" and I sort of get in and help them too. It is demanding but it's worth it.

It's just all sprung up nice and casually. At the end of each term I might shout them a fish and chip lunch. That's as much as I say, "If you've been quite a few times, come into my classroom for lunch". Then just before the end of the year we all had a BBQ so they all came for that and the Principal came and cooked. It was really good.

For Christmas presents this year I had so many kids come up and give me little plants. And in the school holidays we had a couple of kids that off their own backs walked up to the school with buckets and watered the garden. So they are really motivated. When we have school working bees, quite a few of the children from the Gardening Club will actually turn up at the working bee, some with their parents and some without.

It's interesting to watch them when they're in a bit of a quandary with social skills. As the year progressed a lot of them drifted off with their friends and they would come up and say "I'd like to do gardening but we're playing a game". I'd just say "That's fine, you can come and join us whenever you'd like - you don't have to garden every time. You don't even have to garden anymore if you don't want to, but if you want to YOU CAN!" Some would get their friends to join in as well; others would drift off which is just fine because they have developed their own friendship groups. So because it is casual, it is really good.



So a few friendship groups actually sprang up from working in the Gardening Club and then they would go off and play.





In the school holidays we had a couple of kids that off their own backs walked up to the school with buckets and watered the garden.



So what's next?

The next project is the Writing Club. We've got a staff member who came to me the other day and said that she had been asked to provide support for the Grade 5-6's (the Level 4's) so I'm hoping the team will use this to establish writing as an extra area with the focus mainly being on boys. We have one or two very gifted girls in writing and they will be involved in it too, but the main focus is going to be to get the boys writing. The children will actually be invited to join the group. The reward will be to meet with a couple of well-known authors and to put together their stories as a book. Then we'll have a book launch to raise the profile of this club and make it really cool to be a member of the writing group.

What the boys had to say.....

What do you like best about the gardening club

- Pushing the wheel barrow - overwhelmingly the most popular response
- The fun
- Working in the mulch
- Icypoles on hot days
- The special lunch we have
- Working with others
- Working hard
- Helping

What other things should the gardening club do?

- Each person could have their own garden
- Camp and stay at school in the night so we can stay up late
- Plant beans in the garden
- Have pictures of us working by the front office

When asked 'Which children have you got to know since working in the club?', most boys listed more than five students.

A few words from Jacqui

At Carrington, my role amongst others, is the Curriculum Coordinator. I am in my sixth year as a Leading Teacher and have the CSF.Level Four, (grades five and six) coordination also. My interest in Boy's Education developed when my own boys were moving through school and I recognized their lack of engagement in the school curriculum unless it was activity based. This was at a time when my eldest son was adamant that "education for boys was being neglected because of the girl's rights!" Being a parent of both genders I could understand the inequities both genders felt, but it was most disappointing when neither of my highly capable boys completed their secondary school education and their only pleasant school memories are linked with sport. I aim that the students that pass through my classes feel a sense of achievement in the academic and social fields and can recognise their development with pride.

Modified Index Of Learning Styles For Upper Primary School – 2002

Many teachers have been investigating learning styles and multiple intelligences in their quest for teaching strategies that will fully engage boys. The evidence seems to be mounting that many boys are likely to have strong preferences that differ from many girls and that this needs to be taken into account in the classroom.

The first step for teachers is to find out the preferences in learning styles and strengths in intelligences of the boys in your class.

Testing instruments abound, many of them from the U.S.A. Here is one from Tony Butz that has been modified to suit Australian 10 to 12 year olds

Background

The work of Felder & Silverman (1988+) and Solomon & Felder (1999-2002) in developing an Index of Learning Styles for college/ university students provided a practical measure of self-assessed learning styles, that has enabled teaching / learning situations at tertiary level to be made more relevant to the needs of students.

In trying to devise a similar assessment instrument for much younger children (aged 10-12 years) I have kept to the 44 questions of Solomon & Felder, retained their 4 categories of assessment, retained their score sheet format, and tried to keep the gist of each question in the original index. After trialing a few versions of my modified questions, I have found the following questions to be comprehensible by the vast majority of 10-12 year-olds, *if read out orally to them*, and have found the results validated by the students themselves in follow-up discussion on their responses. Teachers with whom I have discussed the results have found the information very valuable and important. Some have made changes to accommodate their students' learning needs. With around 500 students sampled so far, the results are very encouraging as to the use, validity and reliability of this instrument, but I am continuing to develop it and am appreciative of comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvement.

Instructions

- Explain to students that we all have strengths and weaknesses in the things we do and the ways we learn. Take some examples from students of things they know they are good at (both within school and without).
- Hand out a Scoring Sheet to each student and direct attention to the way it is set out. Ask them to either write their names on the sheets if they want feedback on their learning styles, or just tick the boy/girl box if they wish to be anonymous. (This is something I have added to the scoresheet for gender comparisons).
- Explain that there are 44 questions to be answered, working across the sheet, and that each question requires a quick decision of either "a" or "b" beside the question number. Ensure they understand there is no right or wrong answer for any of the questions, because it is asking for their opinion, such as, "Do you prefer: (a) chocolate, or (b) strawberry ice cream?"
- Ensure they know: to tick only one answer, a or b; to make sure the answer they are giving goes beside the correct question number; to decide quickly so it doesn't take too long to do the 44 questions; if having difficulty deciding, to mark the answer that most often applies or that they would choose right now if put on the spot; and to erase or scribble out an answer if they want to change it.
- Explain that they do not need to know what the "ACT/REF" and other headings mean at this stage; in fact it is better if they do not know, because it could influence their choices.
- Read out each question twice, slowly and clearly, and allow a few seconds for students to respond before proceeding to the next one.

Tony Butz explains how he modified the Index of Learning Styles to suit 10-12 year olds.

Modified Index Of Learning Styles: For Upper Primary School – 2002

(A modified version of "Index of Learning Styles" by Barbara Solomon & Richard Felder, North Carolina State University)

1. I understand something better after I
 - (a) try it out
 - (b) think it through
2. I would rather people thought of me as
 - (a) realistic and down-to-earth
 - (b) original and imaginative
3. When I think about what I did yesterday, I am most likely to think in
 - (a) pictures
 - (b) words
4. When I try to understand something, I am more likely to
 - (a) understand the parts of it before understanding the whole thing
 - (b) understand the whole thing first and then look at its parts
5. When I am learning something new, it helps me to
 - (a) talk about it with others
 - (b) think about it by myself
6. If I were a teacher, I would rather teach something that
 - (a) deals with facts and real-life situations
 - (b) deals with ideas and differences of opinion
7. When I am learning new information, I prefer to get it in
 - (a) pictures, diagrams, graphs and maps
 - (b) written directions or someone telling me about it
8. Which is more true of how I think:
 - (a) I put bits of information together until I get a complete picture
 - (b) I want to know what something is all about, then I'll look at it in detail
9. When I am working in a group on difficult material, I am more likely to
 - (a) jump straight in and give my ideas first
 - (b) sit back and listen to what the others think first
10. I find it easier to
 - (a) learn facts
 - (b) understand ideas
11. In a book or magazine with lots of pictures, I am more likely to
 - (a) look at the pictures first and then read the written text
 - (b) read the written text first, then look at the pictures
12. When I solve maths problems
 - (a) I usually work my way through, one step at a time
 - (b) I often just see the solution but then have to work out what steps to put down
13. When I go to high school I am more likely to
 - (a) get to know a lot of the students really well
 - (b) get to know only a few of the students really well
14. When I am reading non-fiction, I prefer material that
 - (a) teaches me new facts or tells me how to do something
 - (b) gives me new ideas to think about
15. I like teachers who
 - (a) use a lot of pictures and diagrams
 - (b) spend a lot of time explaining in words
16. When I am thinking about a story or novel I have read
 - (a) I think of the different incidents in the story to work out what it is all about
 - (b) I just know what it is all about but might have trouble thinking about the different incidents that show this
17. When I start homework, I am more likely to
 - (a) start writing immediately
 - (b) try to understand it all before I start writing
18. I prefer the idea of
 - (a) things being certain and definite
 - (b) discussing differences of opinion
19. I remember best
 - (a) what I see
 - (b) what I hear
20. It is more important to me that a teacher
 - (a) sets out material in clear, ordered steps to follow
 - (b) gives me an overall picture and relates the material to something I already know
21. I prefer to learn
 - (a) in a group
 - (b) by myself
22. How would my teacher be more likely to describe me?
 - (a) careful about the details of my work
 - (b) creative about how I do my work
23. When I am given directions to get to a new place, I prefer
 - (a) a map
 - (b) written instructions
24. Which is more true of how I generally learn ?
 - (a) I learn at a fairly even pace and eventually get there
 - (b) I learn in fits and starts, sometimes totally confused, sometimes it just clicks

25. If I am asked to do something, I would rather
(a) just try it out straight away
(b) first think about how I'm going to do it
26. When I am reading for enjoyment, I like writers who
(a) clearly say exactly what they mean
(b) say things in creative, imaginative ways that I have to think about
27. When I see a diagram or picture in class, I am more likely to remember
(a) the picture
(b) what the teacher said about it
28. When I am thinking about some information, I am more likely to
(a) focus on the details and maybe miss what it is all about
(b) try to understand what it is all about before looking for details
29. I more easily remember
(a) something I have done
(b) something I have thought a lot about
30. When I do something, I prefer to
(a) master one way of doing it really well
(b) come up with new ways of doing it
31. When someone is giving me information, I prefer
(a) Charts, pictures or diagrams to look at
(b) written information to read
32. When I am writing a report or story, I am more likely to
(a) start at the beginning and just work forwards from there
(b) think about the different parts to it and put them in order before I start writing
33. When I have to work in a group, I first want
(a) everyone to contribute their ideas as they think of them
(b) each person in turn to have a say and then compare ideas
34. How would I prefer my parents or teachers to think of me? As
(a) sensible
(b) imaginative
35. When I meet people at a party for the first time, I am more likely to remember
(a) what they looked like
(b) what they said about themselves
36. When I am learning something new, I prefer to
(a) stay focused on that subject, learning as much about it as I can
(b) try to relate it to something I already know
37. How would my friends be more likely to describe me? As
(a) outgoing
(b) quiet and shy
38. In high school, I think I will choose subjects that are
(a) hands-on, practical and factual
(b) artistic and have lots of discussion
39. For entertainment, I would rather
(a) watch television
(b) read a book
40. Some teachers start their lessons with an outline of what they will cover. I find this
(a) not very helpful
(b) very helpful to me
41. The idea of doing work in groups with everyone in the group getting the same mark
(a) appeals to me
(b) does not appeal to me
42. When I am doing long calculations
(a) I usually repeat all my steps and check my work carefully
(b) I find checking my work is boring and I'd have to force myself to do it
43. When I picture places I have been, I can usually do so
(a) easily and fairly accurately
(b) with difficulty and with not much detail
44. When I am working in a group, I am more likely to
(a) think of the steps we need to go through to achieve our goal
(b) think of the different ways our work could apply to other areas

Concluding Instructions

- Ask students to tally their responses in each of the 8 columns, then check that the "a" and "b" total for each pair of columns comes to 11.
- For each pair of columns, have students find the difference between the "a" and "b" scores (subtract the smaller number from the larger – do an example for them) and write the difference in the last box under each pair of columns, followed by "a" or "b" (whichever scored the higher) for each pair of columns.
- Thank the students for completing the survey.
- A scoresheet and explanation can be found at Richard Felder's website:
<http://www2.ncsu.edu:8010/unity/lockers/users/ff/felder/public/ILSdir/ILS-b.htm>

Tony Butz taught full-time from 1972 to 1994, and casually since then. He runs the Blue Mountains Boys' Education Network and can be contacted on 02 4754 2250.

