

in alliance

VOL. 53 / OCTOBER 2014

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ALLIANCE OF
GIRLS' SCHOOLS AUSTRALASIA

Vol. 53



COVER IMAGE
Somerville House students
celebrating the 'Jumping Jive' with
School mascot, Libby Ribbert,
named in honour of past student and
Olympian swimmer, Libby Trickett



IN ALLIANCE
OCTOBER 2014

ISSN 2203-4323

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AUSTRALASIA

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ALLIANCE OF GIRLS
SCHOOLS AUSTRALASIA

The Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia is a not for profit organisation which advocates for and supports the distinctive work of girls' schools in their provision of unparalleled opportunities for girls.

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FROM THE ALLIANCE PRESIDENT BOND UNIVERSITY TAKES ALLIANCE PRINCIPALS TO THE FAR, FAR NORTH

Seven principals from Alliance member schools, including President Judith Poole and Vice-President Fran Reddan, were privileged to visit the remote north Queensland community of Lockhart River for a 'Women's Yarning Up' tour organised by Bond University in early August.

The tiny Cape York community of Lockhart River had never seen anything quite like it: seven principals from leading girls schools in Queensland, NSW and Victoria emerged from a Dash-8, twin propeller plane at Iron Range Airport after travelling for thousands of kilometres over two days.

They were accompanied by two Telstra Business Women's Award winners – Dr Sally Pitkin from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Cathie Reid, managing director of pharmaceutical technology company APhS leaning on crutches adorned with a cup holder for her water bottle and wearing the Google glasses she is currently trialling.

Then came the Indigenous corporate leaders: Leann Wilson from Regional Economic Solutions who has worked with a number of Alliance schools in the Indigenous education space and is also a Fellow of Bond University; and two brave men – Leon Epong and Tony Martens from Recruitment Outcomes, a 100 per cent Indigenous owned and operated private company focussed on transitioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from school to traineeships and tertiary education. And leading the group – Bond University's Pro Vice-Chancellor of Pathways and Partnerships, Catherine O'Sullivan.

Together with our mini media team and tour manager, we descended on the township ready for some serious 'yarning up' ... and collectively managed

to increase Lockhart's 640-strong population by almost half a per cent in the process. The four-day visit came about in response to an invitation extended by Lockhart Mayor, Wayne Butcher and as a result of the Alliance's partnership with Bond University.

Since teaming up with the Alliance early last year, Bond's Pathways and Partnerships team have arranged some wonderful corporate guest speakers to address our state meetings and dinners and, in January this year, they hosted 160 Alliance students at our 16th annual Student Leadership Conference.

This time, they were pushing us way beyond our comfort zone, flying 800kms north of Cairns to this isolated, predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for an educational and cultural exchange.

Also taking up the challenge of representing the Alliance were Methodist Ladies' College (Victoria) principal Diana Vernon, Melbourne Girls' College principal Judith Crowe, Somerville House principal Flo Kearney, All Hallows' School principal Dr Lee-Anne Perry and executive director of Worawa Aboriginal College (and a member of the original 'Sapphires'), Lois Peeler.

We were, indeed, a force to be reckoned with but from the moment our plane touched down, the people of Lockhart rolled out the red carpet and a warm welcome.

First on the agenda was a visit to the Lockhart State School where we were greeted by the delightful principal Siobhan Jackson, Shire Council Mayor Wayne Butcher, Councillors Paul Piva and Veronica Piva and various other community leaders.

Spending the entire day on campus allowed for a truly meaningful and in-depth exchange with teachers and students. Our program included a mix of formal presentations and round table discussions, as well as opportunities to meet the children one-on-one in the playground and in their classrooms.

A real highlight of the school visit was the cultural dance presentation which finished with the children trying their very best to teach us their 'shake a leg' routines.

Over the next few days, we were able to get to know several of the students at various beach picnics and bush barbeques where 'Miss Siobhan' and her senior girls staged a series of 'pop-up restaurants' as part of their new commercial venture, Kai Kai Catering.

We were also very privileged to spend time with the community elders, including Auntie Queenie Gible and Auntie Susie Pascoe who are both accomplished artists for the renowned Lockhart River Art Gang. (It should be mentioned that our visit to the Lockhart River Arts Centre resulted in their most successful sales weekend ... ever!)

On Sunday morning, Flo Kearney and Sally Pitkin were invited to present the Bible readings at a community church service which was followed by morning tea with the elders.

And on Monday, we visited the Puuya Foundation's childcare centre, the women's shelter, the medical clinic and the police station.

As headmistress of a school with a number of Indigenous students, our visit to Lockhart was an outstanding opportunity to learn and see first-hand the challenges and issues of a remote community.

One of the things I've taken away is the need to really focus on the transition points – not just when students come into our school from a remote community but also when they leave.

There was a lot of discussion during our Lockhart visit about what happens to students when they finish school and return to the community for that long break before university starts.

It's opened my eyes to the need for us to be mindful of the different influences they will encounter back in their communities and what we can do to help them stay on track towards achieving their goals.

For Fran Reddan, the stand-out message was the unique experience of journeying with Aboriginal people who walk in both worlds.

Well before the end of the visit, the Alliance members had initiated preliminary discussions with local principal, Siobhan Jackson, on further developing the relationship between Lockhart State School and the community, and individual schools and the Alliance as a whole.

Our challenge now is: how do we take this experience and share it among the Alliance schools?

There are certainly opportunities for cultural exchange and service-based learning but it's a matter of fine-tuning to develop initiatives that will have a meaningful and long-lasting impact on both Lockhart and our own school communities.

It's a two-way street but if we can work together and walk that journey hand-in-hand, I'm confident that this trip will have far-reaching impacts on us all. ▲

JUDITH POOLE

CORPORATE CONNECTIONS

In addition to the key focus on Indigenous education and culture, a number of the tour participants commented on the benefits of 'yarning up' with fellow Alliance principals and representatives from the corporate sphere.

'Throughout the trip, it was often the casual interactions sitting on the bus and at dinner where we've had some really valuable conversations,' said Alliance Vice-President, Fran Reddan.

'It's about women learning from other women in different contexts and that's been a really powerful outcome.'

Dr Lee-Anne Perry from All Hallows' School in Brisbane also described the trip as a 'great conversation'.

'We were all very comfortable about asking questions and sharing challenges, which resulted in some robust discussions all conducted in a very respectful way,' said Dr Perry.

'I only knew a couple of the participants before we came away but the 'yarning' started right from the very first moment that we stepped off the plane.'

For tour organiser and Bond University's Pro Vice-Chancellor of Pathway and Partnerships, Catherine O'Sullivan, this is an aspect of Bond's partnership with the Alliance that she would like to develop further.

'I'm very excited by the new relationships we've seen established between all the participants involved in the Lockhart River trip,' said Ms O'Sullivan.

'There are huge benefits that come from a collaboration of educators connecting professionally, sharing dialogue and working together regardless of whether they're part of the public or independent school system.'

'It was also good to bring corporate representatives like Cathie Reid from APhS and Dr Sally Pitkin from the Australian Institute of Company Directors into the mix.'

'The Alliance schools are headed by incredible leaders who, in many ways, work like corporate CEOs and that's how they should be profiled.'

'Part of Bond's commitment is to bring in that element of corporate engagement.' ▲

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER THE THREE Rs: RELEVANT RELIABLE RESEARCH

Today's digitally driven communications invite us to 'share', 'connect' and 'join the conversation' about issues that affect us personally and topics that concern us professionally. The Alliance's eNewsletter, Twitter feed and YouTube channel are some of the ways in which we engage with our members.

However, along with the advantages of swift delivery and dissemination come the disadvantages of information overload and struggling to keep abreast of developments. Never before have we had such a wealth of information; never before have we had such a dearth of time to absorb it.

The competitive educational environment is a reality. There is an expectation among school communities that educators be up-to-date with news, issues and research. Beyond glib sound-bites and transitory hashtags, you need tangible facts and in-depth analysis that confirm the benefits of a girls' school education.

'I HAVE FOUND THE RESEARCH AVAILABLE ON YOUR WEBSITE TO BE INVALUABLE – A ONE—STOP RESOURCE FOR FACTS AND FINDINGS.'

Current research is a strategic priority for the Alliance. Our members can rely on us to provide access to relevant, useful resources, and to deliver timely analysis of the latest research into pedagogy, student care and the education of girls. The Alliance's research activities encompass:

- analysing recent research in areas relevant to girls' education, such as academic achievement, student outcomes and best practice in single-sex girls' schools
- writing abstracts and reviews of academic research on key themes — for example, girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); neuroscience and cognition; resilience; leadership; behaviour and psychology; and health and wellbeing
- reviewing books of interest, particularly those relating to girls and single-sex education, and writing summaries
- collaborating with researchers and commissioning research germane to girls' education
- offering member schools opportunities to participate in research initiatives
- providing an annual grant for research into girls' education.