Research Section

BEBOP

(Boys' Education Boys' Outcomes Project)

Changes isolated to a single classroom or year within a school, while they may be positive, contribute little to permanent changes for boys.

No-one can say we've been sitting on our hands with this one. In fact we've bopped 'till we've dropped.

In case you haven't heard, BEBOP is our research and seminar program, that's been developed for use in primary and high schools throughout Australia.

Our preliminary research involved schools in urban and regional NSW, urban Victoria and rural and remote Northern Territory in both the private and public domains.

What we're trying to achieve is a supportive way of providing professional development to schools that will enhance boys' academic and social outcomes by recognising and capitalising on the strengths of boys.

We work with teachers, support staff and community members to develop a whole school approach to boys' education. Through the BEBOP process, the participants are making significant changes to the school culture and their individual perceptions, which enables the strengths of the boys, the staff and the community to be more readily used to enhance outcomes for the boys.

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. 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.

By participating in the program schools are able 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 content of the program is fully negotiable, but from our experience, topics that are most popular include:
 - 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

In the seminars school staff are assisted to develop and document action research projects that can be incorporated into their practices with boys at school and in the classroom. The issues and plans for action come from the teachers themselves based on the school and parent knowledge of the boys in their community. They are also based on the latest information on specific boys' education issues provided by the Boys in Schools Program staff.

Between the seminars participants conduct small action-research tasks in educating boys, in their classroom or school area. Participants are supported in their action research tasks through an email discussion group once a term and a phone or face-to face meeting with the staff from the Boys in Schools team. Some teachers involved in BEBOP have used this work as a basis for their own further study in the Graduate Certificate or Masters programs specialising in Educating Boys. The program supports the learning and growth of the boys, the teachers and the school.

BEBOP Outcomes

Northern Territory project teachers developed strategies such as single sex classes for science, behaviour programs, literacy programs, diversifying teaching and learning styles, creating greater community/parent involvement. They really tackled some big issues. (See case studies)

Outcomes for Boys

Teachers working with boys who are at risk, or from rural and remote areas, and those from indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds have used the BEBOP process to help them achieve increased engagement in school activities, school options and academic results as well as improved behaviour. So have schools in urban and high socio-economic areas and both state and private schools. Some of the changes that schools desire can be measured by the data that schools already keep so the record keeping aspect of the projects does not have to be an extra task for teachers. Measuring change is a vital aspect of BEBOP in every different location and situation. Some of the changes that schools are measuring are:

1. Engagement In Schools Activities

Increases in boys' engagement in school activities such as attendance at school, sports carnivals and social committees, participation in volunteering, assembly, discussions and classroom activities, nominations for leadership positions.

Decreases in absence notes, truancy and lateness for school.

2. Academic Results

Increases in awards and merit certificates, literacy levels, achievement in subject areas, quality of assignments

Decreases in non-completion of assignments and classwork

3. Social Behaviour

Increases in library use, hours spent on homework, co-operation in small group tasks, leadership and modelling for younger boys and peers

Decreases in lunchtime detention, bus offenders, accident reports, classroom disruptions, counsellor referrals, drug use and obscene language, incidents of violence and aggression (and/or victim of), graffiti, littering, letters of notification, discipline, assessment, suspension records

4. School Options

Increases in boys choosing Music Art, Drama, Home Science and Textiles, boys volunteering in charity work, organising year activities, boys representing or performing in musical, public speaking, debating, choirs and bands, recognition for sports achievement, recognition in newsletters, artworks of students, reports, marks, comments, involvement in leadership and mentor schemes





Schools from diverse situations all over Australia are taking to the action learning process of BEBOP and applying it to boys' issues. The Boys in Schools Program has been researching boys' education for many years. Many of the recommendations from the Federal Inquiry into Boys' Education, contain actions that have been trialed and perfected in a variety of school environments throughout Australia. BEBOP is a great opportunity for schools to have a very productive partnership with the Boys in Schools team. Together we're walking through the process one step at a time, and investigating at a very practical level, strategies that work for boys. Along the way we're finding out what doesn't work too. BEBOP is a truly collaborative project that is just getting better all the time.

Engagement Of Boys in Literacy and Numeracy

I am teaching 22 year 1/2 students at Millner Primary School (18 boys and 4 girls) with a large range of abilities. At the beginning of the year, I observed that the boys were very "ratty" and most of them were having learning problems and behavioural problems. Some parents seemed not to understand or to support students learning, for example by encouraging them to bring their readers regularly and do their homework.

I wrote up a "firm and fair" class-room strategies and management so the class, especially the boys would learn the routines, and I used the Waddington Tests for Spelling and Reading, and the Maths Diagnostic Test to identify the literacy and numeracy levels and skills of the boys. My action learning project became to enhance the boys' literacy and numeracy skills, and to address their behavioural problems through developing engaging learning activities.

Besides implementing the classroom strategies our class has 'buddy system' with a year 6/7 class, which actually supported both classes to achieve the above goals. I provided my boys with lots 'hands-on, experience-based activities such as cooking and gardening, and singing with a music teacher. All these activities are exciting and challenging for 6-7 year old boys. We also learnt about different kind of texts and are into technology. We are creating useful resources such as cooking books and 2003 calendar to take home for Christmas presents. Through all of this I have been 'a busy teacher'.

Two weeks ago I retested these boys for maths, spelling and reading and found that there is a great improvement. I also have learnt that having 'a busy teacher' is great. The year 6/7 teacher also felt that the older boys are getting more responsible and caring to these little boys. It was wonderful; I was able to reflect on my teaching and what I am doing with these boys. I'd like to rerun this program next year with year 3/4 and team up with a group of high school students.

I think action learning is the best way for teachers to learn, to know and to understand about their classroom and children, especially boys. I have learnt so much and I thought that it was very challenging because I didn't stay back and whinge about the problems I had but it gave me a strategy and the confidence to go out there to search for the solutions and solve them. Yes, it was great! I look forward to doing it again, perhaps with more challenging issues.

Ester Modoh, Millner Primary School

Year 9 Boys and Girls Science Classes

With around 250 students, Nhulunbuy High School is located in a remote mining community in NE Arnhemland. Our action learning involved splitting two mixed gender science classes that were timetabled on at the same time into one boys class and one girls class for one term, Cheryl took the boys class and Lorraine the girls. The students in both classes worked on the same unit of work (Physic – Forces). The goal was to improve the engagement of both the boys and the girls in science with special emphasis on behaviour for most of the boys, some of the girls and with (hopefully) a resultant academic improvement for both groups of students.

We began by implementing a Multiple Intelligence test in each class and devised lesson plans to suit students in the class based on the results of the test. We refined these as a result of our experiences teaching each class, and as our knowledge of the students, multiple intelligences and learning styles increased. We surveyed students before and after project, asking for their opinions. From this action learning we learnt that the boys needed detailed instructions and very structured classes. They love hands-on activities, practical work and group work. They tended to have low self-esteem in relation to their true abilities and talents. And they enjoyed having no girls.

The girls, on the other hand needed little instruction, were very independent learners, and also worked well in groups. While the girls recognised that they learnt more without boys, they missed their 'noise and distraction'. The girls did not mind some practicals (hands-on, experimentation), but not a lot of them.

We would love to do this again for certain science units but not all the time or all year. The school is actually proposing single gender classes for PE and possibly maths at request of students. Timetabling is an issue for creating single gender classes and we would advise teachers not to attempt this with students in term 4, especially for the first time. It took three weeks before the classes settled after recombining. It is also important to have support from other staff. However, as a way of developing and refining your own teaching knowledge and strategies we would definitely recommend that teachers have a go at teaching an all boys' and an all girls' class.

Cheryl Dwyer And Lorraine White, Nhulunbuy High School

Freedom!

As the Special Ed teacher at Jingili Primary School I had noticed a group of boys who could not organise themselves when in their own classroom. They were used to the teacher giving them 1:1 help and had become reliant on this. My action learning focus was to find ways to support these boys to become more self-reliant and organised.

Rather than giving the boys verbal instructions when they entered the classroom (which I usually needed to repeat over and over) I gave them three questions on the white board each day. The questions were designed to focus the boys on their own needs.

For example:

1. Where is your hat?
2. Who will be your partner?
3. What will you need for maths?

Freedom! I found that I was able to greet the boys they came into the room and get myself organised without repeating instructions.

Although the boys didn't remember to read the questions at first, after a few tries they got the hang of the new routine. In true "boy" style they now argue about what I will ask them each day! They are better prepared when I start lesson and immensely proud of themselves. The lessons start without fuss or repeated instructions. I am calmer and not so exhausted each day!

In 2003 I am going to use this strategy in my mainstream classroom. Give this a try, it is so simple and you may find it useful. It works for me!
Sue Mihailou, Jingili Primary



BEBOP operates from the Boys in Schools Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. For more information regarding BEBOP phone Michelle Gifford on 02 4921 8739 or email deborah.hartman@newcastle.edu.au

More Than an Education

– Leadership for dynamic school community partnerships

A series of case studies into rural school and community partnerships has found that schools are a vital but often overlooked component of rural community development. The research identified the leadership process to be an essential ingredient to establishing dynamic school community partnerships. Dr Sue Kilpatrick of the Centre For Research and Learning In Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania explains how their team examined this issue.

Most communities have been severely affected by the withdrawal of important community services such as banks and local offices of government departments, but the benefits to communities from rural schools are not well understood.

The case studies, which look at rural school-community partnerships in five very different rural communities, outline the nature and extent of the partnership and analyse the influence of leadership and other factors on the development and sustainability of the partnership.

A report on the work identifies a leadership process model for developing school-community partnerships and provides a number of important indicators of effective partnerships.

The project

The objectives involved examining the extent and nature of the contribution of rural schools to their communities' development beyond traditional forms of education of young people including the:

- use of the skills and knowledge of the school staff in initiating, organising and/ or running wider community activities and projects;
 - opportunities provided for adults in the community for personal development and skill acquisition through involvement in school activities and school bodies such as school councils; and
 - importance of the physical school resources to small communities.
- The objectives also sought to investigate ways in which leadership modes of the school and community influence the extent and nature of the school's contribution to the community and to consider the constraints to putting schools to other uses.

Sites for the case studies were selected to meet a number of criteria, including size of the community (population of less than 10,000 people), and evidence of the active and ongoing role of the school in improving social and economic outcomes for the community.

From more than 100 initially nominated schools, a shortlist of 14 was selected. The five subsequently chosen were Cooktown State School in Queensland, Cowell Area School in South Australia, Margaret River Senior High School in Western Australia, Meander Primary School in Tasmania and St Paul's College in Walla Walla, New South Wales. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and written documentation from school and community sources.

In the interviews, people's perceptions of their local school and community were sought, and of the capacity of each to respond to or initiate change. Specific questions were asked regarding the nature, outcomes and likely sustainability of school-community linkages, and the extent to which leadership and other factors influenced the partnership.

After data analysis was completed, preliminary findings were presented at community meetings in each study site, and participants were invited to have input into the drafting of recommendations in the final report.

The results

The case studies revealed that rural school-community partnerships deliver a variety of positive outcomes for youth and for the community.

These include:

- provision of training that meets both student and community needs;
- improved school retention;
- increased retention of youth in rural communities;
- positive environmental outcomes;
- cultural and recreational benefits from sharing physical and human school resources; and,
- economic outcomes in terms of the school as a key employer and consumer of local goods and services.

While these tangible outcomes are important to the sustainability of many small rural communities, the research shows potentially more valuable outcomes from school-community partnerships are increased individual and community capacity to influence their own futures.

In particular, the development of Vocational Education and Training-in-schools (VET-in-schools) programs in rural communities, and community-wide benefits that flow from such programs, represent an important vehicle for building community capacity.

Lessons learned from the case studies include the need to value youth, to scan the horizon for new opportunities, and to focus on good school public relations which is about two-way communications between the school and the community. The most valuable lesson, however, was the identification of a specific leadership process.