The Alliance's print and digital publications, including *In Alliance* magazine, the eNewsletter, and the Research section of our website, feature abstracts and reviews on current research related to girls' education. Our new eBrief initiative — a fortnightly



research summary emailed to principals — has been very well-received by members, delivering timely and topical material for academic articles, op-ed pieces, presentations and speeches.

The expert synthesising all this information for our members is Researcher Jan Richardson, who recently took the reins from Kate Broadley. With a BA in political science and postgraduate qualifications in technology management and history, Jan's career has spanned a variety of roles including policy advisor to two former Australian senators, ABC radio producer, library researcher and enrolments registrar. In addition to her professional acumen, Jan, as a mother of two teenagers, is well-versed in the concerns of childhood and adolescence. By having access to Jan's expertise, Alliance members have a researcher as part of their team, an accomplished professional providing you with quality material about girls and their education.

'I QUOTED YOUR EBRIEF SUMMARY IN A RECENT PARENT NEWSLETTER, TIME—SAVING BRILLIANCE, THANK YOU.'

Providing you, our members, with the latest research and access to the best resources, is one of the many ways we aim to support you in the distinctive work of your schools. ▲

LOREN BRIDGE

MEMBER PROFILE: NAPIER GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, NEW ZEALAND

Napier Girls' High School is a state school of 960 girls situated high on Bluff Hill overlooking the city of Napier in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. The school was founded in 1884 and this year we are proud to be celebrating 130 years of high quality education for young women. Napier Girls' is founded on strong values and has many proud traditions and innovative practices to ensure each student fully develops her all round potential.



Q&A WITH PRINCIPAL MARY NIXON

Q: WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN TO YOU?

'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.'
– John Quincy Adams.

As a leader of one of the oldest girls' schools in New Zealand it is an honour to guide the body of staff and students here as we forge a learning institution based on sound core values and aligned to the complex needs of today's global world.

I see leadership as an opportunity to encourage others to influence their peers and their students. This means developing high quality relationships between staff and students and staff with each other and focussing on effective communication.

When many people use their skills and have the confidence to contribute to a learning environment, everyone has fun and the culture of excellence proliferates. When leadership is in every layer of the school there is a much greater chance that every individual will feel she has a place and the possibilities of success for all can be a reality.

Q: HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE EVOLVED?

At first, I found leading from the front challenging as there was much to learn about the history of the school to avoid riding rough-shod over the traditions at the heart of the school that hold it together.

I value distributed leadership and look for ways to give others the opportunity to contribute. I have learned more about when to lead and when to let others lead. This helps create an environment where risk taking is encouraged and helps the school move forward as a successful twenty-first century learning centre.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING EDUCATORS OF GIRLS TODAY?

Girls have traditionally been in support roles in careers and homes. There is a ground swell now for more women in leadership and around the board table. Girls in classrooms today will be the leaders in 2020 – 2030. They need to have the education, qualifications, networks, confidence and resilience to take their place and be influential.

Educators are challenged by the huge array of subject choices, skill requirements and qualities needed to develop successful global citizens. The world is changing so fast and the future is very uncertain. Each student is likely to work until she is 80 and have several careers in this time and future pathways are many and varied. The biggest challenge is to provide learning pathways that enable every student to fully develop a skill set to navigate a successful future and to do this as a balanced, responsible global citizen.

Q: IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE THREE TOP ISSUES FACING EDUCATORS OF GIRLS?

Firstly, ensuring every girl develops the can-do attributes and attitudes for current and future success. Self-belief alongside an excellent academic, social and spiritual education.

Secondly, developing girls' aspirations to learn about things they need to learn as well as what they like to learn and the communication skills to enable them to work and live productively with a diverse range of others.

Thirdly, building the capacity of girls to take on roles at every appropriate layer of work and life beyond school and to enjoy and thrive while doing this.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE CHANGE IN EDUCATION?

Students mature and get to know themselves and their future direction at different times. Currently some students get locked out of possible future choices by selection processes at an early age. I would like to reduce these barriers and allow a more open system where students can study at different levels of the curriculum and be enabled to achieve.

Technology has the capacity to enable a greater breadth and depth of learning with a global perspective. This needs to be harnessed and embraced by educators, then the possibility for expanding the horizons for learning and creating new learnings becomes very exciting.

CONTINUES OVER

MEMBER PROFILE: NAPIER GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, NEW ZEALAND

Q&A WITH PRINCIPAL MARY NIXON (cont'd)

Q: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP AND ENCOURAGE LEADERSHIP IN YOUR STAFF AND STUDENTS?

I create lots of opportunities for people to take on small leadership roles and give anyone who puts their hand up a chance. If a situation is challenging I put an expert alongside the novice and if something goes wrong we have a laugh about it. In student leadership I have increased the variety of ethnicities and personalities represented. The more who can identify a role model the greater the likelihood of more contributions from the whole student body.

Leadership comes in many forms so recognising and celebrating in many forums has increased the number of girls seeking opportunities. We have students on every group in the school including traditional committees like the Parent Teacher Association and new ones like the IT Committee.

Q: HOW DO STUDENT LEADERS IN GIRLS' SCHOOLS MAKE THE TRANSITION TO BEING LEADERS POST SCHOOL?

Providing leadership opportunities in schools that are available post school models ways girls can achieve this. For example sports teams, music groups and service clubs are all areas where a range of leadership roles are available both at and beyond school. The value

of leadership needs to be talked about with student leaders so they understand the skills they can contribute when the opportunity post school presents itself. They also need to know how connecting with others and contributing to groups builds wellbeing and a sense of personal fulfilment.

Service should be highly valued in schools so girls want to contribute when they leave. Building networks between school and the wider community reduces the barriers students sometimes face when they transition to life beyond school.

Q: WHO DO THE GIRLS LOOK TO AS ROLE MODELS FOR LEADERSHIP?

Girls look to many role models in areas that motivate them such as stars in sports they play, successful achievers in work they aspire to have careers in and inspirational people who have made a significant contribution by doing good work for the benefit of others. They are influenced by those with a public profile and there are still many more male role models than females.

Social media is now a powerful forum for influencing who girls aspire to emulate. We need to shift from glorifying women whose profiles rely on facile feminine attributes and promote to star status women whose achievements add real value and contribute to making a better future.

It is great to see more women and a greater diversity being profiled as role models for their own talents and achievements and we need more of this. Women who are applauded and celebrated when successful become role models. ▲



OVERSEAS ATTACHMENT IN STEM MIRIAM COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL, PHILIPPINES

The Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia has connected member schools from the Philippines and Brisbane to explore opportunities in STEM.

A Unique Learning Opportunity

Miriam College High School (MCHS) believes that international and cross-cultural learning opportunities can transform learners' dispositions in particular disciplines. For this reason, it has developed and facilitated its unique Summer Overseas Attachment Program or SOAP in the following learning clusters: STEM, culinary arts, and international diplomacy. Each program features three-weeks of Manila-based coursework and a final week of enrichment activities held with agency partners overseas.

In its initial implementation in 2013, a total of seventeen students went to Singapore to spend two days in four scientific laboratories at the National University of Singapore. In 2014, six students studied

STEM-based urban development in Seoul, South Korea while eighteen students traveled to Brisbane, Australia to visit key locations for STEM-oriented learning. Aside from schools and universities, the Australian team also visited museums and factories. An important feature of the Australian visit was the meeting with leaders and students of a fellow Alliance member school.

More than a Field Trip

Extant research concerning field trips shows that if carefully planned, they serve the purpose of providing experiential learning (Puhek, Perse & Sorgo, 2012; Hutson, Cooper & Talbert, 2012). For them to serve as an informal education setting it is emphasised that they must be properly designed to meet particular course objectives. On the basis of such research-based input, each SOAP course is anchored on a negotiated set of objectives among teachers, learners, and parents. Activities for the local coursework and overseas attachment are then designed by faculty mentors in cooperation with local and international partners.

Keeping in mind that this is an alternative learning opportunity, every student carries with her a travel journal. It contains guide questions which assist students on how to maximize learning at specific venues. The contents of these journals are assessed together with the formal program evaluation inputs of stakeholders.

made a lasting impact on students' appreciation of the extent of study that the STEM fields offer. Indeed, the week-long overseas attachment was an exploration of how science is at work in history, coastal management, transportation engineering, astronomy, and manufacturing.