The leadership process

The findings indicated that in order to analyse the influence of leadership on learning and communities, the unit of analysis should be the leadership process, rather than the traits, attributes or styles of those individuals designated as 'leaders'. In all five study sites there were many players who were active in 'leading' any single intervention or project. Formal leaders (such as office holders in community bodies and school Principals) are key players, but others, people we have termed 'boundary crossers' who speak the language of the different groups or institutions and the broader community, are also important. The actions of these players at different stages in the life of the interventions/projects indicated strongly that traditional analysis of the performance of individual formal leaders does not reflect the reality of leadership as a collective process.

A key finding from CRLRA's research into managing change in communities through learning, is that leadership is about an intervention (which may, for example, take the form of a project) rather than being solely the province of a single leader or a leader's characteristics. As projects evolve, leadership passes from a core initiating group to a larger group, representative of the diversity of the community. Effective leadership of partnerships is the collective responsibility of institutions and the whole community who must actively seek opportunities to involve all sectors of the community. Therefore, no single leadership style is adequate to meet the requirements of the whole range of engagements implicated in a leadership intervention. There is scope for a number of individuals with a range of leadership styles indicating that an effective leadership process is about shared leadership.

The ingredients of the leadership process for success of partnerships vary according to the context, the resources available to the collaborative effort, the organizations and groups involved, and their goals. Only by analysing the leadership process are interactions between 'leaders' and the various contexts that arise as the process progresses captured. Analysing leadership in this way is in keeping with the direction of recent educational and community development leadership research which raises concerns about the limitations of much traditional leadership theory because of its focus on 'the leader' (see, for example, Silins & Mulford in press, Lane & Dorfman 1997, Chrislip & Larson 1994).

Who are the players in the leadership process?

The findings from the *Leadership for rural school–community partnerships* project show a process for school–community linkages where leadership roles are distributed among people inside and outside the schools, and among formal school and community leaders and others.

The leadership process was facilitated by certain individuals within each community, most notably school Principals and those people termed boundary crossers, who provide a bridge between school and community. Principals legitimise potential school–community partnerships, and play an important role in ensuring there are ongoing opportunities for interaction for all community members, as well as facilitating the development of structures and processes that foster group visioning. Their transformational leadership practices empower others as effective players in the leadership process. These activities are complemented by boundary crossers, who legitimise potential school–community partnerships within the wider community, and whose communication and interpersonal skills strengthen the relationship between the school and community. In one community, the chair of the school council who worked for the state library was a boundary crosser. This person identified an opportunity to have a community online access centre in the school and did considerable work preparing the (successful) community submission. In another community, a business person was employed by the school as coordinator for its VET-in-schools program, a role usually filled by a teacher. This boundary crosser spoke the language of the business and school and was able to involve the business community as an equal partner with the school in the VET-in-schools program.

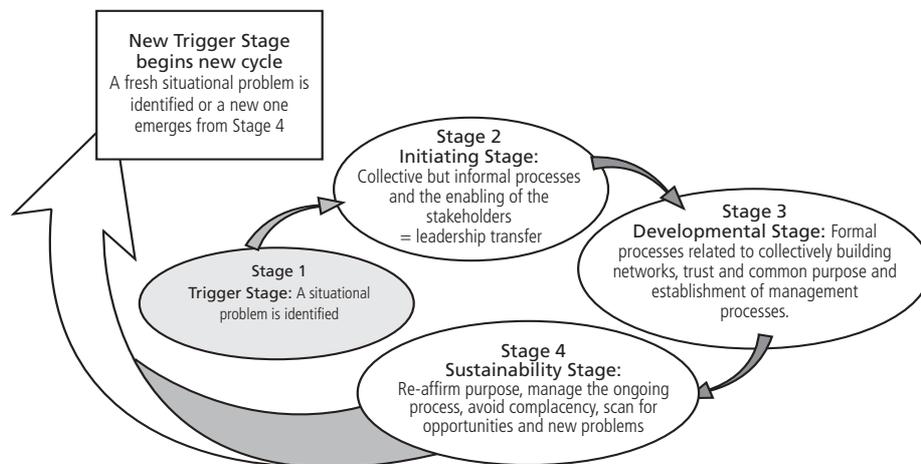
Evidence from each of the five *Leadership for rural school–community partnerships* project study sites indicates that effective leadership for implementing school–community partnerships goes further than involving or consulting with all stakeholders during the decision-making process. Rather, effective leadership for school–community partnerships is a collective process during which school and community go about developing and realising shared visions.

A chronological look at the leadership process

The leadership process in implementing partnerships begins with a *trigger* stage, which relates to the identification of a problem or opportunity for change that impacts on, or is likely to impact on, both educational institution and community. This is followed by *initiation*, in which informal processes come into play in order to mobilise resources to address the problem or opportunity. Next comes *development*, which relates to the implementation of formal processes to tackle the problem or develop the opportunity. At this stage more players become committed to the intervention or linkage. The fourth stage covers *maintenance* and *sustainability* of the linkage. During this stage, effective management of the linkage is facilitated by processes and resources that have been put in place, and the partners review and renew their vision and goals and scan for opportunities and new problems in relation to the linkage. As the leadership process is cyclical, the fourth stage feeds back to either the trigger (for a new linkage) or initiation (for changes to the existing linkage) stages.

The *Leadership for rural school–community partnerships* project shows that the level of maturity of the school–community partnership dictates how schools and communities go about developing and sustaining new linkages. For example, key players in the leadership process tend to adopt a more directive and initiating role in developing school–community partnerships in communities which do not have a strong history of working together (that is, in communities at the early stage of developing school–community partnerships), compared with the more facilitative role adopted by key players in schools and communities with well-developed linkages. This indicates that there is no ‘one size fits all’ process for developing effective partnerships. Rather, the leadership process is situational, as Falk and Smith (forthcoming) propose, in that it must take into account issues such as the school’s and community’s history of working together, the availability, capacity and willingness of people to play a role in the leadership process, and the nature of the problem or opportunity that is driving the school–community linkage.

Figure: The leadership process



Conclusion

Communities and schools that share the belief that education is the responsibility of the whole community and work together, drawing on skills and knowledge of the community as a whole, experience benefits that extend far beyond producing a well-educated group of young people. Leadership for effective partnerships is therefore a shared process where many people play a part, consistent with the writings from education and community development (for example Chrislip & Larson 1994, Barker 1997, Lane & Dorfman 1997). It is the collective responsibility of the educational institutions and whole community who must actively seek opportunities to involve all sectors of the community, including those who would not normally have contact with the educational institutions. Effective leadership of partnerships depends on the availability and willingness of a wide variety of individuals to involve themselves in the leadership process. Building school–community partnerships therefore takes time, as leadership passes from a core initiating group to a larger group, representative of the diversity of the community. In particular, time spent at the beginning of the process is more likely to ensure sustainability down the track. However, the clear message is that there is no ‘one size fits all’ process for developing effective partnerships and that effective leadership processes are dependent on the context in which they occur. Furman-Brown, K. Riley, P. Gonn & B. Mulford (Eds.)

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The study, *More than an education – Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was undertaken by Dr Sue Kilpatrick and her team Susan Johns, Bill Mulford and Ian Falk* from the Centre For Research and Learning In Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania. The full report is available in hardcopy for \$10 from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation E-shop or can be downloaded for free from RIRDC’s website: www.rirdc.gov.au/fullreports/hcc.html

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Cooktown: Pushing the boundaries

In this case study Sue Kilpatrick looks at the success of a Cooktown secondary school in harnessing the energies of their community to build a strong school community partnership. Together they have pushed the boundaries to develop a successful VET program for disengaged boys, living up to its name – One Step Ahead.

This is a case study of a Vocational Education and Training (VET)-in-schools program as a vehicle for a school's contribution to its community. In particular it is a story of a remote school and community prepared to push the boundaries, and think 'outside the box' in order to develop creative solutions to their particular community needs. Cooktown and the surrounding region is not the sort of community to take things 'lying down'. When the Sydney Olympic Games torch relay bypassed the town, they held their own torch relay under the banner of NOCOG (Not the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games) as a fundraiser for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. When faced with high youth unemployment and low school retention rates, school and community developed their own VET-in-schools program. From the beginning they made it clear that the program would be developed and run on their own terms to meet their own particular needs. It meant pushing policy boundaries that precluded funding to Years 9 and 10 VET-in-schools programs; pushing traditional education boundaries such as the 9.00am to 3.00pm school day, the school precinct and existing curricula; challenging educational practices such as employing only trained educators as VET coordinators; and challenging established business practices of providing employment opportunities only to young people whose families were 'known' in the community.

The school

The one school in Cooktown, the Cooktown State School and Secondary Department, caters for 420 students from Pre-school to Year 12, located in a new purpose-built accommodation several blocks from the town centre. Approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the students are Indigenous, with a larger percentage in the Secondary Department.

A feature of the school is the way it actively fosters partnerships with the community through collaborative community development initiatives funded through a variety of State Government and Federal Government programs such as Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) and Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA). For example, Cooktown State School has developed links with schools in the five smaller communities in the region. As the Cook cluster, these schools have combined their funding from various sources, including PCAP, ASSPA and the schools' Parents and Citizens (P & C) organisations, and have developed and run a number of workshops and other programs for the benefit of students, parents and the wider community.

The school has received particular recognition in recent years for its *Step Ahead* program. *Step Ahead* is an alternative, community-based VET-in-schools program for students at risk of not completing secondary school. It is needs driven and therefore culturally inclusive. Of the 22 students enrolled in the program in 2000, from Years 9 to 11, the majority were Indigenous males. It offers Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 1 training to students, with competencies being recorded in student log books. Training areas reflect the industry base of the region, and include rural skills, building and construction, engineering (pre-vocational), basic office skills, and hospitality. The program comprises one week's work placement, and three weeks of school, every month. The school component consists of a modified curriculum which 'is delivered in a multi-age class situation focusing on numeracy, literacy and life skills' (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 17). Students also select a number of electives from the mainstream curriculum.

Taking The First Step

The seed for the *Step Ahead* program was sown in 1996 during discussions between two Cooktown teachers; one a teacher of manual arts and the other a learning support teacher. One was concerned with promoting vocational options more within the school; the other with implementing a program to cater for children whose needs were not being met by the mainstream curriculum and whose attendance was irregular. Not only did these two teachers have differing views of the needs but they were also often involved in what could be termed 'constructive conflict'. As one school staff member put it:

I think our success came from the fact that [one of them] was at one end of the spectrum [as an educator] and [the other one] was at the other [as a hands-on, let's go and do it person] ... [they] argued and bitched and carried on ...

The Principal of the time assisted and supported these two enthusiastic, but conceptually different teachers, to develop a solution to their concerns by acting as a sounding board and by seeking information from relevant key people external to the community, including a representative from Education Queensland. The tentative solution derived by the two teachers was to devise a VET-in-schools program that would cater for students at risk. Using their networks, the two teachers set out on a course of action that not only sought advice and information from, but also increasingly involved, the community. The following school staff member explains why it was so important to involve the community from an early stage:

... have an understanding that there are a lot of people in the community who have an interest in what the school is doing and ... to cultivate that interest ... the school really needs to be able to build the links between ... the councils and the different interest groups ... so that you've got a network of contacts ... and then really working with those different groups to find out how you can best provide for the students as well as look at what happens outside of school ...

The community linkages provided a solid foundation on which to build *Step Ahead*.

Following discussions with Education Queensland, a VET program was developed. Due to the increased workload, funding was provided to allow both teachers to reduce their teaching loads by half, for a six-month period. During this time they coordinated submissions for funding, organised meetings and began to build a community support base, all the while maintaining a bridging link between school and community.