The Alliance and St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School as Partners

As an Alliance member school, collaboration was facilitated with a secondary school with a strong STEM focus. This is why arrangements to immerse the student delegates at St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School were made possible. At this school, our students had the chance not only to experience science education, but also other courses such as art and history. The hands-on, inquiry-based science lessons reflected a healthy academic atmosphere of free dialogue, steered by curiosity. These were supported by various computer applications and physical models that were used during class discussions. Their new STEM building indeed stands as a proof to their school's commitment to STEM education for girls.

Aside from academic exchange, students from both schools interacted with each other during morning tea and lunch. Our girls made friends and exchanged social media accounts with their counterparts. Establishing linkages at an early age will definitely help our students enhance their consciousness for multi-cultural understanding and collaborative learning.

The Future of the Partnership

We are in the process of bringing our partnership with St Margaret's further by establishing an exchange program, which we hope to commence in 2015 – 2016. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone at St Margaret's especially to Principal Ros Curtis, Deputy Principal Kim Cohen, Sharon Mahony, Chris Farrelly, and to Judith Poole and Loren Bridge of the Alliance.

Our invitation at MCHS also extends to fellow Alliance schools for meaningful partnerships such as conducting research in girls' education, benchmarking, and exchanging students and faculty. We hope to host visitors from any Alliance school in the future and learn from each other regarding the uniqueness of our shared thrust of nurturing and placing girls at the centre of our respective institutions of learning, and how this impacts the society as a whole. ▲

RESTY C COLLADO
CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND ENGINEERING SCIENCES
AND PROGRAM COORDINATOR OF STEM-SOAP

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IN PRAISE OF KINDNESS BRISBANE GIRLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL, QUEENSLAND

In a mere seven minutes, renowned author George Saunders conveyed to his audience, Syracuse University's graduating class of 2013, a message that resonated so strongly with those present, that it sped around the universe to be viewed by millions, and became a book this year. It began with a witty and self-deprecating deconstruction of the genre of graduation speeches, and ended with an exhortation to be more aware of, to nurture and to share the luminous part within – the part that exists beyond personality, the soul, which is 'as bright and shining as any that has ever been'. In short, Saunders exhorted his audience to be kind.



Saunders recalled his treatment of a primary school classmate, a girl who was easy to ignore, who tried to 'disappear' so that she wouldn't be picked on. We know these students; they are in all our schools, spending their lunchtimes in toilets or other places in an attempt to go unnoticed. They hide from us, the school staff, as well. They are the girls we worry about but often feel impotent to help. Saunders remembers this girl as an example of a time in his life when another human being was right there in front of him, suffering, and he failed to respond. He wasn't mean to her, but he recognises that he failed to respond 'vigorously'. He regrets that failure and puts it down to a confusion that exists in each of us, called selfishness, where our belief that we are central to the universe and separate from others in it, leads us to prioritise our own needs over the needs of others, when what we really want in our hearts is to be more aware and more loving with others. He wishes he had realised then, what he now knows and values highly – how important it is to 'err in the direction of kindness'.

Saunders' description of selfishness is one we all recognise and most of us can acknowledge its presence in ourselves and others. During adolescence, the need to connect with others and to feel a sense of belonging is particularly evident. Paradoxically, so is the adolescent's ego-driven sense of centrality to the universe. Negotiating the main 'tasks' of adolescence – successful separation from one's parents, the

establishment of one's adult identity, and finding one's place in the world – brings the young person face-to-face with the confusion Saunders highlighted.

THAT LUMINOUS PART OF YOU THAT EXISTS BEYOND PERSONALITY – YOUR SOUL, IF YOU WILL – IS AS BRIGHT AND SHINING AS ANY THAT HAS EVER BEEN. BRIGHT AS SHAKESPEARE'S, BRIGHT AS GANDHI'S, BRIGHT AS MOTHER TERESA'S.

Kindness, selfishness and regret are examined and re-examined during adolescence as the young person experiences the full force of 'relationship world' – that particular and peculiar space of learning about oneself that is the adolescent's domain. Their need to be connected to their friends, sometimes dismissed by adults as unnecessary or an intrusion on the more important things in life, is a genuine and valid one which plays a vital role in assisting the young person to become 'known' to herself and to learn about herself in relation to others. Friends and friendships allow the adolescent to hold a mirror to herself, to compare herself with others who are like her but also not like her, and to find those qualities (such as kindness, respect, courage, trust) that resonate with the person she wants to become. Group life is one way adolescents invest in passionate connected relationships which aren't family

but allow strong feelings of belonging. Experiencing, and coming to understand, the layers involved in our relationships with others, is central to our emotional and social development as human beings. Ideally, this understanding will help shape the quality of our young people's relationships into one where there is awareness of both the pleasure of having their own needs met and the importance of recognising the needs of others.

KINDNESS, SELFISHNESS AND REGRET ARE EXAMINED AND RE-EXAMINED DURING ADOLESCENCE AS THE YOUNG PERSON EXPERIENCES THE FULL FORCE OF 'RELATIONSHIP WORLD' – THAT PARTICULAR AND PECULIAR SPACE OF LEARNING ABOUT ONESELF THAT IS THE ADOLESCENT'S DOMAIN.

Despite alienated high-tech appearances, the youth of 2014 need kindness more than ever in their lives. Our young people live in a fast-paced, consumer-driven, globalised society. They connect with other young people in person and through their (latest, fastest, strongest and most expensive) devices of choice. They not only multi-task but they do so on their triple screens where the ability to splinter attention is seen as an asset and survival technique. The development of self-knowledge and sustaining relationships, in this world, can feel tenuous to those who do not inhabit this space.

The adults in their lives, especially parents, can easily feel excluded by their desire to live on and off line simultaneously and continually, especially when their multiple world-networked participatory culture feels like an alien, unfathomable space. But as Saunders so wisely points out, what humans really want and need is to be more loving and more aware of each other. And what we know, as educators, theoretically and in our observations and interactions with young people every day, is that young people need and want their parents' involvement and love now as much as, or more than, any time in their lives.

Luckily, this is exactly what our young people want, too. Year after year, in Mission Australia's Youth Surveys, our young people report that they highly value family life (75.7 per cent in the 2013 survey). In families, family members experience desire; their own and the desire of others. Family experiences assist each person to learn about love and kindness, forgiveness and guilt, trust and

belonging. That is not to say that family life is always harmonious – even the most loving families contain human beings with contrasting needs and desires, likes and dislikes. But it is good to know that this is not a time to back off or give up on our young people. They need adults in their lives now more than ever because they are working out who they are, what they believe in and how to live with others which, as we know, is difficult yet very important work. They need to know they are loved, even if they shrug or grunt in response, because knowing that they are loved helps them become more loving with others and leads to stronger feelings of belonging.

This clever, connected generation needs good people around them, and speeches from people like Saunders, to help them navigate their way through the cerebral cyclone of adolescence. They need, and want, discussions about courage and goodness, truth and desire – those important conversations that they will remember forever. Who can forget 'that' scene in *Dead Poets Society*, which resonated with what young people really wanted then, in the same way that Saunders' speech resonates today? Our young people want opportunities to show what they believe in and opportunities to think deeply about what really matters. They want, and need, to see things from others' perspectives, so that they can be more aware of, nurture and share in this thing called life that we are all part of. They want to shine.

Or as Saunders put it in his poignant conclusion: 'Do those things that incline you toward the big questions and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality – your soul, if you will – is as bright and shining as any that has ever been. Bright as Shakespeare's, bright as Gandhi's, bright as Mother Theresa's. Clear away everything that keeps you separate from this secret luminous place. Believe it exists, come to know it better, nurture it, share its fruits tirelessly.' ▲

KAREN BELBIN, SCHOOL COUNSELLOR AND CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHOTHERAPIST, BRISBANE

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BRANCHING OUT THROUGH STEM MIRIAM COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL, PHILIPPINES

Maya Angelou once said, 'I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as 'making a life.' As a child, I thought I'd pursue a career that would make me rich and successful.

I have certainly changed since I was seven and my trip to Australia last April gave me a variety of career options to consider from the world of STEM. The week-long trip offered students from Miriam College High School a chance to explore the worlds of astronomy, engineering, and marine biology, as well as finding math and science in art and history. We visited different museums and locations of interest including St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School to discover possibilities in terms of our career paths.

Our first day in Brisbane was spent at St Margaret's where we had a chance to tour the campus, interact with the students and sit in on classes. We learned that their curriculum revolved around ICT skills. I think this is good because as digital citizens we need to embrace new technology and blend it with existing teaching contexts.