The next step was to approach prominent community members to participate in a 'think tank' regarding the viability of a school VET program and to gauge public support for such an initiative. The key was personal communication. A former school staff member involved in the initiation of *Step Ahead* recalls:

R: ... that's when we sort of targeted various key players. Like after that many years in a small community I knew everybody and I could tap people on the shoulder and get them involved and they felt obligated to do so. So ...

I: So it was a lot of personal sort of communication?

R: Very personal, very much yeah, and I worked

really closely with the mayor and the councillors and I was on a lot of various committees you know and as things happen in small communities when you need something you need to just go around and make a phone call, visit people and you know they jump on board and they feel well they have to because you know if they don't nobody else will. And ... the Cooktown people are extremely vigorous and passionate about their town, extremely so and I've never seen anything like it.

Several key community opinion leaders were actively involved in shaping the vision of the VET program, including a representative from the mining industry, who proposed to include students from Years 9 and 10. With overwhelming support from school and community members, the proposal was then presented to the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation¹ (ASTF), the key funding body. The Principal and initiating teachers worked closely with key individuals from ASTF, and from the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and Education Queensland, who also would provide support. ASTF policy at the time precluded funding for VET-in-schools programs for Year 9 and Year 10 students, however, because of the level of school and community commitment to the initiative, and the foresight of the funding body, the initiative went ahead:

... the lady [from ASTF] ... said well this doesn't really quite fit the guidelines precisely, but it's such a valuable initiative we need to keep it going ... So a lot of support was provided by [ASTF], they were just brilliant ... fortunately they had people who could think outside the square and you know support us and allow us to take the risks and the risks paid off.

The next step was to formalise the school–community partnership by the formation of a Management Committee, comprising school staff and targeted community members, who represented the various community sectors that were stakeholders in the program. Many were present at the original community 'think tank', and included representatives from the local council, the construction, mining, pastoral and hospitality industries, Indigenous groups, as well as parents. A representative of the hospitality/tourism industry, with extensive links within the business and local government sectors of Cooktown, was approached by the Principal to act as chairperson. A good deal of the initial and ongoing success of the *Step Ahead*

program has been attributed to the Management Committee who were 'a very very powerful group of quite energetic and creative people'. In particular, the strong support of key players from the Indigenous communities in Cooktown and nearby Hope Vale, as well as a key player from the silica mining industry, was noted as important to the successful setting up and operation of the *Step Ahead* program.

The formation and early actions of the Management Committee were significant for several reasons. The Management Committee:

- reflected the community-based nature of the program;
- developed the program as a business, by developing a business plan, an induction program for participating workplaces, assessment and quality assurance processes, and by publicising the program through brochures and presentations at conferences and seminars;
- provided a strong 'customer' focus by facilitating on-going liaison between stakeholders and clients to obtain relevant feedback for guiding the development of the program, and
- brought a sense of direction and a networking structure to the project.

The role of Management Committee members at this stage was to involve themselves in decision making regarding policy development, and to canvas other employers within their industry to offer work placements to students. To reinforce community ownership of the program, committee meetings and other functions were held at venues in the community, rather than at the school. In addition, it was considered important to reinforce meeting protocols of punctuality, record-taking and non-attendance. This businesslike approach from the program's inception helped to give *Step Ahead* credibility within the community.

The care and time taken with the screening and selection of employers and students was seen as a key feature contributing to the success of the program. As the VET Coordinator stressed:

... it took us 12 months before we even looked at a student in the school ... We made sure we did our ground work, our homework with the employers ...

For over six months in the lead-up to the first intake of students, potential employers were carefully selected by Management Committee members according to their suitability and commitment to the aims of the program, and according to their involvement in actual or potential employment areas. One committee member explains:

I suppose we looked at how long they'd been in business in Cooktown, looked at how well we knew them personally as well as ... in the social way ... we really knew the people's background, we knew that if they made a commitment we were happy that the commitment would be fulfilled ...

For students, inclusion in the program was conditional upon an interview with a guidance officer, evaluation of academic progress, signing of a contract outlining minimum expectations and a parental interview and written consent.

As the following *Step Ahead* school staff point out, for students to enter the program there had to be a need and they also had to believe it was a privilege to belong:

They can't just go into *Step Ahead* because they want to. There has to be the need and the need normally is that their literacy, numeracy is very low and quite often their self-confidence and self-esteem is also very low.

We thought it might look like a dummy's course, and we didn't want it to be that way ... when we selected the students ... we said to them well if you don't come to school, or you don't go to your job, you're sacked ... And, of course, they ... tried us out, some of them got sacked ... they went back to normal classes ... We tried to promote it as a privilege to be there.

In January 1997, the first cohort of students began the *Step Ahead* program.

One Step After Another

Following the implementation of *Step Ahead*, the role of some of the key players in the program changed. The Principal's active involvement in the program reduced, the Management Committee's role changed from one of initiating, to one of monitoring and refining the program. The Committee maintains ongoing links and regular communication between employers, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, and the school. It continues to meet monthly, and is actively involved in decision making regarding student work placements and other issues affecting the program. It also advises on current industry trends and training needs.

In order to ensure the continuation of *Step Ahead*, and in recognition of the large amount of administration and coordination required to maintain such a program, the position of *Step Ahead* and School-based Apprenticeship Coordinator was created. The chairperson of the Management Committee was an invited applicant, and was successful in her application. She had lived in the community for a number of years and, prior to her appointment, was a small business operator. The following extracts describe the 'risk' taken by the school by appointing someone without teaching qualifications, and the reasons for making this decision in terms of potential benefits for both school and community. The first extract is from a community member and the second from a school staff member:

One of the risks the school took was taking somebody who doesn't have an education background to tackle an issue like this *Step Ahead* ... needed someone who could bridge the gap between the school and an employer ... that position could have been given to a teacher, or someone out of their own system and I don't think it would ever have had half its success ... [The *Step Ahead* Coordinator] is the type of person who has a lot of energy, she's very community minded and can see out to the peripherals to see how if we do this then that will affect that and may acquire an advantage to the town in a number of other different ways. She's definitely a person who knows how to work through the bureaucracy of government and government departments ... she has a very broad network ... she's the type of person that really helps initiate and get things going.

The *Step Ahead* Coordinator used her broad networks in business and local government to facilitate communication between the school and community. As she noted:

If there is a problem that problem is coped with very early and it doesn't get time to fester or to really grow out of all proportion.

This same person did much to strengthen the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; in particular, she worked hard at establishing a close relationship with the Indigenous Hope Vale Council, which has proved important in ensuring the *Step Ahead* program is well supported in that community.

The following comment from a student is typical of the level of support of past and present *Step Ahead* students for the Coordinator:

She always checks up on us, always makes sure we're up to date on our subjects and stuff, and she's always happy to help us in any way, [even] if we're in trouble ... she's always willing to be there for us.

Also important for the program's success was using a primary rather than secondary school approach by having one teacher responsible for and teaching the *Step Ahead* students rather than a range of subject teachers. As one of the students in the program told us:

... one classroom teacher is good ... the teacher gets to know us well and [I] wasn't so ashamed ... if you have a problem with maths ... she was willing to help us.

A number of respondents commented on the high level of commitment of stakeholders in the program. This commitment extends well beyond what might normally be expected. Speaking of the *Step Ahead* Coordinator, the following community member explains:

The reason that *Step Ahead* has succeeded and is not just because it's somebody's job ... [it's] people's personal interest in addressing those imbalances or doing something for those that are obviously missing out or dropping out or being passed by the way, so [the *Step Ahead* Coordinator] is employed by the school ... but if it was just 9 to 3 well the program wouldn't have achieved what it has achieved ...

Continued high levels of commitment are demonstrated by the employers participating in *Step Ahead*, as the VET Coordinator notes:

... I'm happy to say that the commitment is still there with the same people that we started with four years ago.

Although the Management Committee would normally cover expenses relating to work placements, respondents noted the amount of financial support provided by employers, in terms of providing students on work placement with meals, accommodation and transport as required. In addition, the commitment of Management Committee members in terms of time and financial contributions was seen also as an important factor in the program's success. The VET Coordinator explains:

We've kept it a really good close committee because they all give two hours of their time one morning every month which says a lot for a small community when there is travel involved ... you've got the guys fly down from [the silica mine] for that meeting and the other people come in from various [places].

A former school staff member involved in initiating *Step Ahead* noted that this continued commitment of stakeholders to the program is influenced strongly by the program's positive outcomes for youth:

... and the kids we have, I think we're very lucky ... they turned out to be really good, excellent kids. And they impressed all the employers, and to a degree that everyone wanted to be part of it ... so I think that's what kept it going actually, more than anything we did, I think it was the kids, because they showed so much interest, and they changed so dramatically ...

The Way Forward

Following on from the success of the *Step Ahead* program, the school has developed a school-based apprenticeship program, which is also administered by the *Step Ahead* Management Committee. The successful implementation of the *Step Ahead* program has been the catalyst for other community initiatives in terms of education and training, including a planned community-run skills training centre in Cooktown. The skills centre planning committee comprises community and school representatives, including the Principal and *Step Ahead* Coordinator. Negotiations are currently underway regarding sharing of school facilities and infrastructure with the proposed skills centre.

The *Step Ahead* program is subject to regular review by the Management Committee. Most community groups and industry sectors now participate in *Step Ahead*, and new opportunities in tourism and eco-tourism are being sought. Issues to be addressed in the future include further developments that will benefit youth in the wider Cape York region; the need to attract and retain female students to the program and to have work placements for them beyond the supermarket and child care; and the need to resolve timetabling and sustainability issues.

Sustainability issues relate mainly to the need for ongoing and increased levels of funding, following the initial three-year seeding grant. In 1999, it was noted that:

Current community support exceeds the school's capacity to accommodate all identified students in the program. The school in consultation with the community needs to encourage Education Queensland to increase its support so that the dimensions of the program can be expanded.

How does Step Ahead contribute to the community?

There are multiple beneficiaries of the *Step Ahead* program: the youth who participate, the school, individual community members and groups, and the region. As a result of participating in the program, there has been an observed increase in the self-esteem and self-worth of youth, in positive behaviour, and in school retention levels. Some have gone on to participate in school-based apprenticeships, and for others, there is a real chance of obtaining work within the region once they have left school. More importantly, those young people who have completed the *Step Ahead* program have gained a sense of their place in and value to the community, and have become positive role models to other young people. As a number of Indigenous respondents note:

[One *Step Ahead* student] won the CD for attendance, that was the first thing he told me, within two minutes of meeting him. And that was from missing school all the time to having the best attendance ... it's another kettle of fish, you know he's there all the time when you need him. ... it's been good for both non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous kids ... it's good that the students themselves know too that there are people in the community that care for them.

My young fella, he's really slow at picking up, and he's joined the *Step Ahead* program, and he loves it and he's always encouraging the other kids now, always says don't miss school or they'll kick you out of *Step Ahead* ... so he's really encouraging the other kids to attend school ...

On a broader level, community capacity has increased as school and community members work together to provide opportunities for their youth. The development of the *Step Ahead* program has provided a mechanism for people with similar values and beliefs to work together to bring about change in the community, as the following Shire Council representative explains:

It's [*Step Ahead*] certainly a catalyst ... it brought [together] as a committee, a group of people with similar interests and ideas and ambitions, I suppose, and that gave that base then to look at other [community initiatives] ... the conversation will lead itself to different opportunities and ideas and options ...

Trust between individuals and between different groups (youth and adults, Indigenous and non-Indigenous) has grown through involvement in the *Step Ahead* program. Two Indigenous respondents comment:

Lots of aboriginal people just don't [support their kids] ... But through *Step Ahead* there's been family support ... it's amazing when Christmas comes around when we can see that parents come, even younger brothers and sisters, that come to the speech night ... it's brought the people out of the woodwork.
... to see black and white mingle together that night [at the annual presentation night for *Step Ahead* students] was a hair raising thing.