St Margaret's 3D printer turns the girls' creative ideas into tangible 3D products. The advanced blackboards in their laboratories offer convenience and interactivity. Complementing such academic provisions are their programs for the arts and extra-curricular learning. Talking with some of the students allowed me to appreciate their exchange program in Year 10 and how they cope with the workload. Being a boarder is also interesting, as girls get to live and study on campus. I joined a material science class where we learned about molecules. The chemistry and biology classes conducted experiments while the physics class discussed robotics.

Our visits to the Brisbane City Hall, Queensland Museum, and Queensland Gallery of Modern Art highlighted the diverse influence of STEM. Not only did

this give us a chance to truly explore and get to know Australia but it helped us see the importance of math and science everywhere, even in art. At the Queensland University of Technology, I enjoyed the robotics workshop and discovered the endless possibilities that engineering can facilitate. We also went to a railroad museum where we learned the science behind trains and how most of the trains were built and started in Australia.

We attended a short lecture at the Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium. This prepared us for the night sky viewing on Mt Coot-tha where we interacted with astronomers of the Brisbane Astronomical Society. Their stories and photographs, particularly those of the women members, reveal a strong dedication to pursue STEM. As our school is starting a new Astronomy Club, I hope that more young women will be willing to venture into this field.

The cleanliness of the Gold Coast beach was awesome. An alumna from Griffith University who now works in the field of marine biology discussed with us the projects they have managed to help improve the state of the beach. Their efforts towards preparing artificial corals in order to restore life in that area are truly noteworthy. She mentioned that she took a science course in college and landed in a job at a company because of her project to help clean the beach. Her insight on being paid to do what she loves the most remains inspirational to me. Being happy in one's job is something that I would love to achieve in the future. Ever since I was a kid, I have always wanted to explore life under the ocean. The Philippines, as an archipelago, relies heavily on its bodies of water for sustenance and economic development.

I have gained more appreciation for STEM after this trip. The world of STEM is truly important to the development of our world today. I admire the women of STEM and how they continue to surpass all of the things that people think of women in pursuit of these fields. I am glad that MCHS and all AGSA-member schools encourage students like us to open our minds to new possibilities for future careers. I know that no matter what I do in the future, I want to love what I do and be able to contribute to our world. ▲

ANNIKA CRUZ
GRADE 12 STUDENT

THE POWER OF TOGETHERNESS WOODFORD HOUSE, NEW ZEALAND

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:5.

As far back as 1919, current and past students of Woodford House, worked together to raise funds for the new chapel: 'the one thought on our minds at present, is how to get our chapel built' (Ye Woodforde Chronycle, 1919).

A school fete offering a wide range of produce, handcrafts and games was held, raising over £300 towards the fund. Throughout the year, many families,

both past and present, also made sizeable donations in support of the chapel building project.

Over time the theme of togetherness has permeated through all facets of our school culture. Whether it is in the classroom working alongside other learners, on the sports field, in one of our many service groups or in boarding, the power of togetherness plays a significant role in creating a success story for each of our girls. This year alone, learning experiences outside the classroom where the power of togetherness has played a pivotal role in its success include our *Peter Pan* production, over-night stay at Matahiwi Marae, relay for life, the big sister – little sister program, prefects working with Iona and Lindisfarne to plan a Servant Leadership day, hospital bed pushing, as well as numerous sporting and boarding events.



Guy Claxton (2005), an educationist, refers to the ability to be alone and alongside others as the power of reciprocity. He breaks this learning process into four parts:

- Interdependence, which refers to the balance of self-reliance and sociability
- Collaboration, the skills used and developed when working with others
- Empathy and listening, the ability to step into someone else's shoes and see things from their perspective
- Imitation, the ability to pick up skills and values from others and pop them into students' own tool kits.

Claxton suggests that through building this learning power, students' overall capacity to learn will be greatly

enhanced. During the past eighteen months, we have been working on developing the role of the form teacher. We believe that if each girl has an adult who knows her well and takes an active interest in her learning and her life, her chances of making it successfully through her time at Woodford will grow significantly. We hope that over time, students, parents and staff will see the form teacher as more of a learning coach; the someone within the school community who knows the girls in their care the best. ▲

CATHERINE BENTLEY
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL – DIRECTOR OF STUDENTS

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SELF-WORTH AND THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL, VICTORIA

When a student embarks upon her Year 10 journey at St Catherine's School, it marks a seminal point in her development. Suddenly a whole new landscape stands before her – a young woman, ready, excited, yet at times hesitant to take that step over the threshold towards young adulthood.

It can be a daunting time. The change does not necessarily take place overnight; in most cases individual shifts occur gently and gradually. So what might the reality of the Year 10 girl be? New friends, old friends, new VCE subjects, future career paths to consider, subjects to manage, family and even work responsibilities on top of sport and co-curricular commitments. With constant change comes a growing awareness of one's sense of self and personal identity, as well as a sense of one's place in the world.

The culture of St Catherine's seeks to nurture and instil our School's values of integrity, curiosity, perseverance and empathy in a manner that holds and supports the student while (seemingly paradoxically) encouraging the individual to explore and extend her experience beyond the school gates.

Where and how does Community Service fit in?

Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, 'The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others'. In many ways what we seek to achieve through the various Community Service initiatives at St Catherine's School embodies this ideal. So often, students who volunteer their time, skills and energy find that in offering their services to help others, they do indeed 'find' or discover an aspect of their own being that they have not had the opportunity to express or perhaps did not even know they possessed. This is a very powerful moment. Quite often students feel empowerment and a deep sense of satisfaction that is not quantifiable nor measurable in any tangible form, but everyone senses and feels that it is 'good'.

Since 2010, Year 10 students have been involved with the Friday Night School. Every Friday during term, from 4.45pm until 6.00pm, a group of students and a supervising St Catherine's School teacher make their way to St Ignatius Church in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond. There, in the big Church Hall, they tutor students whose families have recently arrived in Australia; students who come from a non-English speaking background; or students of refugee background. Our girls may work with young children or even Year 12 students and our teachers often assist parents with their English skills. Everyone gets involved and this outburst of intense activity takes place, almost miraculously, within 75 minutes!

Similarly, St Catherine's School students at Year 10 look forward to the winter months every year, as this is when we get involved with UnitingCare's Prahran Mission Winter Breakfast Program. Here, two students,



POSTCARDS FROM THE HILL

NAPIER GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

This year students at Napier Girls High School designed and made quilts for residents of our local retirement and nursing homes. The school-wide project was aptly called 'Postcards from the Hill' as each square of the quilt was postcard size and depicted a story about the student who made it.

Students used a variety of materials and techniques to create their personalised quilt-squares. Some used fabric pens to draw or write quotes, some used buttons or embroidery and some stitched on pictures or objects

to represent themselves. There were netballs, gardens, iPads, New Zealand and music themes and many more.

The objective of the project was to collaborate to help our local community and show our care for the elderly. The students benefited from working together as a team in an inclusive, supportive environment to create something beautiful while also expressing their own personalities and uniqueness.

People gain from giving and showing care and concern for others. The small act of giving the quilts to the elderly in our community was very rewarding and also gave us an appreciation of our own health and wellbeing. ▲

ZANITA THOMPSON, TEACHER LIBRARIAN
ENGLISH & ESOL TEACHER

accompanied by one St Catherine's School staff member, are involved in the preparation and serving of breakfast to those who are in need of a warm meal and are living in our community. This community service experience is also very powerful. Everyone volunteering during these cold winter months is confronted with the very real face of poverty in our society. However, it is also the face of humanity. Working with the staff and patrons of Prahran Mission serves to remind each and every one of us of the links that bind us, essentially, the link of our common humanity. The students who volunteer at Prahran Mission, without exception, come away feeling such a deep sense of gratitude, empathy and care for their fellow man. Again, how does one measure the success of such a program?

According to Thomas Oakland, as cited in Frydenberg (2010), 'Much has been written about optimism and empowerment and how these contribute to an understanding of how we confront the challenges of life, develop goals and visions and attain success'.

In an age where young people are faced with many challenges, as teachers and parents we are indeed challenged and compelled to foster a sense of personal agency in each young person in our care.

Community Service is a means through which the individual student is able to manifest and cultivate her own personal sense of self and engagement with society. It promotes positive communication and relationships, whilst increasing resilience, empathy and courage within a spirit of altruistic and civic responsibility. The impact of such an experience cannot be underestimated as it quite often represents the potent seed of individual empowerment and cultural change. ▲

VASILIKI SPANOS
DEAN OF YEAR 10

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HELPING STUDENTS FLOURISH IN HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOLS CAN BE TRICKY SOMERVILLE HOUSE, QUEENSLAND

People who have the most positive emotion, the most engagement, and the most meaning in life are the happiest, and they have the most life satisfaction (Martin Seligman, 2011).