The program has given the community a greater sense of control over its own and its children's futures, and has fostered an increasing awareness of the need for education and training. This Indigenous respondent explains:

I think that with RATEP [Remote Area Teacher Education Program] and that *Step Ahead* and there's more people getting more jobs yeah, there's more people in you know good positions and working for the community ... to see different people you know, different aboriginal people and in different areas of where they've got control over things and it makes me proud.

Participation in *Step Ahead* is stimulating a greater awareness of the need for individuals within industry groups to work together. A rural industry representative describes the benefits of participation in *Step Ahead* in the following way:

... from the properties' point of view and from the industry's perspective point of view it's the benefit that you are going to get long term, on bringing that kid along in that right direction. That you may not get the full benefits out of it but your industry is going to. And I think more people have got to look in that direction ...

The *Step Ahead* program has received widespread publicity because of its positive impact on the community. For example, a video and booklet about the program were produced by Education Queensland, and distributed widely throughout Queensland. A school staff member describes how this publicity has increased school and community identity and pride, and has engendered a sense of collective self-efficacy:

Oh the enormous personal and professional pride for being associated with it, the fact that it was recognised by a national organisation like ASTF, gave enormous sort of kudos to the people involved and ... they felt good about themselves. So self-esteem of everybody increased, it was a winner and everybody ... wants to be part of the winning team ...

School staff involved in *Step Ahead* expressed some concerns at the relatively narrow range of criteria used by funding bodies to evaluate the program's effectiveness, which did not take into account the multiple outcomes for youth and the community.

Although *Step Ahead* was a school initiative it soon grew to become a community vision reflecting a partnership between the school and a community of committed and passionate individuals.

This case study forms part of a study, *More than an education – Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, which was undertaken by Dr Sue Kilpatrick and her team Susan Johns, Bill Mulford and Ian Falk* from the Centre For Research and Learning In Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania. The full report is available in hardcopy for \$10 from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation E-shop or can be downloaded for free from RIRDC's website: www.rirdc.gov.au/fullreports/hcc.html
* Ian Falk has recently moved to the Northern Territory University

Secondary Section

Going Ahead in Leaps and Bounds



Head of Curriculum, Cassy Sorensen, and Vocational Project Officer, Isobel Skoczek, discuss their work with boys in the Cooktown region over the past few years.

This story follows on from the journey of the Step Ahead Program outlined in the previous case study on Cooktown State School carried out in 1999-2000. The program was awarded an Australia Day award in 1999, and in 2000 it was recognised as being one of the five best programs in Australia, involving both school and community, by the University of Tasmania. Since then the Step Ahead Program has seen some changes. After its initial success, it faltered momentarily but is once again on sure footing. The success rate of improving school attendance among the students on the program is currently hovering around 73%.

By 2000, the Step Ahead Program noted that literacy and numeracy levels of students coming into the program needed some significant support. As a consequence, the Connections program evolved to develop literacy and numeracy skills in a school-based program for the younger students at risk aged 13 and 14.

The Peninsula Partnership Educational Outreach Models PPOEMs is the next phase in this innovative approach to education. Aimed at extending alternative education programs to isolated communities at Hopevale, Laura, and Wujal Wujal through local partnerships, PPOEMs will provide numeracy and literacy support for those students who have already dropped out of school. It will also introduce the students to the world of work and provide learning activities and life skills development in their own environments.

Although these programs are open to male and female students, by far the majority are indigenous boys.

We have followed the Step-Ahead Program up until 2000 in the research report - you are obviously a new coordinator since then and there is a new Principal – so what has happened with it in that intervening time?

CS What I noticed as a newcomer to the school in 2001 was that people had come and gone from the program and had taken a lot of knowledge with them in their heads. The knowledge hadn't been transferred into procedures and processes. The same information was also interpreted differently by different people. When the AQTF standards came in, it really gave us the prompt. We knew we had a good program here, but we needed to get staff handbooks and student handbooks and procedures in place so that everyone knows exactly where they stand. So I had a look at what was happening, and found out information from other people. In the process I could see there was a slump in the program – the initial enthusiasm and community input had faded away a little bit. So as well as creating standardized procedures, we also needed to approach new industry reps and enthusiastic community members.

How did you go about doing that?

CS We have done a lot of marketing. We've had vocational education evening where we've had displays and information and we've had parents visit and nights where parents can give us input. In our newsletters and also in the local paper we have been trying to really market the program so that awareness is raised again. I think it is a slowly, slowly process but it is working.

Some employers had bad experiences with the structured work placements, which weren't followed up properly, so they felt that communication wasn't happening. As a result, one of the things we've really tried to increase is the communication between the student, the parent, the school and the employer so that everyone feels comfortable. If something happens with a structured work placement, we do talk to the student and get their side. Even if something goes wrong we find out what went wrong, what we can do in the future. It might not be a positive experience but it does become a learning experience. The employer knows that if someone just didn't turn up, we have talked to the student, who in turn writes a letter, acknowledging that this is inappropriate behaviour in a work situation.

IS Another thing that we have done is to promote vocational education within the school and within the community as a positive choice. We ensure the kids know that they will get nationally recognised certificates and that they understand the step-by-step process of completing different units of competency, so they can see their progression.

CS Today we were interviewing each of the kids just after four weeks, looking at their behaviour, looking at their attendance, working on their individual learning pathway plans which have their overall goals, clear aspirations etc. and then the steps to go towards that. This information will be sent home to parents and there feedback will be taken into account to try to ensure that the goals we are aiming at are consistent with theirs.

IS Often the students aren't clear about what they want. One boy insisted he wanted an apprenticeship with Main Roads. I rang and found out that basically being in Cooktown he couldn't get an apprenticeship with Main Roads, he had to go through a larger area that has a subcontractor base close to where you are. So when I explained

that he said, "Well what am I going to do now? Maybe I'll go and do a building contract." And I said, "What is it that you would really like to do? You know, why Main Roads – what part of working with Main Roads was the thing that interested you?" He said, "It was just a job." And I said, "What is it that you would LIKE to do?" and he said "I don't mind" and I said "What is the thing that you would really, really love to do? Isn't there something that you occasionally think you know 'I'd like to be doing that job'" and he said "Oh yeah, I want to work with metal. That is what I really, really like to do" So it was just a good process for all of us to see that often kids approach you initially with one request but it is not necessarily what their true goal or desire in life would be. This student will be going to Cairns to do structured work placement at Hastings Deering next structured work placement.

Another thing, which is really working for the program, is the involvement of the silicon mine, Cape Flattery. They prefer to take school-based apprentices because they believe that the transition of leaving school and going straight into the workforce is too great. They also have a range of opportunities from boilermakers to hospitality to bush regeneration.

IS With a lot of these businesses there is as high an expectation of the student's commitment at school as there is in the workforce. So we are working closely with host employers or with the local businesses where kids are doing apprenticeships. It means that there is an expectation from the school that if you are going to go to school for the two days a week you go and do your work on your apprenticeship and earn your money as well. So there is a link there. Since that has happened there has been a far better attitude with the kids both at school and in the workplace.

CS For a little while we had a big turn over of teachers, which didn't really help. At the moment the teacher that they have is very, very caring. She makes it evident that she really, really likes the kids and that comes through in the way she really sticks up for the kids and their rights and makes sure that everyone sees all the sides. So that is working very well. She is not just there to leave as soon as she can and she doesn't find them a difficult class. She finds them a very good class and she really enjoys teaching them. The same goes for the teacher aide. So that caring of the staff is one of the real benefits.



What was the motivation to deliver a program to the younger boys?

CS Basically we felt that the Step Ahead Program was achieving its goals and mainstream education wasn't meeting the needs of the younger students aged 13 and 14 who were disengaging from learning. Generally those students are indigenous students - they've got poor literacy and numeracy levels and they have in each case a background, which is not necessarily streamlined.

On the day-to-day level we experienced behaviour problems, lack of attendance or sporadic attendance. Often the misbehaving in class was due to the fact that the kids couldn't cope with the curriculum because of the low literacy and numeracy or that it was uninteresting for them.

Tell me about this program for younger boys?

CS Basically it is a similar program to the Step Ahead Program in that the kids stay together as a group. They have a homeroom so they feel ownership of that, and they become cohesive as a group. In traditional schooling kids in this age group are going from one room to another, which these kids find hard to cope with. Staying together in a homeroom, doing intensive literacy and numeracy as well as having a teacher aide working with them gives them a sense of stability. There is a home teacher that completes core subjects with the students, as well as a number of specialist teachers that deliver the different electives such as Hospitality, and Design and Technology, but the teacher aide still goes with them so they maintain that continuity.

Have you noticed a change because of that setup?

CS This year has only just started but definitely last year that group became more settled, they enjoyed school, their attendance picked up, their misbehaviour was minimized because they were enjoying themselves. The teacher could actually cater specifically for the particular learning styles of the indigenous students so they undertook a lot more 'doing' type activities. They could go off on little excursions and actually go down to the beach and do their science activities there. So there were a lot more avenues to foster the kids' development and cater to their learning styles.

Is the plan that this young group will lead into Step Ahead or are you trying to bring them back into mainstream education?

CS The purpose of the younger group is to have a look at their literacy and numeracy and develop individual plans to enable the students to achieve their goals. So their goal may be to get back into the mainstream or they may aim for Step Ahead because their outcome is some type of vocational traineeship, a school based apprenticeship, an apprenticeship or some type of work.



And what about the program that goes into communities?

CS PPOEMS is a pilot project, which has been funded by DEST aimed at taking some of the successes of Step out into the community - having a look at vocational aspects of structured work placement, literacy and numeracy and offering training to those students in their own community.

Sometimes children in communities that haven't got access immediately to a high school will go away to boarding school. For various reasons, they'll miss school for an extended period, and then feel ashamed that they aren't up to the age level of their peer group in their literacy and numeracy skills. Often kids return to communities for cultural reasons, or because their relatives are sick, or because they were bullied at school, or some of the girls get pregnant. There are a lot of different reasons that kids come back to communities and don't access education. The Step Program and the Connections Program are for students that are at risk, for those students who are still willing to come to school and participate in an education system. The kids that we are trying to access with the PPOEMS project are disconnected so that they are not accessing any type of educational system at the moment, so they are in these communities and are not doing anything. The aim is to redirect these kids. For example, if a boy wants to become an apprentice but thinks his literacy is too low we create a plan so he can see how he CAN get there. It may take a little longer but he still can access a traineeship, or apprenticeship or do a TAFE course.

So the PPOEMS project is trying to reengage students into education by first of all going into the community and offering the training, the literacy and numeracy, offering structured work placements and accessing support services. The students there can just come and go as they please, they can't access electives like the Steps students, for example, Marine Studies, Hospitality, Industry Skills or Computing. So it is just a stepping-stone to try to get kids back in.





Are these classes all boys?

CS The Connections class at the moment is all boys and that has just worked out that way. The Step class at the moment is fairly close to even - maybe slightly more boys. And it is nice to see two mature age students who are being good role models. One of them who has come back as a mature age student was elected sports captain. So he is a really good role model.

IS I think Step has given many indigenous parents a lot of faith because parents are having a pretty hard time in communities up here. Their social structure is changing, the kids are basically falling out of school in large numbers and parents are finding it hard to parent, so I think it gives them a lot of faith that good things can happen.

So have you found that these boys are stigmatized at all or alienated because they are in separate programs rather than part of the mainstream?

CS I don't think so. We first thought about that with the Step Ahead group. At a recent leadership camp, all the students really socialized well and one of Step's students was nominated for school captain. It was good to see that of the two boys nominated, one of them was a Step's kid because you could see the stigmatization isn't there.

IS Alternative programs like these can sometimes be seen as a soft option but I think what the kids are seeing is that it is a privilege to be in a program where so much effort is put in on your behalf. At the same time there is a lot higher expectation of them – they have to behave more maturely and have to be in situations that other students might not come across for another few years – so it is seen as a privilege to be in the program.

At Hopevale I saw a student, who was basically unhappy with what he was doing – left school early, spent some time in Cooktown, then went to another town, tried one of the other colleges – and none of it actually worked out for him. And just through conversation he said, "I really want to start learning again", and asked if he could come back to Step even though he was older than the other students. So he has come back and is incredibly happy.

Going through Step, there is something more to school than just learning for the sake of learning. For the kids that have got a definite academic ability mainstream choices make sense. For kids who don't have that, often the school loses its meaning and I think that is why something like Step is really good.

Cassy Sorensen has been Head of the Curriculum Department at Cooktown State School since 2001 after nine years in schools at Weipa and Thursday Island.

Isobel Skoczek is the Vocational Project officer who organises structured work placements.

The Minister's Visit

It all started in 1999 when Linda Downey, the Career's Adviser at Sir Joseph Banks rang our Senior Head Teacher, Arthur Crosson and asked him if there was any suitable course for some of her students that might decide to leave after Year 10. Arthur, being a very innovative person said that he could pick some modules out of the Fitting and Machining course, which would be common to a lot of trades.

Well, I was given the task of teaching these lads. I didn't know their background so I treated them in the same way as I treated my apprentices. This worked to a certain degree but then I had to modify my method. I noticed that their attention span was very short when giving theory lessons. So after discussions with Arthur we decided to get them interested with hands on work and concentrate on theory later in the year. This worked very well. We also made up exercises that would be useful to them when they were completed, for example bike pegs, dumbbells and tape wrenches.

I then approached Arthur and recommended that we should offer this course to other schools in our region that had boys that were thinking of leaving school before they finished their formal education. The term for this was "Youth at Risk". *At Risk* of not finding work opportunities, *At Risk* of being unemployed for long periods, *At Risk* of not completing their formal education.

Now came the hard part – finding these students work. Well it turned out not too hard at all, because employers are looking for lads who have the basic knowledge of "hand and power tools" and are willing to get their hands dirty. I always told the boys that when they went for a job to take along their finished jobs, which works in two ways. Firstly, everyone has a resume' but not too many people actually have something that they made themselves to show off their skills. Secondly, it helps break the ice with a prospective employer and soon he will start to handle their work and ask how they made it.

To date we have had 70-75% success rate with these boys in finding employment in various apprenticeships, anything from landscaping, electrical, plumbing, air-conditioning, metal fabrication, welding, sheet metal and even our own trade of Fitting and Machining. One of our ex-students even won a gold medal in Word Skills for Metal Fabrication.



Ivan Noacco describes what happens when a 'Kids At Risk Program' is itself at risk of losing its funding.



One of our ex-students even won a gold medal in Word Skills for Metal Fabrication.

Fitting and Machining is part of the Engineering Trades at Chullora campus of Bankstown TAFE. We teach how to operate several different types of machines, for example, lathes, milling machines, surface grinder cylindrical grinders, boring machines and drilling machines off hand grinders and CNC machines. Part of the fitting involves the use of hand and power tools and basic welding skills. We also teach how to repair, maintain and construct equipment and machinery.



You are probably wondering what this all has to do with the Minister's visit.



... although I have been teaching for 22 years, I still find it great to see these young lads build up their confidence and self-esteem.

Ivan Noacco is the TAFETA Chullora Federation Representative and a teacher in the Fitting and Machining section.

Of course all these students increase our A.S.C.H. (actual student contact hours). Management seized upon this and used this increase to close Fitting and Machining at St George TAFE, which had enough students to operate successfully. They transferred the teachers to Chullora Campus of Bankstown. This made it harder for Arthur to give everyone a full program. Management then told us that we could not run this "Youth at Risk" course. So through Maree O'Halloran and Geoff Turnbull we appealed to the Minister for Education and Training to continue to run this course. In the meantime, Rod Lalor a Fitting and Machining teacher applied for various funding, but to no avail. Then Minister John Watkins came to our rescue and funded a semester with 30 students. However private schools, for example Catholic schools, were excluded. The Catholic Education saw the benefits of this course so they paid \$15,000 for one term for 15 students.

You are probably wondering what this all has to do with the Minister's visit. Well we as a group of concerned teachers and citizens wanted the Minister to see at first hand what we were doing. We asked our management in August to invite John Watkins and were told the next time they had breakfast together they would. Again our Federation executive helped us and John Watkin accepted our invitation for 5 November 2002.

Our little committee which consisted of Rod Lalor, Bruce Gregory, Arthur Crossan and myself thought it would be a great idea to invite our local members, heads of industry, careers advisers, parents and students and of course our managers. On the day we had approximately 50 people turn up with four MPs.

John Watkins was very impressed with what we are doing. In fact he has promised to continue funding for 2003.

A special thanks to Bruce and Rod, who were the driving force in all this and without their help this visit would not have been so successful. The main lesson I learnt from this is that, although I have been teaching for 22 years, I still find it great to see these young lads build up their confidence and self-esteem because some find they can actually make something themselves and this encourages them to achieve even better things in the future. Another lesson is you can't solve everyone's problems but even if you only help a few, it is worthwhile and rewarding.

I really enjoyed seeing the change in these lads. I also find that employers are willing to give these boys a chance. Remember every kid you give this opportunity to, may save us taxpayers thousands of dollars in the future. But even if you run this course or a similar course solely on altruistic reasons DO IT, because a lot of youth will reap the benefits and we will have a better society for everyone.

Big Brother is Watching

It all started when Brother Brendan's health cracked up in Papua New Guinea. After 27 years of teaching on his feet, his low blood pressure now restricted him to a desk job. So he headed for St Bede's, a Catholic Boys' School teaching Years 7 to 12 to 1350 students.

What began as a straightforward clerk's job recording attendances and latecomers, grew to be much more than that.

Brother Brendan decided that a more proactive approach to dealing with attendance issues could circumvent some of the associated problems, so he put in place a new way of handling absenteeism.

As usual he enters on the computer program, the data of daily attendance. Parents however are asked to notify the school by 9.30am if their kids are to be away or late. By that time, Brother Brendan cross references any absentees with the parents' calls. For those unaccounted for in the process, he gets on the phone right away to talk to the parents.

In the past boys may have been absent for three to five days before parents were alerted. By then the habit of truanting was established. Nowadays if boys want to try that, they get caught on the first day.

Not only that but there is a record of attendance kept for every class period, so that even if you're at school, you can still be sprung for skiving off. Three Year 9 and 10 boys work with Brother Brendan each day collecting the absentee sheets from each class. Any absentees that don't cross reference with the calls from parents are notified to the year co-ordinators, who follow up with the boys. While it may seem that the walls have ears, the effect of the process is more preventative than punitive. It acts as a deterrent. In fact the truancy rate has dropped considerably. Nowadays the rate is one per month, a fraction of the state average for Victoria.

Brother Brendan Crowe talks about the scope of his role as an Attendance Officer with St Bede's Catholic College.

While it may seem that the walls have ears, the effect of the process is more preventative than punitive.

*So the system becomes a safety net
for those on the edge.*

Parents feel really comfortable with the scheme, as it gives them an added feeling of security, knowing that someone is looking out for their boys, but there are also other spinoffs.

Boys who truant know they're going to get caught. According to Brother Brendan this system picks up quickly on the boys in crisis.

Occasionally with the Year 7's and 8's it's a bit of bravado and they go out with a mate and it's really no real problem but usually with the kids from Year 9-12 it's a bit of a cry for help.

In these instances, parents are encouraged to go easy on the boys, and the school offers help through the school counsellor, external counsellors, student welfare officers and year co-ordinators.

So the system becomes a safety net for those on the edge.

Problems that often become too much for these boys are either family related – dealing with parents splitting up, or combining into a new family – or personal issues such as the emotional upsets of break-ups, money problems, drug use and so on.

For Brother Brendan, one of the unexpected spin-offs of the job is his relationship with these boys.

I see my job with the kids as being non judgmental and I just try to be as optimistic and as encouraging as I can. I end up having a lot of the kids who are not getting on well in school either with teachers or with peers. I think they feel that I like them and that gives them a bit of confidence you know. And sometimes when they do come in late and there has been a problem, well I sit down and talk about it. I'm not a trained counsellor myself but I try to give a little bit of warm fuzzy to them and where I feel that they would benefit from real counselling, well I certainly recommend that they have a yarn with the school counsellor.

There was talk of the Government providing funds for attendance officers in schools, but it seems we'll have to mark that one 'absent without reason'.

For schools of more than 1,000 students, Brother Brendan believes that a full-time attendance officer can make a real contribution – taking the load from class teachers, providing peace of mind for parents and ensuring that kids with problems are detected and given assistance early.

So you see, Big Brother may well be watching, but he's also ready with a helping hand.

Brother Brendan Crowe
is a full-time
attendance officer at
St Bede's Catholic
College, Melbourne.

Bulletin Board

Boys Education Lighthouse Schools Program

A new government initiative to enhance teaching and learning in boys' education is providing great opportunities for Australian schools to address the needs of boys.

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

The programme will commence early in 2003 and involve two stages. During Stage One an initial suite of up to 70 action research projects will be established in schools to develop and document best practice in the education of boys. Following this, up to 30 clusters of schools will be formed within which one school will act as a 'beacon' in the professional development of teachers in practical best practice in the education of boys. .

The programme aims to establish self-sustaining 'best practice' clusters by providing seed funding to projects in school clusters that will make a difference in their own right, but which will also spread best practice in boys' education.

Stage One

The first stage aims to examine and identify what works in teaching and learning in boys' education in Australian schools. It will involve identifying up to 70 schools or school clusters to enable them to develop and document their boys' education best practices.

- Funding of between \$5,000 and \$20,000 will be available, depending on the number of schools in the cluster.
- Schools and clusters will be selected for funding on application, and will be representative of all education sectors and States and Territories, including rural and remote areas.
- Funding will be by application and evaluation against selection criteria.
- Each school and cluster will document best practice, with descriptive and quantitative evidence of what difference it makes. This will be published and will inform selection criteria for Stage Two.

STOP PRESS
For further information and application forms for the Boys Education Lighthouse Schools Program go to www.curriculum.edu.au/boyslighthouse or contact Mr Stuart Trist at Curriculum Corporation on 03 92079600. Schools or clusters who wish to apply for funding need to do so by Tuesday the 25th March, 2003.

Information provided from the DEST website www.dest.gov.au/schoolsboyseducation

Applications for Stage One

Dr Brendan Nelson, Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, will write directly to all Australian school principals and other key stakeholders inviting applications in early 2003.

Individual schools may apply for grants of up to \$5,000. Clusters of 2, 3 or 4 or more schools may apply for up to \$10,000, \$15,000 and a limit of \$20,000 respectively. Applications must address the selection criteria for Stage One.

Schools need not already have a specific 'boys' programme' in place and may use funds provided to work towards that goal. School and cluster projects could be proposed for different phases of development, including:

- *Initiating phase* – to seed new development, and report on current start-up issues.
- *Developing phase* – to support further development or expansion of a programme or project already initiated, and to report on this.
- *Consolidation phase* – to report on, evaluate or study outcomes of an initiative that is relatively mature.

For clusters in regional, rural and remote areas, participation of cluster schools may involve innovative methods, such as information and communication technology. This could be an aspect of the best practice model demonstrated.

Stage Two Description

Stage Two aims to establish approximately 30 clusters of schools. Each cluster will have a designated lighthouse school to act as champion and demonstration school. These lighthouse schools, not necessarily from Stage One schools, will act as 'beacons' to provide, facilitate, coordinate and support professional development of the whole cluster.