The pressure on students to achieve well and succeed in academics, sport, music and even socially in schools can be unrelenting. The most recent Mission Australia Youth Survey (2013, p.19) found that the following issues were very concerning or extremely concerning to young females:

- Coping with stress – was the number one concern – a major concern for about a half of female respondents
- School or study problems – a major concern for about 45 percent of females
- Body image – a concern for 42 per cent of respondents
- Depression was of concern, with about a quarter of young females saying it was an issue for them, and
- Family conflict and bullying were also issues for female respondents.

So what can we do as educators to help our young women overcome and conquer such difficulties in our high performing schools?

Somerville House is focussed on finding ways for all of our students to 'flourish', that is, to thrive and grow emotionally, academically, spiritually, socially, and culturally. The School has embarked on a revision and revitalisation of its Pastoral Care Program, based on the Positive Psychology movement of leading proponents

such as internationally renowned, clinical psychologist, Professor Martin Seligman¹.

Seligman's extensive research reveals that building students' resilience, academic buoyancy and showing them ways to be more optimistic, flexible, adaptable and accurate in their thinking, and to have more grit, can be learned and practised. Having a purpose, being engaged with interests, and having positive relationships, as well as positive emotions can allow students to flourish, reports Seligman (2011, pp. 26-29).

According to researchers Krause (2014), McEwen (2011), and Nadge (2005), building a resilient child (and adult) characteristically includes the interplay of different factors and personal qualities, namely:

- Sense of purpose and meaning in their life
- Optimism
- Mental toughness, grit, and persistence
- Emotional balance and a range of strategies and skills to deal with problems as they arise
- Ability to see a difficulty as a problem that can be resolved, worked on, changed, or endured through flexibility of thinking and by reframing a problem or issue, and a
- Sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy which allow students to deal with and cope with obstacles and problems.

Teaching students that it's okay to fail and take risks is an important part of building resilience too. As Sir Winston Churchill once quipped, 'Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm'.

Perfectionism in students (and adults) has many pitfalls and it's important to include discussion in the pastoral care program and tackle this topic overtly. Perfectionism can stymie students' creativity, problem-solving skills, and risk taking, and lead to procrastination and levels of anxiety. However, the research of Jeff Szymanski, PhD, a clinical psychologist and author of *The Perfectionist's Handbook: Take Risks, Invite Criticism, and Make the Most of Your Mistakes* (2011), makes the point that there is such a thing as healthy perfectionism. Szymanski puts it this way:

As a rule of thumb, you're operating within the realm of healthy perfectionism when your payoffs are greater than your costs, you are striving for and meeting standards you set for yourself, and you value organization. However, your unhealthy perfectionism is at play when your behaviour, choices, and strategies are driven by factors such as a fear of failure, chronic concerns about making mistakes, constant self-doubting, attempts to live up to others' expectations of you, anxiety about always falling short of self-made goals, and if your costs outweigh your payoffs.

Building a resilient student cannot be done in isolation and it requires a multi-pronged approach through direct pastoral care teaching and learning, outdoor education programs, a strong spiritual program, a varied and a challenging co-curricular program as well as a common approach, attitude and strategies across all curriculum areas in the School. This requires ongoing professional development and learning for teachers – not

only for academic teaching and learning but also for pastoral care teaching and learning.

Teachers have a key role in developing positive relationships with students. As Marzano (2011) stresses to teachers: It's what you do that counts. Specifically Marzano argues that positive relationships between teachers and students are often determined by teachers' actions:

- Showing interest in students' lives
- Advocating for students
- Never giving up on students, and
- Acting friendly.

These teacher behaviours can, according to Marzano, with rare exception, make all students feel that they have a positive relationship with their teachers. This is true for all teachers but particularly relevant to the Pastoral Care teachers in the School.

At Somerville House, we provide many opportunities for parents to develop better parenting strategies that assist their daughters to develop greater resilience and confidence. The School has enlisted the help of an external clinical psychologist, Dr Judith Locke. Why an external person? As Dr Locke says, 'She can say things to our parents that we can't'. The School runs individual parent nights for Pre-prep/Prep, the Junior School, Middle School and Senior School which are held each year. Also this year we included a special professional learning session for all of the teaching staff and another session for the Alliance of Girls' Schools in South East Queensland.

Dr Judith Locke's PhD research (2014) on overparenting investigated the practice of parenting which over-uses valued parenting practices, such as protection and care for offspring. In particular, Locke was able to define and create a measure of overparenting. She showed that overparenting actions/beliefs to do with homework may impact on a child/adolescent's sense of responsibility for her academic achievements. Consequently, parents consciously or unconsciously, can through their words and actions contribute to learned helplessness and lower levels of resilience in students. The parent evenings held at Somerville House assist parents in the use of effective strategies, words and actions that reinforce resilience building skills and techniques in students.

SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY WHICH ALLOW STUDENTS TO DEAL WITH AND COPE WITH OBSTACLES AND PROBLEMS

There is no one single factor that guarantees that student resilience and wellbeing will flourish; it's obvious that a multiplicity of factors contribute to students' wellbeing. One other step that Somerville House has taken, is to create a Student Services Portal. Research from Mission Australia (2013, p. 21) indicates that more than 75 per cent of females turn to the Internet for information – a higher percentage than asking parents, family, friends, school counsellors, teachers or community agencies for information.

In an innovative approach, and supported by the Mission Australia research, Somerville House is developing a Student Services portal for students, parents and teachers that will provide information, written resources, YouTube clips, and useful websites for a wide range of topics such as wellbeing (for example, showing kindness, a gratitude journal), positive psychology (links to Seligman's website: Authentic Happiness), mental health issues (for example, anxiety, perfectionism, depression, body image issues, harm minimisation), learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia, dysgraphia), learning strategies (for example, time management, study skills), spiritual resources (for example, daily prayers, bible readings/stories), positive relationships (for example, dealing with conflict, conflict resolution), careers and other relevant health and wellbeing topics. Eventually the pastoral care program of the School from Pre-Prep to Year 12 will be online and accessible to students, parents and teachers 24/7. There will be different sites for teachers, parents and students and resources appropriately placed for the different audiences.

Somerville House is leading the way in not only academics, but also importantly in the pastoral care of our students. At Somerville House our students are **flourishing**. ▲

IT IS NOT THE STRONGEST OF THE SPECIES THAT SURVIVES, NOR THE MOST INTELLIGENT THAT SURVIVES. IT IS THE ONE THAT IS THE MOST ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE (CHARLES DARWIN).

KARON GRAHAM
DEAN OF STUDENTS

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NOTES:

1. Dr Martin Seligman's questionnaires and surveys on a whole range of well-being measures can be found at: <http://www.authentic-happiness.org>



FINANCIAL HEALTH & WELLBEING: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE SACRÉ COEUR, VICTORIA

Much research has been conducted about women and money, and the effects their financial situation has on their general health and wellbeing. In last year's Stress and Wellbeing survey, the findings were, 'Financial issues remain the leading cause of stress amongst Australians with more than half of Australians identifying finances as a cause of stress' (Australian Psychology Association, 2013, p. 19).

If we look specifically at women, the top two causes of stress were tied: financial issues and family issues. There were ten factors unique to women that increased their stress levels: number four was remuneration and the gender pay gap, and number nine was insufficient superannuation funds. Furthermore, 63 per cent of women felt that their 'lives were out of control'. That is a substantial number.

The effects of stress and the ways in which we can reduce it are well documented. The one topic that has traditionally been understated is now causing women the most stress; and something needs to change.

'Knowing how to make sound money decisions is a core skill in today's world, regardless of age. It affects quality of life, opportunities we can pursue, our sense of security and the overall economic health of our society' (ASIC, National Financial Literacy Strategy, 2011, p. 4).

When reviewing research on financial literacy in Australia and internationally, the two groups consistently disadvantaged by low levels of financial literacy are women, and young people aged between 15-24. Women are less confident, less knowledgeable and less likely to build long term wealth compared to

men, and yet, of the 112 financial literacy initiatives conducted by 64 organisations (public, private and non-profit) Australia wide, only 9 per cent of these initiatives were targeted at women (ASIC, National Financial Literacy Stocktake Survey, 2013 Report).

Women lack the confidence and knowledge to make the bigger financial decisions. Women invest less frequently, have career breaks to rear children, are more likely to work part-time, end up with less superannuation to fund their retirement, and yet due to longer life expectancies, will outlive their male counterparts and require more savings to fund their retirements.