- Funding of up to \$60,000 will be provided to the lighthouse school to implement a professional development programme for the whole cluster.
- Each cluster will be required to evaluate its programmes in boys' education and its professional development activities under the lighthouse project.
- Follow up evaluation of successful and less successful practice will provide a basis for further national dissemination of good practice in boys' education.

Applications for Stage Two

Applications for Stage Two will be invited in late 2003 once Stage One is complete. Applicants may have participated in Stage One but this is not essential. It is expected that applications will come from clusters of schools with identified 'beacon' schools, rather than individual schools. Requirements including selection and evaluation criteria and the application processes will be formalised once Stage One is finished.

Selection will be made by an expert panel against criteria, which allow schools to demonstrate (quantitatively and qualitatively) achievement or expected achievement in improving the education of boys, and the cluster's plan to disseminate best practice more broadly.

As with Stage One, schools need not already have a specific 'boys' programme' in place and may use funds provided to work towards that goal. School and cluster projects could be proposed for different phases of development, including:

- *Initiating phase* – to seed new development, and report on current start-up issues.
- *Developing phase* – to support further development or expansion of a programme or project already initiated, and to report on this.
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For clusters in regional, rural and remote areas, participation of cluster schools may involve innovative methods, such as information and communication technology.

Examples of Projects

Projects may focus on one or more aspect of best practice in boys' education, including:

- Adapting pedagogy, curriculum and assessment for different learning styles, including interactive and experiential styles;
- Improving literacy and communication skills and performance across the curriculum, including the integration of phonics into literacy teaching;
- Developing effective and sustainable behaviour management programmes;
- Improving student engagement with schooling and motivation to learn; and
- Drawing school and community resources together to provide positive role models for students.

For clusters in regional, rural and remote areas, participation of cluster schools may involve innovative methods, such as information and communication technology. This could be an aspect of the best practice model demonstrated.

Proposed Timetable

The following proposed timetable indicates the key stages in the programme. Please note the timeframe is tentative and may change. The dates for applications and commencements have been deferred. The new dates appear below. It is assumed that the reporting stages will also be deferred although no new dates have been announced at the time of publication.

Early 2003	Minister writes to all schools to invite applications for Stage One.
March 2003	Applications for Stage One close.
April 2003	Announcements of 70 successful applicants for Stage One.
2 nd quarter	Stage One projects commence.
3 rd quarter	
2003	Schools complete reports under Stage One.
4 th quarter	
2003	Reporting under Stage One is consolidated and best practice guidance is identified. Selection criteria for Stage Two finalised.
Late 2003	Applications sought for Stage Two.
Early 2004	Successful lighthouse schools and clusters announced.
End 2004	Funded lighthouse project complete and report.

For further information on The Lighthouse Project visit the DEST website www.dest.gov.au/schoolsboyseducation

Talk Good To Yaself!



Courtesy of Streetwise Communications 2002

Craig Hammond (Bourkie) gives his take on the latest Streetwise comic to help indigenous boys deal with depression.

This brand new comic from Streetwise, is aimed at young Aborigines who may be experiencing depression. Talk Good to Yaself! tells the story of Jake, a young bloke having problems dealing with his anger and emotions. With the help of his friend Rebecca and the local AEA, Jake learns that he may be suffering from depression and that there is support available to assist him.

Talk Good to Yaself! highlights the problems faced by young Aboriginal boys in rural areas who may be experiencing depression or other forms of mental illness and encourages them to use the health services in their area. The comic can be used by school counsellors, teachers, youth workers and other service providers in discussions, role plays and storytelling.

Bourkie, what do you think of this comic?

I've seen Streetwise comics before and never taken a lot of notice of them. But after reading this one and then thinking about it a bit more, it really does have a good picture on this young Aboriginal man and the effects racial slurs have in sport. It might happen on the field but it goes on after the game in terms of the effect it has on him as a young man – at school and his social life in general. In saying that, there is a lot of anger in Aboriginal people. I feel we have got to look a bit more at anger management because of all the things that have happened to Aboriginal people in the past. It's about trying to develop ways to control our anger. I suppose I was a bit like that young fella myself, just punching them out and then not thinking of the consequences. But then as I have got older and have kids of my own now and because I have a lot of contact with young Aboriginal people, I'm trying to encourage them on how to control their anger. Posters and booklets and talking to them seems to be the way to go.

So you think this story in the comic seems pretty realistic?

Yeah it is. It talks about respect and in a lot of Aboriginal communities, if you are a good footballer you tend to get a bit more respect from other people in your community and people tend to want to get to know you and spend a bit more time with you. But as soon as you're down and out, a lot of times they just sort of tend to push you aside. At the moment with this young fella in this comic strip he's pretty lucky – he's got his girlfriend to sort of support him on, and his father even though he's not a good role model but in some sense his father is there so that helps out a little bit.

How do you reckon you could use this book, what could people working with young indigenous kids do with a comic like this?

I'd probably work with just teenage kids from around the first year in High School. As they get older they'll spend more time with their friends. They'll be taking themselves to football training or to wherever they've got to go so they'll be pulling away from us. That is when they are most vulnerable to all the racist remarks and either the mum or the dad won't be around as much to sort of protect them. I think that is the time when we've got to target that anger management stuff within our young Aboriginal kids – within High School level. With this booklet here, they can do class time with it, with Aboriginal people as their teacher, like an AEA or a Youth Worker or even an Elder to come in and just talk to the kids. You know the issues they have got to deal with, with the police,



Courtesy of Streetwise Communications 2002

with the juvenile justice and the wider community all that sort of stuff, we've got to deal with that because we are already branded as people without a future. And the only way I see it changing is by re-educating them. We've got to have strength within ourselves. By educating our kids, us as Aboriginal people educating our kids, we can make them stronger you know because the main stream education (they do put our kids down) is not going to make our kids stronger. By doing this sort of stuff with these booklets anything is possible. It wouldn't harm anyone it would only make them feel a lot stronger.

In that book they are making suggestions about how kids could deal with depression - like talk to somebody, go to a counsellor, get some medication – do you think those suggestions are helpful for indigenous teenagers?

Yep they're helpful but a lot of Koori kids think that it is shame to go and get help from a professional like a doctor for medication. They're worried about the other kids thinking they are not normal, stupid, schizo, you know that sort of language. It is about awareness and the old saying "prevention is better than a cure". We've got to try and find the right way of saying it is alright to seek help. You know like saying it's alright for men to cry and it is alright for men to ask for help. We've got to try and make them aware that they have got to make the decision that they need help. It's not about us trying to help them. I feel it is about us promoting the awareness for them to admit that they need help. And then once they admit to needing help well that's when other things fall into place like the people working with them and it makes it easier on them.

Not only that but a lot of us don't want a lot of other Aboriginal people knowing about why they are at the doctors because that then reflects on their family background. You know they could live with an alcoholic mother or father and then that in turn reflects back on the parents. Sometimes a lot of parents have got to start to take responsibility of their kids' actions because a lot of them relate to a lot of things that other parents allow them to do. A book like this could help, if it had the right promotion and workers were trained to use them. A booklet like this needs the right community knowledge. I mean I have seen them around but not a great deal in the community.

There are heaps of Aboriginal organisations - like hundreds in the community. If they are developed properly and promoted properly they'd be more useful. It would need more than just sending them out in a box for people to say well this would be alright for your service. It would take training and information for staff on how to use them.

You get somebody that knows what they're talking about to drop them off at the services and you make an appointment to talk more about the comic – not just to say well this is a good resource, when half the people don't even know what to do with the resource. So you take that time out and make the effort to promote it to services. You go there and you sit down and talk about how this could be used for the whole family. Every Aboriginal organisation here relates to family involvement. If a problem affects the father it affects the family, it affects the sons and daughters. So if they're gonna take the trouble to put this sort of book together they have got to promote it and when they drop it off you have your person to go and talk to them.

You see often when books are sent there the receptionist or secretary sees it and sits it over there and she doesn't know what it is about and it might not even get to the Community Workers. So you have got to have that contact with the Community Workers to say well look this is what this edition of the comic is about and this is how you can use it.

Anything else you would like to say about it?

It's a good resource but it has just got to be promoted in different areas. This comic book that I'm reading has got local area health services for Orange and Dubbo. This is no good for someone who lives in Moree. They could leave this page blank for other local areas to put their details in, cause this info is not going to help me. It would be no good to me if I was a young fella. That's an STD call. I ain't got \$5 to ring up them for information, I only got forty cents.

Craig Hammond (Bourkie) is an indigenous community worker with the Engaging Fathers Project, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. He works extensively with indigenous fathers and young men. He can be contacted on 02 49217711.

Streetwise Comics and other resources are available from Streetwise Communications: Suite 6, 245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016. Tel:02 9319 0220 Fax: 02 9319 5553 Email stwize@streetwise.com.au www www.streetwise.com.au

Professional Development for Educators

Available through the Boys in Schools Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle

Boys in Schools Program

How can we get the best for our boys and from our boys?

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

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

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

BEBOP: Boys' Education, Boys' Outcomes Project

A Systematic and Comprehensive project for Professional Development and Action Research in Educating Boys

Is your school a boy-friendly school? Would you like to teach boys more effectively? Then BEBOP will interest you.

BEBOP enables schools and/or groups or clusters of schools to systematically develop their approaches to boys' education, supported by research staff from the Boys In Schools Program. 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.

Over a twelve-eighteen month period, BEBOP will help you achieve your outcomes for boys. In that time you will see many changes in your boys. They will participate more in the school's activities, improve their academic performance, exhibit more co-operative behaviour, expand their options and increase their involvement in extra-curricula activities.

Schools involved in BEBOP have:

- Developed effective school structures for educating boys and involving the community
- Improved staff knowledge of the academic and social situation of boys
- Developed strategies to build good relationships with boys including effective classroom management techniques
- Built knowledge of a range of successful literacy strategies, programs and resources for developing boys' literacy.
- Identified skills amongst staff to recruit fathers and father figures and involve them in the classroom.
- Implemented individual action plans to ensure that these outcomes are achieved.

As a teacher in a recent BEBOP says:

I have learnt so much. . . . I didn't stay back and whinge about the problems I had but (BEBOP) gave me a strategy and the confidence to go out there to search for solutions and solve them.

Graduate Certificate and Masters Programs in Educating Boys

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

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

The program offers flexibility for busy teachers. At least three courses are offered each semester and students can begin either semester one or two. On completion of the Graduate Certificate graduates can apply to continue to complete the Master's program. To complete the Graduate Certificate students must successfully complete a total of 40 credit points made up of one core course and three electives. Graduates can apply to continue on to the Masters Program. For the Master's program, students need to complete 80 credit points. The program is full fee paying, with payment of the fees directly to the university. Costs are likely to be \$750 (inc. GST) per course. There is also a general service charge. Course fees may be a legitimate tax deduction.

Designing and Implementing Programs for Boys

Presented by Rollo Browne

What makes programs work? How do we get skills to stick? What are the key elements, useful processes, activities and strategies to use with boys? This workshop has a practical focus on working with boys in schools towards social outcomes. We will examine:

- How to design and run programs for boys
- What's in it for boys? Revealing the need for change
- A framework for thinking about boys' programs
- Key elements of effective boys' programs, including
 - Engagement
 - Group work
 - Use of action methods
- Selecting appropriate topics
- Practical activities and strategies
- Approaches to building social skills

This is a two to three hour program with notes provided.

Specialised Boys in Schools Workshops

The Boys in Schools Program offers tailor-made professional development workshops for education staff at a local school, cluster or district basis. You can contact us with your particular professional development needs regarding educating boys, or look out for our one-day seminars in your state. We offer reasonable rates for whole-day and half-day professional development workshops and seminars.