Interesting you might say...but how does this relate to the girls we currently teach?

Well, the obvious answer to that is that they will shortly be young women, with jobs, income, bills, superannuation and many wonderful opportunities previous generations of women have not had. Another important thing to remember is that many of the women surveyed are mothers, and children learn the financial habits and attitudes of their parents from as young as seven years old. The overwhelming majority also get their 'financial advice' from their parents. If the parents have high levels of financial literacy, it sets the child in good stead. It is when they don't, the cycle of poor money management is likely to continue.

Some great organisations are emerging to help women, as it becomes obvious that help is needed. Professional women in the finance industry are collaborating and sharing their knowledge on social media forums like never before. Superannuation funds are tapping into the market and offering free seminars, webinars and information sessions on investing in property and the share market. This is all a step in the right direction and is to be applauded.

However, we at Sacré Coeur think that prevention is better than cure, and that the earlier we start with 'financial guidance', the more likely it is that our students will get off to a financially savvy start.

Consequently, Sacré Coeur has incorporated another dimension to its Health and Wellbeing Program: Financial Guidance for Girls. This began with a trial workshop for our Year 12 students at the end of 2013. The workshop was part of our 'Toolkit for Adulthood' program offered to the students in their final week of school. Through focus groups with our Year 12 leaders, they told us what they wanted and much to our delight, a finance workshop was high on their list of priorities. They said, amongst other things, that they felt 'unprepared for this part of their life' and 'confused by all the jargon' in the industry.

The style of these lunch-time workshops is intentionally informal, to foster a relaxed environment so the students are not embarrassed or scared to ask questions. With the positive feedback from the students who voluntarily attended the workshop at the end of 2013, we decided to include it in our Year 11 and 12 Pastoral Program in 2014, therefore making it compulsory to attend.

The feedback from our Year 12 students was as follows:

1. Would you recommend this workshop to other students?
Yes: 100% No: 0%
2. Do you feel confident about what to do once you start earning?
Yes: 93% No: 7%
3. Did you learn something new today?
Yes: 99% No: 1%
4. Do you think students need financial guidance?
Yes: 100% No: 0%

When asked 'What would you like to learn more about', 40 per cent said the share market. Again, we were delighted with this response and plan to offer a workshop on this topic alone later in the year.

The feedback from our Year 11 students was as follows:

1. Would you recommend this presentation to other students?
Yes: 94% No: 6%
2. Do you feel confident about what to do once you start earning?
Yes: 89% No: 11%

3. Did you learn something new today?
Yes: 99% No: 1%
4. Do you think students need financial guidance?
Yes: 96% No: 4%

As we prepare our young women to enter professional working life and to become independent, strong, capable and life-long learners, education on money matters is paramount. Being in control of their spending and saving, knowing where their money is going, and thinking of their financial future, will lead to a sense of security and certainty. In this fast paced, information age world in which they are currently living, this will in turn decrease their stress levels and improve their overall wellbeing. They will worry less, be in a position to deal with life's emergencies and to grab life's opportunities. Why wait until they are in trouble? Prevention is better than cure. Our young women need this and they want this. ▲

ANDREA CINCOTTA, FINANCE WORKSHOP FACILITATOR

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FIT offers a 1.5 hour evidence-based workshop for teenage girls. Topics covered include:

- Gen Z: Fast facts
- Modern women & money
- The how, why & when of savings plans
- The basics on Investing, Tax & Super
- A plan of attack to get the girls started
- How to take control from an early age

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Andrea is a qualified secondary school teacher and an experienced financial services practitioner





HOUSE ACTIVITY

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING WESTLAKE GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, NEW ZEALAND

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs lists 'a sense of belonging' as one of the most fundamental needs human beings have. Schools are people places and a sense of belonging is fundamental to student and staff welfare. Knowing and appreciating this, most schools have effective strategies to orientate and quickly integrate new students, as valued members into their school communities. After developing a sense of belonging to the school, students' self-esteem and self-actualisation also strengthens.

In 2012, Roz Mexted became Principal of Westlake Girls High School, Auckland, and took up a Board of Trustees' challenge to build community and increase school spirit at the country's largest girls' school. Westlake Girls High School has 2,200 students and 200 staff. Roz thought carefully about which strategies would best achieve that aim and developed surveys for the school community.

Since 1962, Westlake Girls had been structured in five, horizontal year levels, growing from 500 students to the size it is today. Limited integration existed between juniors and seniors in later decades. In a 2012 survey, many younger students did not feel part of the school or that their input mattered very much. Juniors didn't know the prefects or what seniors did for the school. Staff also fed back ideas about strengthening bonds between members of the school and, after many discussions, voted for a vertical house system.

In 2013, five houses (named after five local, Maori, geographical landmarks) were created, equivalent to vertical families of 440 students and 40 staff. A Deputy Principal was appointed to lead each House,

with two House Deans and fifteen Form Teachers. Moving with their form class, after completing Year 13, Form Teachers cycle around to lead a Year 9 form class. House Deans co-ordinate the pastoral needs of their students, while assisting with house initiatives and assemblies. While many schools around Australasia already have houses, this model has totally transformed a very large school, with teachers and school leaders knowing students far better than in the earlier, horizontal system.

Flipping Westlake Girls from five horizontal groups to five vertical groups means student leaders can enjoy greater exposure to all students. This, together with new senior school uniforms introduced in 2013, gives seniors greater visibility, added responsibility and a sense of purpose. Junior students love being part of house initiatives and can aspire to be prefects and Year 13 students leading assemblies and other events. One house initiative is Smart Swans, a student led academic mentoring programme, placing Years 12 and 13 mentors with younger students. Smart Swans was developed by an academic prefect and has become extremely popular with mentors getting as much out of it as those being assisted.

A Prefect Executive includes the Head Prefect and Deputy Head Prefect and the five House Captains. This Executive meets Principal, Roz Mexted, every Wednesday developing leadership initiatives. Prefects in each house have portfolios for academic, sports, cultural, service and internationalism. Six prefects in each house work with junior form classes to see how Years 9 and 10 students are progressing with their annual goals. Arts Prefects form an Arts Council, Service Prefects drive community service for the year through house charities, which juniors have involvement in. Sports Prefects form a school-wide Sports Council, creating sports competitions, and Academic Prefects drive Smart Swans and inter-house academic events, for example house quizzes.

Reframing Westlake Girls into five houses was a simple process, resulting in multiple benefits never envisaged in planning stages. Not only do Years 9 and 10 feel far more connected to what is happening in



YEAR 9 ORIENTATION

the senior school, seniors have embraced far greater responsibility and a sense of pride in leading the school. There are new badges for citizenship and for scholarly achievement, as well as visible rewards for many activities already in place but which used to go unnoticed.

EDUCATING GIRLS GLOBALLY ST MARGARET'S COLLEGE, NEW ZEALAND

St Margaret's has created an online community of girls' schools across the globe with the united purpose of changing the lives and life opportunities for girls at Lilongwe school in Malawi.

Believing that educating young women will change our world for the better and being acutely aware of the privileges of comfort and wellbeing that they have in their own lives our girls, under the leadership of Gussie



School spirit and a sense of school pride can also be achieved through school uniforms that are unique to the school and have a point of difference. To that end, new school uniforms for all students were introduced in 2013 and provide a distinctive presence for Westlake Girls, which they feel very proud of. Prefects enjoy their special prefects' pocket and tie, as well as badge. Students who achieve national or international sporting honours receive a silver swan's tie and, in 2015, a Year 11 leader's tie will be added, to recognise emerging leaders moving from the junior to the senior school.

The health and wellbeing of students has been surveyed formally and informally, before and after the introduction of the house system at Westlake Girls. Responses unanimously point to a much more positive, purposeful and inclusive school environment, focused on excellence. Students describe feeling proud of their house and proud of their school. When they enter in Year 9, they already have a strong sense of community within their house and there have been far fewer issues emerging with new students in Year 9 being referred to Deans and Guidance Counsellors. It has been a great move, positively impacting on 2400 students and staff. ▲

ROZ MEXTED
PRINCIPAL

Cohen and Lucy Tothill in 2013 and now Rose Robinson and Lucy Morton in 2014, have joined with other to raise funds globally. Two old girls Abi Collins and Charlotte Ross are currently visiting the school to see the fruits of our fundraising through the EGG initiative (Educating Girls Globally).

The young women at Lilongwe are now able to feel safe and have fewer disruptions to their learning with newly installed toilet blocks and a boundary wall to keep out intruders. Our girls benefit in their own personal wellbeing from being part of something bigger than themselves and giving hope and purpose to their own lives by helping others.

GILLIAN SIMPSON, EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL



L-R LUCY TOTBILL, GILLIAN SIMPSON AND GUSSIE COHEN



FIVE STEPS TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

MENTONE GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

As mental health issues continue to rise among young people, schools are increasingly aware of the need to implement wellbeing strategies from a very early age. The National Health Service (NHS) in the UK has released findings from a study conducted by wellbeing experts, including Professor of Public Health at the University of Warwick, Sarah Stewart-Brown.

Their research has contributed to the development of a 'Five steps to mental wellbeing' guideline. This tool provides suggested ways that people can work towards improving their wellbeing, including:

- Connect – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.
- Be active – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find the activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.
- Keep learning – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?
- Give to others – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
- Take notice – be more aware of the present moment, including your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness



'mindfulness', and it can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges (National Health Service UK, 2014).

Our Child Psychologist at Mentone Girls' Grammar, Lara Silkoff, says that fundamentally, wellbeing is integral to learning. 'Students who are happy and healthy engage more in school and achieve more at every level. Students who are not doing well with their mental health usually find that their physical health suffers too – sleep, eating, illness – are all affected by stress, anxiety or low mood.'

'As adults, it is important that we take positive action, not only to protect our own wellbeing, but so we can be good role models for young people and help teach them important habits for life. We can all benefit from these five simple steps to improve our mental wellbeing. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from your life,' says Silkoff.

At Mentone Girls' Grammar, wellbeing has been a strategic priority for many years, and we believe it is the key to supporting positive mental health for young people. Young people today live in a world

full of amazing possibilities and unprecedented opportunities, many brought on by advances in technology. However, these exciting possibilities are coupled with some incredibly daunting challenges. We now live in a vast, hyper-connected world that can leave us with a profound feeling of disconnection and isolation. As educators, we have a responsibility to teach our students about the importance of both physical and mental wellbeing which are intrinsically linked, and to equip them with the skills and knowledge to manage their own wellbeing, not just at school, but for the rest of their lives.

Overall wellbeing involves both body and mind. Feelings of contentment, enjoyment, confidence and engagement with the world are all part of mental wellbeing, coupled with positive self-esteem, self-confidence and the resilience to deal with new challenges and pressures.

At Mentone Girls' Grammar, we understand this and have integrated wellbeing into every aspect of

school life from ELC to Year 12. This is not simply a finite program covering the basics of self-esteem, personal achievement and good health. Rather we aim to address the range of issues that overarch all stages of school life, including the intensely complex adolescent years. We link physical education, with the promotion of good nutrition, and mindfulness training to improve focus, promote positive thinking and control anxiety. Our students are encouraged and supported to engage with the community through volunteering, to explore the world beyond, and to keep learning through new experiences and challenges. ▲

FRAN REDDAN
PRINCIPAL

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MUTUAL RESPECT BUILDS WELLBEING

ST HILDA'S SCHOOL, GOLD COAST QUEENSLAND

NAIDOC week activities at St Hilda's School encourage students from different backgrounds to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through their the history and culture.

Using the nest as a symbol of nurture and support, we drew on the Aboriginal story of Bunjil's Nest to inspire a collaborative art-making experience.

Students enjoyed a sense of self and wellbeing as they immersed themselves in understanding an environment that we take for granted every day. The girls spent time outside in the school grounds gathering dried palm frond and sticks to start the nest. They soon discovered that by using their imaginations they could find leaves suitable to write messages on and then weave into the frame of the nest.



Members of the School Community were invited to contribute to our nest by adding their personal message sticks – inscribed with messages of hope, love and understanding. Our Aboriginal students also decorated eggs for the nest to convey the concept of shelter, home and connection to the land. NAIDOC celebrations came to a gentle close with a moving Chapel service which aimed to increase understanding and build mutual respect for cultural practices by both Aboriginal Australians and the wider community. ▲

ROBYN VINCENT
HEAD OF YEAR 7





BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS ABBOTTSLEIGH, NSW

Liz Cannon, Head of Education Services and Counselling at Abbotsleigh, outlines the principles of Positive Psychology and how these can be embedded within a school context to build student resilience and wellbeing.

The promotion of wellbeing is an essential core of education and is an integral part of all quality academic care programs. Wellbeing refers to a combination of experiencing positive emotions and finding meaning, purpose, engagement, good relationships and accomplishments in one's life. The goal of Positive Psychology in wellbeing theory is 'to increase the amount of flourishing in your own life and on the planet' (Seligman, 2011).

Enhancing the wellbeing of students and staff to optimise personal growth should be a key goal of your school's strategic plan. Schools have a responsibility to help students to flourish. By working in partnership with parents, schools aim to equip students with the values, ethics and academic and emotional skills necessary to navigate, thrive and flourish throughout life. It is important to teach students to understand and regulate their own emotions, both positive and negative, and to understand the emotions of others and respond in appropriate ways. Schools can help students to form and foster strong relationships as well as school and community connection and engagement to find meaning and purpose in life, and thus to flourish.

Employing the Principles of Positive Psychology: It's Not Just About Being Happy

There is sometimes a mistaken belief that the Positive Psychology movement is simply about being happy. Certainly, happiness is an important pursuit but there are many layers that underpin and support this premise without which 'happiness' can seem rather

superficial. Positive Psychology states very clearly that it is important to be 'real' and to find meaning and engagement in our lives. In addition to happiness, we need to experience and express emotions such as sadness, disappointment, anger and grief. These 'negative' emotions cannot be eliminated from our lives. Further, no amount of helicopter parenting (or helicopter schooling) can, nor should, protect children from disappointments and setbacks and the accompanying feelings.

What Positive Psychology does espouse is the skill set children and adolescents require to accept and acknowledge emotions, and then put strategies in place to enable them to move on from a setback. Resilience is this ability to bounce back from life's setbacks, big or small, or as child psychologist Andrew Fuller states, 'to bungy jump through life'. Some people are born with this trait, others must acquire it and the good news is it can be learnt (Seligman et al. 2009). By being resilient, we are better equipped to deal with stress and anxiety. We are then able to begin to find meaning, engagement and connection in our lives whilst weathering any storms that may hit us.

As educators and parents, we have the exciting responsibility to help children develop a resilience skill set so as to enhance wellbeing. Our effectiveness will be enriched by developing a shared language with parents that demonstrates to children positive, solution-focused strategies.

How can Schools Help Students to Become More Resilient and thus to Flourish?

Modelling and teaching positive, helpful thinking and optimism can help children and adolescents to challenge their negative thinking patterns and replace them with positive and helpful thoughts. This will foster optimism and hope, both of which are essential for resiliency. 'Change the way you think to change the way you feel and behave' is the basic premise of cognitive behaviour therapy.

Again, this way of thinking is not to be confused with the 'Pollyanna, everything is wonderful' view. It is about dealing with things that you cannot change, finding ways to problem solve, taking considered risks and persisting with the things you can change; it is about knowing the difference between things you can and cannot change.

This is also where shared language is important in providing a consistent message at home and at school so that it then becomes a skill for the child. Help children to challenge their negative self-talk in the classroom – don't let them get away with saying they are hopeless at mathematics, otherwise it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy and self-efficacy suffers. Helping students to develop a 'growth mind-set' (Dweck, 2009) and embracing the view of persevering with a task that has not yet been mastered rather than abandoning it when it becomes difficult or when fear of failure arises is a lifelong skill. Modelling and teaching risk-taking in learning avoids procrastination and the paralysing effects of maladaptive perfectionism. We need to encourage students to become 'optimacists' and to have a go, make mistakes and try again in

order to learn and grow (Ben-Shahar, 2011). Helping children to develop a healthy resilient attitude towards learning can be aided by using language that promotes persistence, effort and grit.

Encouraging and teaching children and adolescents to identify and develop their 'character strengths' has been identified as a key way to generate optimism and resilience, to help them achieve their goals and to become more engaged and find 'flow' in their work (Seligman, 2011). While it is good to remediate weaknesses, we need to keep the focus on building strengths and competencies whether they be academic, sporting or emotional, or character traits such as empathy, kindness and leadership skills.

Another way to help children and adolescents to flourish is by modelling and teaching the benefits of gratefulness, and the ability to focus on and appreciate the small things in life. Sometimes we are so focused on the big picture that we miss the everyday things that are the most important. Helping young people to see all the wonderful things they have in their lives and to appreciate them is a very important task. Humans are primed with a negative bias that needs to be counteracted by thoughts of positive events that occur each day in the world. Fredrickson (2009) states that we need to have three positive thoughts to every negative thought in order to flourish rather than languish. Encouraging young people to keep a daily gratitude journal can help them to see the good things and focus on them. This simple act raises awareness and helps children to realise what is really important in life.

Teachers and parents should also model and teach generosity and the act of serving. This stems directly from being grateful. When one is able to see beyond the disappointments in life, which are temporary, and to appreciate the good things, which are permanent and pervasive, one is more likely to have the willingness and desire to reach out and help others. Service-Learning ensures service is embedded in the school curriculum; this is a valuable tool for ensuring young people are regularly engaged in service, and see and experience first-hand the benefits of service to others. Time and time again we have observed the positive impact of Service-Learning projects on student wellbeing at Abbotsleigh.

The importance of being connected and forming relationships also needs to be highlighted to students. Being connected to family, friends, school, community and church is vital. Relationships and connectedness are significant protective factors enhancing resilience and wellbeing. Sharing stories of the support given by significant others during hard times helps to reinforce the importance of connectedness.

Underpinning the quest for wellbeing are the essential foundations of a healthy mind and a healthy body. Eating well, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep are vital wellbeing pillars and students need this mantra to be reinforced regularly particularly when entering the senior years of school. Too often, students (and teachers and parents) are willing to sacrifice sleep for an extra hour to work or study, chat

online or party. The research shows that this is not a good option as sleep deficit has short and long term effects on wellbeing and mental health. Teenagers need eight to nine hours of sleep a night to perform at their optimal level (Flinders University, 2008).

SOME STUDENTS BELIEVE THEY DO BETTER BY REDUCING SLEEP TO JUST A FEW HOURS A NIGHT TO INCREASE STUDY HOURS. EXPLAINING THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS FALSE BELIEF IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT, AS IS ENCOURAGING THEM TO WORK SMARTER BY UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY MIND AND A HEALTHY BODY AND THE POWER OF POSITIVE, HELPFUL SELF-TALK.

Teaching and encouraging 'stillness' in the form of relaxation or meditation and mindfulness is important as it assists students to face challenges and stressful situations with clarity and calmness. This activity needs to be positively reinforced as a means to improve attention and concentration and relieve stress and anxiety.

Wellbeing and Flourishing – A Journey

The principles highlighted in Positive Psychology and the skills to build resilience can and will have profound effects on the wellbeing of students when explicitly and implicitly taught and embedded within the school culture.

As schools work towards the goal of enhancing student wellbeing it is important to remember that flourishing is a journey not a destination. ▲

LIZ CANNON, HEAD OF EDUCATION SERVICES AND COUNSELLING

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WOMEN'S CAREERS AND WELLBEING LORETO COLLEGE, MARRYATVILLE, SA

The importance of engaging girls in the study of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) has once again come to the fore after a report by Graduate Careers Australia (2014) showed female university graduates are earning, on average, 9.4 per cent lower starting salaries than men.

The report found that if women were encouraged to study STEM subjects in school they may consider the more male-dominated fields, such as engineering, which may lead to higher paid professions.

The impact of these findings on students' future financial wellbeing can be great and while not every student will choose to pursue subjects in the STEM field, schools play a very important role in giving students every opportunity to explore the many options available to them and not limit their experiences with stereotypical expectations.

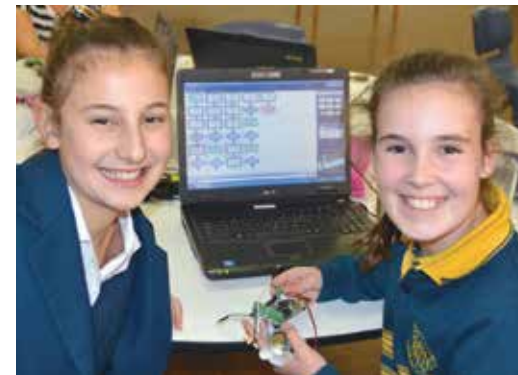
Challenging gender stereotypes is made possible in an all-girls environment, as all students are free to try something that might be perceived as a 'male subject'. There is no competition from boys or fear of being the odd one out. However, the environment is just one part of the equation; piquing students' curiosity is essential for engagement.

At Loreto College Marryatville, middle years students recently programmed microchips as part of an initiative led by local company, eLabtronics. Students worked with Science, ICT and Maths staff and university mentors associated with eLabtronics to design, build and program relevant micro-controller projects that help solve real-life problems in a sustainability context. The topics covered aspects of Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Social and Enterprise Learning (STEMSEL), while also enabling students to develop skills in team work, problem solving, critical thinking, responsibility, respect, leadership and self-confidence.

The workshops fit comfortably with the philosophy and methodology of the IB Middle Years Programme, where the inquiry approach is used to develop a real world context for learning. The broad subject matter met the IB's goal to develop interdisciplinary thinkers who analytically and creatively embrace new ideas to solve some of today's most challenging problems.

Patty Warrender, Loreto College Marryatville's Middle Years Science Coordinator, who helped organise the STEMSEL initiative with eLabtronics, said providing opportunities for 'out-of-the-box' teaching and learning is important.

'At a time where women are still under-represented in many of the STEM fields, Loreto is bucking this trend by enabling students to embrace these subjects with many additional opportunities for challenge and extension. In particular, the middle years are crucial in consolidating student interest and faith in the study of Science, Technology and Mathematics,' Warrender said.



'Stimulating methodologies and a positive learning environment go a long way in promoting a smooth transition to future STEM options in senior school and career choices in this field.'

This initiative not only ticked many boxes from a curriculum point of view, but students also found it to

be a valuable learning opportunity. Student reflections ranged from, 'I never knew how fun technology and using a screwdriver can be! I also found out how people solve problems and the problems they face when trying to solve them' through to 'I am now wondering about Technology, Science, microchips, global warming, electricity and the world's scientific future' and even, 'I am wondering if later in my life I will be an engineer for my career'.

The opportunity to challenge girls through exposing them to what may be seen as 'non-traditional' disciplines is an ingrained part of a Loreto education. Beyond special initiatives, such as the eLabtronics workshops, exploring subjects without bounds is part of every day learning. Loreto College Marryatville's Head of Learning Technologies, Ann-Maree Tippins, said learning is not framed by gender in an all-girls environment but instead focuses on empowering students through diverse learning opportunities.

'The robotics units taught in a couple of year levels are a source of great challenge. Boys could easily dominate girls who have had little exposure to Lego and programming, as such activities are standard fare for the male gender. Girls process, collaborate and create differently; at Loreto they are empowered to do so.'

'There is an egalitarian expectation that you can 'have a go' at anything; if success eludes you, resiliently try again or reconsider other options. Limitations are self-imposed, rather than at the whim of others.'

Schools can play a powerful role in shaping the future generations of women and set them on a path that can lead to greater long-term security and wellbeing. An environment that allows for exploration in all areas ultimately leads to informed students who can pick subjects and eventually career paths that are based on their interests and experiences, rather than stereotypical expectations. ▲

BRIAR STANDING
MARKETING MANAGER

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2014 EVENTS

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Student Alliance Network
The Women's College, Sydney University
- > **15 OCTOBER / TASMANIA**
Tasmanian Staff Dinner
St Mary's College
- > **16 OCTOBER / TASMANIA**
Tas. Executive Meeting
Fahan School
- > **4 NOVEMBER / NEW SOUTH WALES**
Dinner Meeting
Tara School
- > **5 NOVEMBER / VICTORIA**
Mindfulness Seminar
Korowa Anglican Girls' School

- > **25 NOVEMBER / WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
Senior Staff Networking Dinner
Penrhos College

- > **15 DECEMBER / QUEENSLAND**
Christmas Lunch
The Brisbane Club

2015 EVENTS

- > **6-10 JANUARY / QUEENSLAND**
2015 Student Leadership Conference
Bond University
- > **29-31 MAY / QUEENSLAND**
Aspiring Managers Conference
Bond University



Did you know that New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1902) were the first two countries in the world to give women the vote, and that women in Saudi Arabia will have to wait until 2015 to be allowed to vote and stand in municipal elections?



The Student Leadership Conference provides unparalleled opportunities for girls to explore leadership styles and strategies, reflect on their own leadership aspirations and build meaningful life-long connections with other young leaders.

The program has been designed specifically for girls who will hold leadership roles in their schools in 2015. It focuses on developing leadership capability, managing responsibility and responding to the challenges faced by girls on their leadership journey.

The unrivalled quality of this event and the calibre of the girls make the experience incredibly valuable for all who attend. Only Alliance member schools can apply to send delegates. The girls should be entering their last year of secondary school in 2015 and hold key leadership roles in their schools.

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IN ALLIANCE
OCTOBER 2014 / ISSUE # 53

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