Building Relationships with 'Difficult' Male Students by Observing Ourselves

Presented by David Shores and Jackie Marlu

The relationship between teacher and male student is recognised by many educators as a critically important in a student's positive social, emotional and academic development. Much work has been done attempting to understand and remediate classroom and school situations where this relationship has broken down. Often this takes the major focus of attempting to modify or manage the behaviour of the 'difficult student'. This often provides a new start for a more positive relationship. But what happens when the relationship breaks down? What do we do when boys continue to withdraw, resist or actively and consciously work not to develop a positive relationship or change their 'difficult behaviours'? Building Relationships with 'Difficult' Male Students by Observing Ourselves has been developed specifically with such situations in mind. The workshop has been conducted extensively, over five years, in South Australian schools.

This is a one-day workshop

Year 9/10 Boys Program on Masculinity and Power

Presented by Rollo Browne

The school's male teachers run small groups of boys through a series of rotating activities. Rollo gives a keynote address, uses action methods and on power and runs activities during the morning. In the afternoon the small groups work on and present their solutions to problems such as bullying, harassment and violence. Activity sessions include Language and Sexuality, Images of Masculinity (Photolanguage or Male Photopak) and Males Coping with Pressure. Staff must run through the program prior to the day. A suitable venue, such as a library with sufficient break out rooms, is required.

This is an all day program. Copies of teacher notes and student handouts are provided

Social Education Classroom Program: Developing Social/Emotional Intelligence Through an Exploration of Risk-Taking Behaviour, With a Focus on Boys

Presented by David Shores

If the Girls' Educational Strategy was very broadly about getting our female students out into work with a wider range of options, then what's the aim for Boys' Education? To get them out into the world? They're already there! I believe that the aim of Boys' Education is rather to get our boys and young men back into themselves, to develop introspection. The Social Education Program uses young males' attraction to physical risk-taking to create an interest in, and an understanding of, our intra-personal experiences. Participants explore how these experiences can be used to create more positive relationships in the classroom. What we think, feel, do and say are connected. With practice, by observing ourselves in action, we can develop an understanding of what it means to take responsibility for our internal and external behaviours.

For more information about any of these professional development opportunities contact: Michelle Gifford, phone: (02) 4921 8739 Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au Or visit our website www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac

Rock and Water

The Rock and Water program is coordinated throughout Australasia by the Gadaku Institute and the Boys in Schools Program and is presented by Freerk Ykema.

The program offers teachers a new way to interact with boys through physical and social skills. Simple self defence, boundary and communication exercises lead to a strong notion of self-confidence, assisting 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, bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

One day Introductory Workshops: Introduction to the Rock and Water program provides a survey of the entire course (with teaching materials), including standing strong, the rock and water attitude in physical, mental and social contexts: and dealing with pressure from others.

3 day workshop: presented by Freerk Ykema. This workshop provides a survey of the entire course. Day one covers the contents of lessons 1-4: standing strong, the rock and water attitude in physical, mental and social context; and dealing with pressure from others. Day two extends the range of exercises and topics: breathing to extend physical power and to keep self-control; the body language of The Tunnel and of The Beach; feeling; setting and respecting your own and other people's boundaries. All lessons from 1-8 are practised on day three. Lessons 9-13, about self realisation, are most suited to older male students. Registration includes a course manual and light refreshments each day.

Refresher courses and advance training are also available.

Dates are organised throughout Australia during March/April/May and September/October/November. Please contact us for further details.

For Rock and Water Resources please refer to our order form or contact us for our catalogue.

For more information about the course, up and coming tours, or to find out how your organisation or school can host a workshop in NSW or NT contact:

Michelle Gifford, phone (02) 4921 8739

Email Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au

Or visit our website www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac

For all other enquiries throughout Australia please contact the Gadaku Institute at Events WA on (08) 9409 8688 or email events@ozemail.com.au



Who is Freerk Ykema?

Freerk Ykema has been a Physical Education and Remedial Teacher and Counsellor at Schagen in the North of The Netherlands in a comprehensive school. In 1995 he trailed the Rock and Water Course at his school to address boys' motivation and self-confidence. He now trains teachers in countries throughout the world to deliver the course. In 2000 the course won a national award in The Netherlands for targeting boys' education.

The third biennial Teaching Boys Conference:

Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships

Sponsored by the Boys in Schools Program and Engaging Fathers Program of the Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle, Commonwealth Department of Education, Science & Training, NSW Department of Education & Training, Rio Tinto and NSW Health



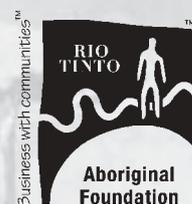
5pm Thursday 27 March to 4pm Saturday 29 March 2003

Newcastle City Hall

King Street Newcastle 2300 NSW AUSTRALIA

Conference themes

- Engaging Boys: Building on boys' strengths in the educational process
- Boys and Literacies: Building on home, school and community partnerships
- Welfare and Behaviour: Building partnerships for developing resilience and purpose in boys



Who should attend

Teachers, principals, health and welfare staff, parents, educational leaders, counsellors, youth workers, policy-makers, community and government agency staff

Places are still available - Register Now

Contact: Tulips Meetings Management
email boys@pco.com.au or phone 02 4984 2554
www.pco.com.au/boys2003



The UNIVERSITY
of NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



Program at a Glance



Thursday 27 March 2003, Newcastle City Hall

- 8:00am** Registration (pre-conference workshop participants) – Level One, Newcastle City Hall
- 9:30am** Optional Pre-Conference Workshop #1 – David Shores, 'Introspection, Responsibility, Relationships and Boys in School'
- 9:30am** Optional Pre-Conference Workshop #2 – Freerk Ykema, 'Introduction to Rock & Water'
- 9:30am** Optional Pre-Conference Workshop #3 – Neil McClelland, 'Reading Champions'
- 2:00pm** Registration – Level One, Newcastle City Hall
- 5:00pm** Opening; Performances and Welcome chaired by Judi Geggie – Concert Hall
Newcastle Welcome; Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor John Tate
Conference Welcome; Margaret McMillan, Deputy Executive Dean, Faculty of Health, The University of Newcastle
My favourite "Boys' Own" Teaching Stories; Richard Fletcher
- 6:10pm** Keynote #1 – Don Weatherburn, 'Making Boys into Fine Men: The role of economic and social policy' – Concert Hall
- 7:00pm** Light Refreshments Served – Hunter Room

Friday 28 March 2003, Newcastle City Hall

- 7:30am** Registration – Level One, Newcastle City Hall
- 8:45am** Welcome Day Two chaired by Trevor Waring – Concert Hall
Indigenous Welcome, Introduction, a "Boys Panel" and a performance from Boys' Business NT boys music group project
- 9:40am** Keynote #2 – Ann Buchanan, 'Removing the barriers – Promoting the emotional well-being of boys' – Concert Hall
- 10:40am** Morning Tea – Civic Theatre Foyer
- 11:10am** The Big Issues! Facilitated discussions on the key issues in boys education
- | WELFARE AND BEHAVIOUR
Concert Hall | LITERACY
Cummings Room | ENGAGEMENT
Hunter Room | RESILIENCE AND PURPOSE
4.16, University House |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Facilitated by Bob Conway</i> | <i>Facilitated by Liz Rushton</i> | <i>Facilitated by Robyn Cragg</i> | <i>Facilitated by Julie Midson York</i> |
| Ken Rigby | Kevin Wheldall | Bob Morgan | Freerk Ykema |
| Rollo Browne | Ken Rowe | Bob Lingard | David Shores |
| Roberto Parada | Neil McClelland | Ian Lillico | Deb Hartman |
- 12:40pm** Lunch – Civic Theatre Foyer
- 1:40pm** Keynote #3 – Ian Falk, 'The essence of engagement: Boys and Belonging; Schools and Communities' – Concert Hall
- 2:30pm** Keynote #4 – John Spiering, 'Realising Australia's commitment to young people: Making a structural difference in learning and work' – Concert Hall
- 3:20pm** Afternoon Tea – Civic Theatre Foyer
- 3:50pm** Concurrent Sessions A – pre-selected (90 mins)
- 7:00pm** Optional Conference Dinner – Crowne Plaza Newcastle

Saturday 29 March 2003, Newcastle City Hall

- 8:00am** Registration – Level one, Newcastle City Hall
- 9:00am** Welcome Day Three chaired by Deborah Hartman – Concert Hall
- 9:05am** Keynote #5 – John Marsden, 'Language, Communication, Power and Boys' – Concert Hall
- 9:50am** Keynote #6 – Ken Rowe, 'Auditory Processing: Why many boys are behind the literacy '8-ball' throughout the early and middle-years of schooling' – Concert Hall
- 10:30am** Morning Tea – Civic Theatre Foyer
- 11:00am** Concurrent Sessions B – pre-selected (90 mins)
- 12:30pm** Lunch – Civic Theatre Foyer
- 1:30pm** Concurrent Sessions C – pre-selected (90 mins)
- 3:10pm** Conference close – Senator John Tierney, Senator for NSW and Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education – Concert Hall
- 3:40pm** Afternoon Tea and Farewells

Sunday 30 March 2003

- 8:30am** Optional Tour of Port Stephens' Historical Sites
- 10:00am** Optional Post-Conference Workshop – John Marsden, 'Boys and Teachers: Language and Power in the Classroom Newcastle City Hall

RESOURCES FOR BOYS EDUCATION

Boys In Schools Program

Order Form



Title	PubNo	RRP (inc GST)	QTY	TOTAL
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (school set) - 3 copies of each issue		002S	\$110.00	
The Boys in School Bulletin (single) - 1 copy of each issue		970	\$45.00	
The Boys in School Bulletin 2002 back issues - 1 copy of each issue (3)		004S	\$40.00	
The Boys in School Bulletin 2001 back issues - 1 copy of each issue (3)		004S	\$33.00	
^{New} Sometimes Magic – 32 colourful laminated cards, practical & useful tool to help provide delights into learning (St Luke's Innovative Resources)		010	\$46.75	
^{New} Strength Cards for Kids – a delightful, strengths-based resource aimed at primary school aged children. (St Luke's Innovative Resources)		011	\$49.50	
Being a Man Photopak		979	\$132.00	
Boys in Schools		961	\$28.00	
Leadership in Boys' Education		992	\$33.00	
I Can Hardly Wait til Monday		001	\$33.00	
Boyz Rulez Posters		981	\$33.00	
FatherCare Posters		983	\$20.00	
Male Health Posters		991	\$33.00	
Boys to Men Posters		004	\$33.00	
113 ways to be involved as a father – poster		006	\$11.00	
The Rock and Water Approach (2 nd edition)		002	\$55.00	
^{New} Rock and Water Perspectives - theory book		007	\$35.00	
^{New} Rock and Water Action Reaction Video (English subtitles – suitable to secondary school only)		008	\$55.00	
^{New} Rock and Water Basic Exercises Video		009	\$55.00	
Man's World: A Game for Young Men – suitable for high school aged children only		974UK	\$121.00	
FOR FURTHER DETAILS ON RESOURCES PLEASE CONTACT US FOR OUR LATEST CATALOGUE PLEASE NOTE: Unfortunately we cannot send resources on approval. Please add 15% for postage and handling (up to \$20.00 maximum)		Sub Total		\$
		Postage and handling (add 15%)		\$
		TOTAL		\$

PLEASE MAKES CHEQUES PAYABLE TO: THE BOYS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM ABN: 15 736 576 735

Contact Name: _____

Organisation: _____

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Postcode: _____

Order No: _____

Phone No: _____

Please invoice our Organisation (only available in Australia)

Enclosed is my cheque for AUD\$ _____

Please debit my credit card

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Expiry Date _____

Name of Cardholder _____

Phone: _____

Signature: _____

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

Phone: +61 2 4921 8739 **Fax:** +61 4921 8686 **Email:** men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au **Website:** www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac