Australian Journal of Middle Schooling

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Editorial

As the year draws to a close it is important to reflect upon the many events that Adolescent Success has hosted throughout the year and the considerable learning that has occurred by all participants. Sharing best practice continues to occur through Twitter Chats and a number of 'TeachMeets' which provide excellent professional development and an opportunity to share. Adolescent Success workshops have been held across Australia and have been very well received. Our members and new members have enjoyed using the text "Teaching Middle Years: Rethinking curriculum, pedagogy and assessment" (Pendergast, Main & Bahr) as reference tool for exploring a number of topics pertinent to the middle years including school transitions, team teaching, integrative and transdisciplinary teaching and middle school pedagogies. These workshops have provided a way for members to engage directly with the Association while also reinvigorating middle years concepts and approaches.

From 25-26th September, nine school teams (4 from Singapore, 1 from New Zealand and 4 from Australia - 1 QLD, 1 NSW and 2 from Victoria) met at the Australian International School in Singapore for the first two days of the 12 month Student Wellbeing Action Research project. Sessions were planned with overviews being presented by Donna and Katherine on a range of topics related to student wellbeing, action research and gathering evidence. Stimulus activities enabled school teams to work together to develop their individual projects and to design ways to measure growth. It was a stimulating two days with all schools leaving with well-formulated plans to be implemented in their schools in 2019. Over the next ten months, school teams will receive online coaching and feedback from Donna and Katherine. These schools will meet together again at the Adolescent Success Conference in Brisbane in August, 2019 where other conference delegates will be able to attend the session and listen to the schools present their project outcomes.

A new initiative from Adolescent Success in 2018 was the recent study tour to Finland. Our President, Debra Evans commented "The opportunity to be immersed into the Finnish education system; to hear from teachers; to visit classrooms; and to speak with students is the most valuable way to learn. This study tour incorporated all of these aspects, as well as high quality lectures from experienced educators and leaders. Being able to do this whilst networking with educators from other systems and countries provided great scope for thinking and learning. To understand the success of Finland's education system, you need to understand that it is "the sum of all the parts". It isn't one thing that I take away, but how all things work together to empower students to want to learn and achieve. The "no dead ends" for any child inspires me to work within my own system, to make this a reality at our school. What an amazing experience." Another study tour is in the planning stages for 2019 so it would be a wonderful opportunity to become well-acquainted the Finnish education system.

One date to mark on the calendar for 2019 is 8 – 10 August when the 11th International Conference for Adolescent Success will be held at the Brisbane Convention Centre. Once again the conference will be a highlight of the Adolescent Success calendar. Planning is well underway and a call for abstracts for presentations and workshops will go out in the near future. Please consider presenting at the conference as it is a fabulous vehicle for sharing your practice.

There is no doubt that 2018 will continue to provide numerous opportunities to connect with Adolescent Success. As the focus on research strengthens and grows it is important for members of Adolescent Success to connect with each other and through the committee to develop new projects and to report on existing initiatives. On behalf of all of the Adolescent Success Committee and Editorial Board of the journal I wish everyone a joyous Christmas and relaxing holiday break. We all look forward to bigger and brighter 2019.

Dr Anne Coffey
Journal Editor
Adolescent Success

President's Annual Report
2017-18

In my second term as President of Adolescent Success, it is exciting to see that we are seeing a consolidation of key initiatives and activities which continue to improve the connections we have made with our existing partnerships, but most significantly with and for our members.

Our current Management Committee is representative of almost all states of Australia, and it is our aim to ensure that this diversity enhances opportunities for expansion of Adolescent Success, by enabling us to meet the specific needs of our members as identified in each jurisdiction. Our focus in 2017 was to grow our membership, thus our aim has been to work more closely with and to serve our members more explicitly. As such, 2018 has seen the roll out of events and activities aimed to provide more opportunities for our members to engage with us and with each other.

My last report was delivered at our 2017 International Conference. With a delegation of over 500 teachers and 120 students, our focus was STEAM, with the theme of Discover, Design and Drive. Kevin Honeycutt was our major keynote speaker, and we were able to deliver an inspiring, energetic, engaging and valuable professional learning experience for all who attended. Having received a Science Grant from the Queensland Government for our 2017 event, the student strand was extremely successful, and we hope to be able to continue to include this Student strand in our 2019 conference.

Conferences in this era are extraordinary events, with our 2017 International event generating well over $140k in revenue, and with

expenses equalling just over half of this, we were able to make a significant profit on the conference. This provides us the capital we need to pay wages to our Executive Officer, without whom we would not be able to continue as a vibrant association.

As has become an integral process in our functioning, we have developed our Operational Plan for the current year – 2018. This year, we are particularly focused on *developing our leadership in education throughout Australia* with a specific aim to be known for *our expertise and ability to provide Professional Learning to educators around the country.*

Our Strategic priorities for this year are to reinforce our association to become recognised as a leader in our field, which will allow us to continue to grow and serve our members by strategically planning and promoting Adolescent Success Professional Learning throughout the country (and beyond our shores).

In order to do this, our key goals are to:

- engage with key bodies throughout Australia,
- monitor and increase Membership base, and to
- ensure our Professional Learning Opportunities are relevant and valuable

Already this year, we have launched our new Position Paper and infographic. This was the result of a year-long collaboration by our management committee, to update what was our MYSA position paper to align with 21century education and thinking, and

to ensure that it would become more relevant and accessible to our members. The infographic is available for purchase on our website, and is utilised in our middle years workshops. It is an invaluable resource, representing who we are and what we stand for as an association.

As was the intention, our Middle Years' Workshops have commenced around the country. Both Brisbane and the Northern Territory workshops have proven successful, with over thirty delegates in Brisbane, then an entire staff in Katherine, and over forty delegates in Darwin. Whilst audiences were significantly diverse in each of these workshops, by utilising the Text, Teaching Middle Years by Donna Pendergast, Nan Bahr and Katherine Main, the learning has been made relevant and significant. Feedback on all occasions has been excellent, and this is due to the expertise of our Executive Officer, Angela White. She is able to adapt to the needs of our members and contextualise the learning. The next workshops are to be run in Adelaide, with opportunities for Canberra, Melbourne, Tasmania and Perth on the agenda for the remainder of the year.

There are a number of other Professional Learning opportunities occurring this year, with the Finland Leaders' Study Tour taking place from 29 September – 8 October. We have approximately 20 delegates involved in this exciting educational experience, and thanks goes to our Partners, Latitude Travel for organising this event, and ensuring that our delegates will have a valuable travel and study experience. Both Angela and I will be attending this Professional Learning.

Later in October, we have a number of teams from Asia and Australia signed up for our Action Research Project which commences in Singapore. Donna Pendergast and Katherine Main are leading this project, which begins as a two day experience at the Australian International School. This is a year-long project, with teams having further opportunity to check in with Donna and Katherine during the following year, and ultimately, facilitating the teams to attend and present at our 2019 Conference in Brisbane.

Each of these programs is generating revenue for our association, which allows us to provide more services for our members. Importantly, they also ensure we are able to continue to operate as an association, supporting our executive officer in her work.

As stated, a key undertaking this year is to engage with key bodies, in particular we aim to make ourselves known to government bodies throughout Australia. To date, we have contacted our Federal Education Minister, and have plans to connect with state ministers around the country. We have identified the connection we can make with the educational agenda as outlined by the latest Gonski Report, and as such, will continue to garner the support of our government officials, by highlighting how we, as an association, could be working more closely with them to advise and assist educators throughout the country. Furthermore, we aim to build a stronger relationship with educational sectors throughout the country, where we may be able to create ongoing partnerships into the future.

Other key operations:

- Our Middle Years Journal continues to be published twice a year, providing relevant research, and showcasing schools around Australia.
- The eNewsletter is published periodically to provide a further avenue for resources for our membership.
- Twitter slow chats have

recommenced in July this year.

Each of these media provide valuable opportunities to engage and connect our membership with each other. I thank all of those responsible for ensuring their continuation.

We acknowledge our annual partners, Higher Ground and QCCC and Latitude Travel, and hope to continue our relationship with these partners, along with new partners into the future. It is of note that we have entered into a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Andrew Lines from The Rite Journey as we share similar values and see clear benefits by working together and building this relationship. We also continue our MOU with NZAIMS. Our Executive officer attended the NZAIMS conference in May this year with our scholarship awardee Wendy Maye from Ipswich Girls Grammar. This allows us to support their association and maintain contact with their executive.

We also retain connections with the American Middle Level Educators (Association) and have recently had conversations with the Chair of their Board, Christine Thielen. We look forward to continuing our affiliation with them, and look forward to marketing some of our key events through them into the future. Our Communications member, Adam Sommes will be attending their conference this year thanks to the complementary registration they have provided us.

We aim to maintain our support of all of these people, corporations and associations moving forward, as this promotes Adolescent Success to a wider audience.

As a sponsor of the Catholic Secondary Principals of Australia conference in Cairns in July this year, we were able to make some valuable contacts. This event enabled us to strengthen our visibility with key leaders, increase our membership and our own sponsorship data base, as well as provide a connection with a new potential

partner. We will continue to interact with these people and groups for our future events.

It has been a very full and rewarding year, and I would like to acknowledge our new management committee members who have joined us for the 2017-2019 period:

- Treasurer – Emily Ross, an educator from Brisbane State High,
- General members - Megan Mackenzie from the department of Education in NT and Simon Wagg, an educator from Canberra.

I would like also to acknowledge our continuing management committee members:

- Jan Hargreaves (Vice President), David Wilcox (Secretary), Anne Coffey (Journal editor), Adam Somes (Communications), and Robyn McCarthy and Howard Macpherson, our General members.

It is through the tireless volunteer work that each of these committee members undertake that allows Adolescent Success to continue. They are to be commended on the work they do both for the association and in their own states and territories as dedicated educators of young adolescents. The Association is grateful to the Principals and leaders of their schools and educational organisations for supporting them in their roles as management committee members.

Finally, I thank all for their support and look forward to continuing to serve Adolescent Success into the coming year.

Debra Evans
President

CONTENTS

Cultivating social media safety awareness in middle school girls

Roberta Thompson

Abstract

Australian middle school girls are some of the heaviest users of social media in this country. They use it extensively to communicate with friends both in and out of school and, not surprisingly, most say they could not live without it. Despite these claims, girls aged 12 to 14 experience higher levels of online trouble such as cyberbullying and sexting than same age boys. These troubles make them more prone to emotional distress such as depression and anxiety. To date, intervention initiatives have not been overly effective in reducing these problems. This paper reports on the online practices employed by middle school girls to negotiate social media. The data is drawn from an ongoing study involving 75 middle school girls from two high schools in Queensland. Preliminary findings drawn from survey and focus group contributions show that middle school girls can easily describe online safety protocols but their interpretation and translation of protocols into effective social media practices often differs from recommended guidelines when communicating with friends. Strategies for cultivating social media safety awareness in middle school girls are offered.

Introduction

Cyberbullying, sexting and image-based troubles impact on girls' everyday experience in and out of school and have potential to interrupt individual learning and personal wellbeing (Spears, 2016). Middle school girls are more likely than any other demographic to experience online challenges, especially cyberbullying (bullyingnoway.gov.au, 2017), and are particularly prone to stress, anxiety, and depression in relation to these encounters (Alexander & Krans, 2016; Rigby & Johnson, 2016). Social media and friendship are central to these experiences (Thompson, 2018). Therefore, a robust model for understanding girls' friendship experiences with social media can inform online safety policy, wellbeing agendas, awareness-raising programs, and self-help mechanisms for this age group.

This paper shares data from an ongoing project that focuses specifically on middle school girls, social media, and friendship. The project investigates girls' online practices and strategies with friends, friendship expectations and norms associated with social media, and friendship difficulties experienced in online contexts. The overall aim of the project is to challenge generic online safety measures to include more explicit strategies and awareness raising dialogues for middle school girls and their friends. At the more comprehensive level, the research contributes to current debates concerned with gendered online practices (Thompson, 2016a), gendered norms and sexism (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013), and aggression and violence towards girls and young women (Plan International Australia/Our Watch, 2016).

Middle School Girls, Social Media and Friends

Australian middle school girls are some of the heaviest users of social media in the country (Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA] (2015). Communicating with friends via social media is integral to their daily lives both in and out of school. They text friends regularly, check friends' posting frequently, update profile pictures, and engage extensively with visually-oriented platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat (Lenhart, Duggan, Perrin, Stepler, Rainie, & Parker, 2015). Not surprisingly, most of them say they can not live without social media. "It's a fun way to keep in touch", "organise events", and "find out what's going on with friends" (Thompson, 2016a).

Despite positive claims about the value of social media for friendship, girls aged 12 to 14 report higher levels of bullying (Rigby & Johnson, 2016), and are more likely to feel pressured to produce nude images than same age boys (Cooper, Quayle, Jonsson, & Svedun, 2016). They are more likely to report being sad, frightened, and upset after being bullied and feel much less safe from bullying at school, on the way to and from school, and online than boys. The emotional effects of bullying, especially covert forms such as cyberbullying, are greater for girls than boys (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). Forms of emotional distress include depression, anxiety, self-harm, and in extreme instances, suicide ideation. Adolescent girls, especially those in middle school, are more prone to these forms of distress (Alexander & Krans, 2016). The recent passing of 14-year-old Amy "Dolly" Everett, a well-known young Australian (see, Overington,

2018), highlights how challenges embedded in social media practice can have devastating outcomes for young adolescent girls.

The selfie phenomenon has also raised concerns about girls' use of social media, especially, their identity construction. With digital devices in hand, 12 to 14 year old girls are generating new idealised versions of themselves to share with friends and others in networked spaces. While experimentation with appearance and identity is not new to this generation of girls, there is a key difference between past and present day curation. Contemporary girls are curating "glossed up" images of themselves, many of which are sexualised (Chang, 2015; Chua & Chang, 2016). Even though contemporary Western culture supports female sexiness as normal expression of gender, girls who directly flaunt their sexuality are often judged, punished, and shamed for this expression by both peers and adults (Ringrose et al., 2013). Consequently, girls' image production and social media postings often place them at risk for being objectified, ranked, betrayed, coerced, and judged (Cooper et al., 2016). Long term effects from these experiences have yet to be fully documented, however, preliminary work suggests adolescent girls' confidence, self-esteem, and identity construction can be seriously impaired by bullying and sexting incidences. Research is crucial given the effects social media can have on middle school girls' wellbeing especially during this time of significant social and emotional developmental (see, Main, 2017 and Main & Pendergast, 2017).

Online Safety and Wellbeing

For more than a decade, online safety and wellbeing have been at the forefront of educational research worldwide. More than ever, cybersafety programs, websites, and resources are a visible presence. *Safer Internet Day*, an annual worldwide event encouraging a better, respectful internet for everyone is celebrated in 130 countries (**see, https://www.saferinternetday.org**). In Australia, internet safety is mandated through federal and state safety and wellbeing campaigns. Community organisations and not-for-profit sectors also provide support services and educational resources. Recently, the Australian Government launched the *Online wellbeing hub* (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018a), an initiative designed to bring together the best online safety and wellbeing resources countrywide. The initiative highlights the interconnectedness between online safety and wellbeing. The newness of the initiative makes it difficult to ascertain how many young people will actually use the resource but it is an important access point for getting appropriate information and support to those who need it. Australian schools have also adopted a number of these safety and wellbeing strategies, some of which include: whole school anti-bullying-cybersafety policies, school assemblies targeting online safety and wellbeing, direct sanctions and zero-tolerance policies for bullying behaviours, teacher-led curricular activities for social and emotional learning, strategies for building resilience and mental health, mediation practices, restorative approaches, group methods such

as the *Method of Shared Concern* (Rigby, 2005), and the adoption of external programs and resources including but not limited to: *MindMatters, headspace, Bullying No Way Website, Student Wellbeing Hub, Friendly Schools Programme, eSmart Schools system, and Office of the eSafety Commissioner website*. Another crucial aspect of intervention involves working with parents to provide them with the skills and mediation strategies needed to supervise and balance young people's online safety and wellbeing. However, the effectiveness of parent mediation approaches is mixed depending on the child's age, type of online risk being addressed, and device used to access internet services (Chen & Shi, 2018).

While anti-bullying approaches have been moderately successful in dealing with overt forms of bullying (e.g., physical and verbal forms), many schools report indirect forms of bullying, in particular cyberbullying and sexting, have either stayed the same or increased (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). This latter point is worrying given the amount of time and effort dedicated towards improving young people's online safety.

Online Safety Protocols

Online safety is the broad term used to describe protocols, practices and key messages about how to stay safe online. The terms cybersafety, internet safety, and esafety are also used to refer to these same practices. In Australia, the *Office of the eSafety Commissioner* (2018b) has responsibility for ensuring all Australians have safe and positive online experiences. To this end, the Office has developed and continues to extend a portfolio of supportive practices that focus on online safety, wellbeing, and digital citizenship. Positive engagement with technology is the key message and guidelines for staying safe reinforce this directive even as new challenges emerge in ever-changing social media contexts. Australian safety protocols and key practices for staying safe online are summarised in Table 1. Similar safety practices and wellbeing messages are promoted worldwide (see, for example, www.saferinternetday. org). For the most part, cybersafety protocols and celebration-style events have proven to be reasonably successful in broadcasting general safety messages. Regardless of these ongoing efforts, middle school girls continue to experience online troubles with friends. The question is, why?

Table 1
Summary of Australian Online Safety Protocols. Adapted from the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2018b).

Safety Protocols	Key Practices
Control personal information.	• Keep profiles private. • Protect personal details and passwords.
Manage inappropriate contact.	• Block it. • Report it. • Talk about it.
Engage safely.	• Know your online world. • Make informed decisions. • Choose consciously.
Engage positively.	• Think before you post. • Manage messages and images thoughtfully. • Ask permission before sharing content/images. • Treat others as you want to be treated.

In earlier research, Thompson (2016a, 2016b) found girls in middle schooling could easily describe general online safety practices, especially strategies for controlling personal information and managing inappropriate contact. Indeed, the girls could not only describe online safety protocols, they could provide detailed examples of what these strategies 'looked like' in their everyday practice. However, while the girls said they governed their online time cautiously and responsibly, a significant number of them continued to experienced online troubles, especially with friends. On further analysis, the study showed that the girls had a different set of rules and practices for engaging with friends online. At times, these practices led to troubles at school and online. While online safety protocols and cybersafety education protected most of them from unknown people and inappropriate web content, it was more difficult to ascertain the success of these protocols for girls' daily encounters with friends. This finding along with other research (see, for example, Cooper et al., 2016 and Ringrose et al., 2013) supports the notion that intervention approaches must take into consideration the needs of particular groups of young people, such as middle school girls, who may be disproportionately impacted by online demands specific to their age and developmental phase.

Despite middle school girls struggle with particular online challenges, there are few if any targeted strategies designed to help them effectively negotiate these concerns. The data discussed in this paper offers insight into middle school girls' online safety and social media practice. Findings clearly point to

friendship as a mediating factor in middle school girls' online safety practice and social media awareness. Suggestions for cultivating social media awareness in middle school girls' friendships are offered as starting points for intervention.

The Study

The data discussed in this paper is drawn from the ongoing study *Girls Social Media Project* funded by Griffith Institute for Educational Research (GIER), Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. The project draws on principles of design anthropology/ethnography (Otto & Smith, 2013) to investigate middle school girls' social media use, safety awareness, and online practice with friends. Design anthropology/ethnography is a strong, visually engaging qualitative method that sets research within a design context (van Dijk, 2010). The method involves creating a contextual space for participants to explicitly generate materials, resources and/or products informed or inspired from their everyday lives. In this case, teenage girls co-create social media intervention resources such as YouTube clips, memes, self-help applications, vlogs or blogs, website pages or postings, and other items (e.g. pamphlets) for other girls their age. The girls' design work is still in progress so will not be reported here. However, preliminary findings concerning their social media use and online safety awareness are discussed as a means for informing teacher practice.

In October 2017, 75 Year 7 girls from two high schools in Queensland (approximately 30% of Year 7 girls from each school) agreed to complete an online survey. As per ethical requirements, all girls and parents/guardians

signed HREC approved consent-to-participate forms. The survey was comprised of 23 questions ranging from tick-the-box (e.g., never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, a lot, and so on) and Likert-scaled options (e.g., very likely to very unlikely) to free-text choices (e.g., Please tell us about …). The questions were divided into three main sections: *Your Everyday Activities* (e.g., How much time do you spend online?), *Your Social Media* (e.g., What social media do you use?), and *Your Social Media Postings* (e.g., If a friend is upset by a message you post, what do you do?). Categorical and ordinal survey questions were converted into frequency themes [e.g., how often] (Saldana, 2009) and free-text accounts were analysed and coded into themes using recurrent word strings, phrases, and stated actions, practices and strategies (Boyatzis, 1998).

In November 2017, 38 of the same girls surveyed participated in one of 10 focus group discussions. Focus groups ranged in size from 2 to 8 participants and were comprise of girls grouped from the same homeroom (tutor/pastoral) class. In this way, each group could be carefully coordinated by the class teacher to avoid any possible personality clashes. Recurrent themes generated in survey contributions were used to stimulate discussions about social media experience and practice. The girls' conversations were audiotaped then transcribed. Focus group contributions were coded and analysed as per survey free-text accounts. Both the survey and focus group discussions generated rich and in-depth contributions. However, a higher ratio of participants from each school would more strongly support findings reported here.

Girls' Online Safety Protocols

Without much effort, almost all of the girls could describe online safety practices for controlling information and managing inappropriate content. Most girls agreed they used these strategies daily and much of what they had to say about their online activity reflected the language and practices promoted through online safety curriculums. Being able to nominate online safety practices is not uncommon. Many young Australians have a high awareness of online risks and understand strategies to stay safe (ACMA, 2011). How middle school girls specifically interpret and translate these practices into daily practice with friends is less clear even though scholarship has shown online communication has a strong impact on adolescent relationships (see, for example, Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). In addition, there is reasonable evidence that girls are more likely than boys to use online platforms and social media to communicate with friends, plan social events, and share personal experiences (ACMA, 2008, 2015; Common Sense Media, 2012, Lenhart et al., 2015; Thompson, 2016a; Wood, 2017). So, it was not surprising that these girls spoke extensively about how they personalised safety protocols to communicate more freely with friends.

Controlling information was mainstay to the girls' online safety. They protected themselves by using privacy settings (89%) and keeping personal information private (88%). The girls agreed they were careful about types of information posted on social media profiles (such as not saying what school they went to or the suburb

they lived in) and said they did not let unknown people have access to their accounts. One girl explained, "I never put my full name in the username and make sure I always know a person before I let them follow an account of mine." A small number of girls used more extreme measures to protect their identity from strangers and "men acting like little girls". For example, one girl said, "I keep tape over my device camera to keep my identity unknown."

While most of the girls agreed they used privacy settings to protect themselves, it was clear they interpreted privacy guidelines in different ways for different people. Strict adherence to privacy rules applied to "people you don't know" or "people you should be careful about". Stranger danger tactics seemed reasonably effective given many girls could described strategies for checking friend requests (i.e., people who asked to follow them). "You search them up to see who else they know, you look to see what they are looking at, don't just click on yes." At the same time, a good portion of them had extensive online friendship circles and many of these friends had reasonable access to the girls' postings (i.e., messages and images). For communicating in online 'friend' contexts, many girls used code words, emojis, or special language to protect information and maintain privacy. "I use code words between me and my friends so we can communicate in our special way so that people reading our messages won't understand what we are trying to say." Code words and emoji were particularly useful for talking about events, "a crush", or people they disliked.

Using code words and symbols to camouflage meaning in online

contexts is not new. Indeed, Marwick and boyd (2014) reported that young people frequently use stenographic practices (e.g., coding techniques to hide meaning) to manage and control privacy in online contexts. The interesting point here is that the codes or devices used by the girls had well-established meaning (e.g., 🔥 for "he's hot") but this transparency was not questioned by code/emoji users. So, even though girls' use of coding mechanisms assumed privacy, common understanding amongst peers may have inadvertently precluded privacy.

Managing inappropriate contact. The girls had a number of strategies for managing inappropriate contact which included blocking people (81%), reporting unkind messages and inappropriate pictures/material (70%), and talking about online problems to someone that could help (71%). However, the girls' blocking and reporting practices were not straightforward. When online problems involved people they didn't know, the girls blocked and reported the person or asked parents/carers for assistance. If good friends were involved, they preferred to work it out themselves. "I would ask them why they did it and explain why I don't like it. I would ask them to take it down. If that didn't work then I would tell my mum." They were far more likely to talk to parents (71%) about online problems than teachers (45%). On the other hand, when online challenges involved boys, embarrassing content, or awkward pictures, girls were more likely to seek assistance from friends (72%). Girls claimed they spoke to friends about their problems because parents over-reacted. One girl said, "my friend posts some really racy pictures and guys are always asking her for nudes. I tell

her that she should tell someone, but she says her parents will take [her phone] away." Another girl said, "we like talking to boys but some boys send inappropriate things so if we tell our parents, they assume something is going on like we're dating and then we can't be friends with boys." Reporting problems was also associated with being a "snitch". "I want to handle it myself. I don't want my friends telling adults about it and I don't want to tell them either cause people will see me as a snitch. That's worse than putting up with stuff." While the girls knew and understood the importance of reporting online problems, for most, problems with friends were reported only when the situation could no longer be managed without adult intervention. That is, when the situation became critical.

While 'report it' recommendations have been mainstay to cybersafety education, the context and conditions of reporting have not been thoroughly investigated (i.e., the why and why not, the who and who not). In earlier work, the author (2016a) found that middle school girls were more likely to report other girls who were not considered friends. Beyond this basic condition (friend, not friend), other reporting patterns were not noted. In the current study, data shows that girls do translate reporting protocols in particular ways that minimise damage to friendships, sidestep adult intervention, and circumvent stigmatising outcomes. It is concerning that middle school girls will "put up with stuff" or wait until events become critical before seeking help. More work is needed in this area.

Girls' engagement with technology and social media

As previously mentioned, positive engagement with technology is a key safety message and guidelines for reinforcing this directive include protocols about how to engage safely and positively with the internet and others (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018b). Response to survey questions showed that most of the girls had reasonable experience with technological devices and social media. Almost all of the girls (97%) were online daily. The average time spent online was one to three hours although a significant number of them (27%) spent more than four hours a day online. The girls used a range of devices for connecting to the internet. Most used devices were laptop computers (84%) and smartphones (75%). The girls went online regularly to listen to music

(79%), keep in touch with friends (78%), watch videos (73%), do homework (74%), and check up on social media (67%). Social media was used frequently (54%) or fairly often (31%) although there was a small group (7%) who did not use social media at all. Top social media activities included following people they knew (95%), 'liking' pictures and posts (93%), 'commenting' on pictures and posts (78%), following celebrities and YouTubers (73%), and searching for new ideas or content (72%). Most popular social media were YouTube (81%), Instagram (72%) and Snapchat (62%). Social media used by the girls is summarised in Table 2. These findings are consistent with reports from the Australian Office of the eSafety Commissioner (see, *Research Insights: Young and Social Online,* 2016) suggesting the girls in this study are reasonably representative of young Australian social media users.

Table 2
Summary of girls' social media.
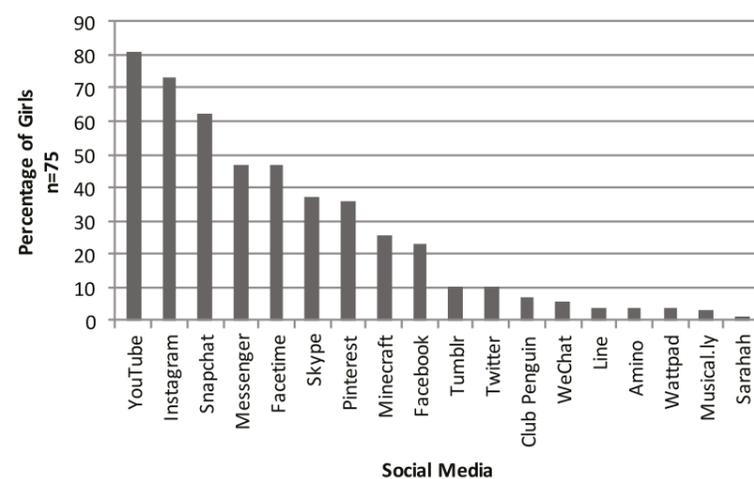
Engaging safely. In the online survey, 84% of the girls said they "felt okay" about their social media practice. However, in group discussions, the girls' capacity to engage with social media safely was not clear. When asked questions

about age limitations, geo-location features, privacy controls, safety strategies for each service, and so forth, their answers were mixed and, frequently, incorrect. A simple example, several girls claimed Instagram and Snapchat age limit

was 12. The age limit is actually 13. While some girls could explain Snap Map (i.e., the geo-location feature on Snapchat), there was at least one girl in each focus group who used Snapchat but did not know about this feature or could not explain Ghost Mode (i.e., hiding yourself when posting 'snaps'). Girls' understandings about how social media services operated also varied.

> I don't think Year 7 girls are supposed to use Facebook. I think most adults use Facebook, since there's a word limit on it, isn't there? And photos are limited as well. So Instagram, you post your photos, which seems what Year 7 girls have been doing so far. Facebook is pretty limited, only people who follow you can see your content.

Another girl said,

> On Facebook you can search them up and anyone can see your photos, so you can't actually put your account on private. On Instagram you can put your account on private. But on Facebook you can't so everyone can see what you're doing and who you are, your information. That's why I don't put any information on Facebook.

Some girls had sage advice for others.

> If you post a picture on Instagram, put the location on it later when you get home like about a week later.

> If you take pictures, don't have your street name on it. Just take a picture laying down on the grass or on a brick wall or on a white wall.

> If you want to keep your identity safe, don't use Snapchat because people can track where you are if you don't have Ghost Mode on.

While some girls were consciously thinking about how to protect their identity, in the main, there was considerable confusion about how various social media services operated and the strategies needed in each space to protect themselves. Misperceptions were not overly surprising given more than three-quarters of them had drawn social media practices from discussions with friends not from informed online safety sources. "Yeah, my friend showed me and I was like ooh this is cool, I'll just download it." Peer pressure plays a key role in technological and social media adoption (Quan-Hasse & Young, 2010) and self-presentation approaches (Chua & Chang, 2016; Thompson, 2016a). It is likely that conforming to peer pressure places some girls at risk for online problems (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Efforts to cultivate social media awareness in middle school girls must address peer pressure tensions and self-presentation norms.

Engaging positively. The girls talked about their social media in positive ways. Social media was valued because it allowed them to stay connected with friends in and out of school, they could post about daily events and good things that were happening, share content and look at things they were interested in. Staying in touch with family and friends overseas was also important. Sharing pictures and videos with friends was a significant aspect of their social media. They had a lot to say about pictures that shouldn't be posted. "Girls post photos of their boobs and butts and other photos and they use emojis that mean rude things and send them to boys. They should act their age and stop posting inappropriate photos." While most girls said they used social media in positive

ways, it was clear that "some girls post[ed] really inappropriate stuff". In general, the view was some girls were out of control on social media, started rumours, used "inappropriate language like swearing", and "posted way too much personal information". One girl advised, "Year 7 girls should limit their use and be more active!"

The girls agreed that they would not deliberately post something that would upset their friends but sometimes misunderstandings happened. If a friend was upset by one of their postings, 97% said they would take the image down immediately and apologise for hurting the friend's feelings. "I would delete the message and say I'm sorry and never do it again." Talking it out and trying to make the friend feel better was important to them ("I would talk to her about it and send her memes to make her feel better"). In reverse, when friends posted images they didn't like or found embarrassing there were mixed reactions. Some girls said they wouldn't take it too seriously ("if it's an ugly photo then it's funny so I'd just laugh") while others were a bit more thoughtful. "I would politely ask them to delete it. I would ask them to get my permission next time." Several girls were less sympathetic. "I would be really, really, really mad because anyone can see it and that would be dangerous and I will report her."

Overall, there was reasonable evidence the girls attached particular meaning to certain social media practices especially inappropriate images and language and rude emoji. No one claimed to view their own content in this way and, while some girls demonstrated clear alliance to the mottos, *think before you post* and *treat others as you want to be treated*, this trend

was not consistent across the group. Indeed, the girls provided mixed messages about Year 7 girls' engagement with social media.

It goes to their head if they have a lot of likes and if you don't have likes, they laugh at you and I find that rude.

Social media can be harmful and Year 7 girls should be careful of their actions and how it affects others.

If you don't want strangers or your parents to see it then don't post it as everyone in the world has a way to see it.

The girls' attitudes towards social media engagement exemplify the ways in which they interpret, translate and enact various cybersafety protocols to manage and negotiate friendship. And, while many of these articulations can be traced back to core cybersafety messages, the girls' commitment to and expression of safety is clearly cultivated through the norms, practices and strategies of friendship. As pointed out by O'Keefe and Clark-Pearson (2011) and Thompson (2016a, 2016b), this articulation often places them in positions of vulnerability.

Cultivating Girls' Social Media Safety Awareness

As mentioned at the start of this paper, there are numerous national and international initiatives aimed at helping young people to stay safe online. The discussion to follow is not intended to replace those conventions but rather to add to and extend ways of thinking about online safety for middle school girls. As shown above, middle school girls do use online safety mechanisms to protect themselves online. However, the ways in which these protocols are

interpreted, translated and enacted varies considerably, especially when friends are involved. In many cases, girls were not fully informed about the services they used or the safety mechanisms that worked best within those contexts. They often found out about these things from friends. Social media was understood for its great communicative power with friends but, again, the girls had mixed understandings of how to effectively and safely negotiate friendship in these spaces. Overall, friendship plays a critical role in how girls negotiate social media.

While government bodies and other philanthropic organisations have created excellent cybersafety resources and broad frameworks for addressing young people's online safety and wellbeing, findings reported here support the notion that specific measures for cultivating girls' social media safety awareness, especially with friends, is much needed. Preparation of specific curriculums that explicitly teach safe, responsible and ethical use of social media as well as awareness raising strategies for middle school girls seems essential work for school communities, teachers and parents. In this light, three strategies are offered as critical tools for educators and parents for cultivating middle school girls' social media awareness.

1. **Informed use.** It is vital that middle school girls develop an in-depth and critical understanding of social media. Building their repertoire of effective strategies for evaluating and using these applications is a must. Positive-use activities are a good starting point. For example, in groups, girls could research popular social media then develop safe-use guidelines

for other girls their age using online safety guidelines. These activities not only engage them with online safety protocols but also encourage them to read the terms and conditions (i.e., the small print) of social media. Developing online literacy skills especially effective coding practices for privacy is central to developing a practical understanding of social media as well as formulating effective safety plans for their wellbeing. Given the rapid development of technology and the ongoing challenges faced by girls online, their capacity to make informed decisions about social media is crucial.

2. **Help-seeking options.** Help-seeking is an important life skill. Middle school girls need to be encouraged to ask for help when social media is causing them distress. Breaking down taboos and dispelling myths around help-seeking and reporting practices (see, Spears et al., 2015) is essential. The notion that being called a "snitch" is worse than putting up with bullying is concerning. Social and emotional learning curriculums must target these help-seeking fears. For middle school girls, help-seeking patterns mostly involve friends. Sessions designed to help girls help friends (e.g., this is how you help a friend…) are attractive, accessible approaches. Such sessions negates embarrassing or disciplinary effects of sharing problems, messages, and content with parents or teachers while providing a level of support that can sustain wellbeing.

3. **Reflective self-mapping.** Reflective self-mapping is based on therapeutic aspects of reflective journal writing,

an approach often used to consider the impact of events or actions on self and others. This activity has been used with middle school girls before to help them map their private thoughts, ideas, feelings and understandings about challenging online events with friends (Thompson, 2016a). Reflective self-mapping is based on five levels of progressive thinking outlined by Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, and Lester (2002). The five levels are: describing what happen, explaining feelings about what happened, connecting what happened to previous experiences, considering why it happened, and reconstructing possibilities for a different outcome. Asking girls to map and reflect on their social media experiences using the five levels of progressive reflection offers opportunities for them to re/think actions and plan possibilities for future online interaction. It is a problem-solving approach that aims to develop an empathetic eye

towards social media activity. As such, the approach has potential to help them think more carefully before posting and to thoughtfully consider how they want to be treated by others and vice versa. The author (2016a) found reflective self-mapping of online experiences increased self-awareness of middle school girls and, in turn, helped them to think carefully and reasonably about their online actions.

The strategies listed above offer a starting point for considering how to create opportunities and conversations that help middle school girls interpret, translate and enact online practices while negotiating everyday interactions with friends. Teachers are encouraged to implement these strategies in core teaching areas (especially where digital technologies are prescriptive), wellbeing curriculums, and counselling activities. Parents and guardians can make use of these ideas as they develop home-based approaches for girls' social media use.

Conclusion

Achieving and sustaining middle school girls' online safety and wellbeing is core to the research reported here. The girls have articulated an everyday world where social media is dominated by friendship, a world that is neither online or offline but rather a complex and layered experience articulated through actions, practices and interactions translated through friendship norms and expectations and peer group pressures. More research is needed in this area. However, it is clear that middle school girls' everyday experience with friends impacts on their online safety and wellbeing.

Roberta Thompson
r.thompson@griffith.edu.au

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Why don't we ask the students what engages them in their learning?

Colin Pettit
Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

A great deal has been written as to what engages and/or disengages students in their learning. Educators are aware that the level of engagement with school and education assists a child to develop skills to succeed academically and build and maintain social relationships.

With indicators of engagement such as attendance, a sense of belonging and participation not improving or in many cases deteriorating, the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People developed a unique consultation process with children and young people to seek their view on what engages them with their learning. The responses and evidence they provided are compelling and provide educators with an insight rarely found in any research that will make a significant difference to how schools should look to engage their students.

Two reports, "Speaking Out About School and Learning" (a summary report -https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/media/2763/speaking-out-about-school-and-learning.pdf) and a "School and Learning, Technical Report" (https://

www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/projects/engagement-in-education/school-and-learning-consultation-technical-report/) were tabled in the Western Australian Parliament in late January 2018. The purpose of the research was to seek the views of Year 3 to Year 12 students enrolled in government, Catholic and independent schools across WA on the positive and negative factors that influence their engagement in education. The research comprised two components: an individual electronic student survey and group discussions with students facilitated by staff from the office.

The survey questions were drawn from the New Zealand Youth 2000 Survey and adapted to the Western Australian context, for a younger cohort of students and for students with disability attending education support centres. Each version of the survey was slightly different, meaning that the different cohorts of students were not asked all the same questions.

Prior to conducting the survey, the literature review identified the following concepts as being core to understanding the complexity surrounding student engagement or disengagement:

- Students can be disengaged at different levels (e.g. with content, in class, with school, and/or with education as a whole).

- There are different types or domains of engagement (e.g. emotional, behavioural, and cognitive).

- Disengagement can therefore be indicated and measured in multiple ways (e.g. behavioural disengagement with class content may be indicated by poor classroom behaviour; emotional disengagement with school in general may be indicated by poor school connectedness).

- Disengagement is both a process and an outcome. For example, student absenteeism may reflect disengagement from school, but it is also a risk factor for other disengagement indicators such as early school leaving.

- Contexts beyond the educational setting (i.e. family) are an integral part of disengagement processes for children and young people.

In total, 1,812 students from 98 schools participated in the survey and 1,174 students participated in the group discussions. Schools from all nine geographic regions of WA were involved. There were 954 Year 3 to Year 6 students and 837 Year 7 to Year 12 students who participated in the School and Learning Consultation survey.

The wealth of information gathered resulted in a number of primary engagement factors being identified by students that were essential to ensure they engage at any level. This was then supported by a number of factors they deemed would accelerate their engagement. (see fig 1.).

Primary factors

These three factors provide the foundation for a student's sound and sustainable engagement in school and learning. While engagement in learning can be improved through other means, the primary factors provide crucial supportive relationships that enable students to develop positive attitudes towards education and cope with adversity and challenges that arise.

The three central factors to engaging in learning are:

Having friends and positive relationships with other students.

Teachers who have a genuine interest in our wellbeing and future.

Families that are involved and interested.

Secondary factors

These six factors can accelerate engagement by supporting the student to be ready to learn and intrinsically motivated. These factors have two sub-categories:

1. Learning:
A positive, fair and supportive classroom environment. Teaching and learning that is interesting and relevant. Choices and a say on decisions that affect us.

2. Student:
Feeling safe. Help to overcome personal issues. Feeling physically and mentally well.

Both reports contain significant supporting information and numerous quotes from children and young people to support these findings that will challenge much of our current thinking and practice.

As a result of the information gathered seven findings and fourteen recommendations were established to support, teachers, schools and their systems, parents and universities to assist them in helping their students engage more with their learning. Suggestions from students are also central to these findings to allow school leaders to challenge their schools current practice.
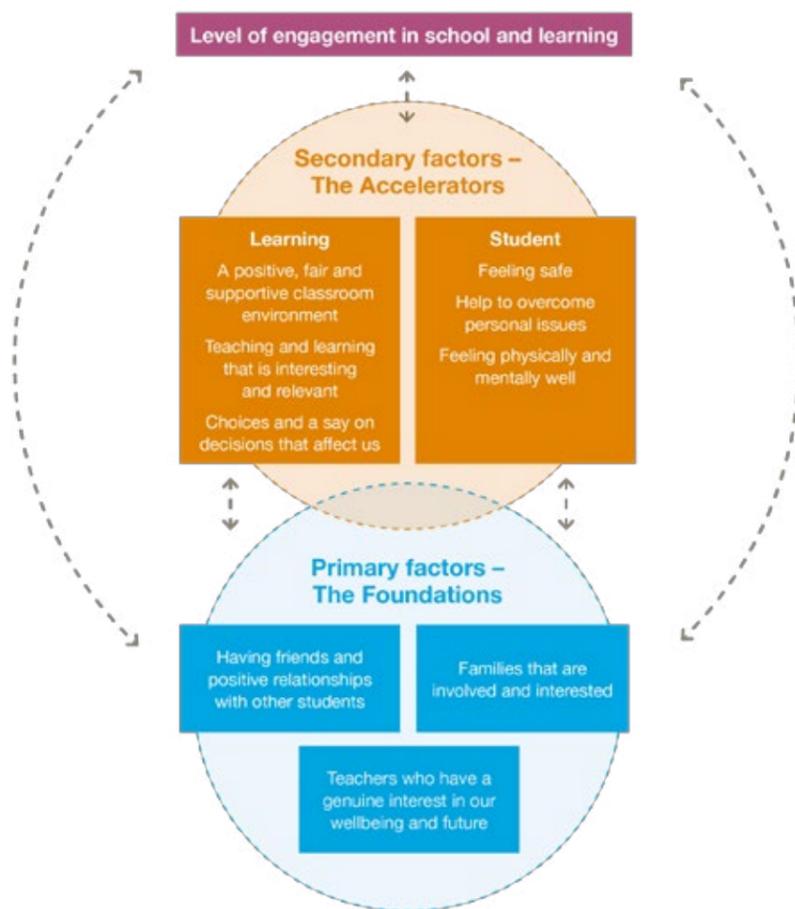
fig.1

Findings

1. The views of WA school students are an invaluable but underutilised resource that provides an opportunity to challenge our approaches and beliefs regarding education and continually improve our practice.

2. Aboriginal students identified a number of areas that hinder engagement in their education and learning. The nature and quality of relationships with teachers and peers, the availability of support for learning and personal health problems, particularly difficulties with mental health, emerged as areas where many Aboriginal students experienced greater challenges than their non-Aboriginal peers.

3. The foundations of student engagement are primarily based on the quality of relationships students have with teachers, school staff and other students. Importance of having friends and positive relationships with other students Relationships with teachers and other school staff

4. Children and young people involved in the consultation valued the role that parents or guardians and their broader families played in their learning. The ability of parents or guardians and broader families to understand the significance of a balanced approach to schooling, in particular homework, was significant to students.

5. The role of teachers in providing a stimulating and positive learning environment was, unsurprisingly, critical to students' school and learning experiences.

6. Feeling safe at school was a key issue nominated by children and young people as something that schools should address as a matter of priority. Students who reported positive relationships with other students and with teachers were more likely to report feeling safe at school. Students with disability or long-term health conditions were more likely to report feeling unsafe at school and worried about issues such as bullying.

7. Feeling supported to address personal problems and challenges, and feeling physically and mentally well was also important to students being able to attend, participate and achieve at school. Physical and mental health has an impact across a range of engagement factors. There appears to be an under-diagnosis of physical and mental ill-health in schools, particularly for Aboriginal students, which warrants further investigation.

Genuinely asking students what helps them to engage in their learning should be core business for schools. These reports are a great starting point for positive change using the voice of your students.

Colin Pettit
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Reflection from the Classroom

21st Century Learning Skills – Innovation Revolution

Kristy Matthew

Year 8 teacher & Deputy Head of Middle College
Riverside Christian College, QLD

21st Century Skills is one of the current 'buzz words' travelling around all educational sectors at the moment, but what does that really mean and how will it impact classroom teachers? For some time now, I have been a part of a team that is designing and trialling an innovation program that undertakes the explicit teaching and assessing of 21st Century skills in the Middle Years. I go between loving it and hating it. I go between feeling like it's a success and feeling like it is a failure. Why? Why are the ups and downs so big, and so frequent?

We are literally sitting on the cusp of the innovation revolution in education. This is a time of massive change. Did you know that 82% of the content you teach your kids in your classroom will be irrelevant by the time they are in the workforce? That 64% of jobs in the future are not even jobs yet?

The only relevant thing that we can teach our students, that will be useful for them in the future are… 21st Century Skills. Of course, content will still be relevant and I am in no way saying we should throw content out altogether, but our new focus should be 21st Century Learning Skills. When talking to employers they say the two biggest gaps within school age children applying for work are; communication and team work. "They can't talk to customers, hold a conversation or initiate conversation. They also find it very difficult to contribute to a team and understand that teams can achieve more than individuals" (General Manager, IGA).

For many teachers the thought of 'subject content' being somewhat irrelevant makes them feel a little lost, sad or obsolete. I can fully identify with these feelings and have experienced this over the past 3 years on numerous occasions. Swinging back and forth on the pendulum of loving 21st Century Skills, to hating them. Why does this create such highs and lows for me and perhaps other educators at the moment? There are perhaps two reasons for this. Firstly, public perceptions of teachers are often attached to student success. This idea is outdated and ridiculous. Even though I am aware of this, I still go between the thought of how the public views me as a successful teacher and knowing that it is not a real indication - especially in the ever-changing nature of education. What does it really matter if my

students can memorise the key dates of Ancient Aztec civilisations? What matters more is that they can they research that topic, find credible sources, evaluate the source with a disconcerting view and find bias. That's the real thing worth teaching, that's the lasting skill.

Secondly, being a people pleaser. The majority of teachers I know are people pleasers. They spend their day going above and beyond to cater to everyone else's needs. We want to keep everyone happy, all the time. It's hard to take a stand against traditional views of content driven education and tell traditional educators that their views are becoming more and more outdated. It is hard to stand in front of a student's parents and tell them that they way in which they were taught at school is now a 'distant pastime'.

Again, this sends me back and forth on this pendulum of doubt and then absolute certainty about our push for 21st Century Learning.

Change is scary and hard. Teachers are generally organised people, with a plan and then usually a back-up plan too. Change means doing something that you can't guarantee will be either a success or a failure, until many years down the track. Change means throwing out big parts of past teaching philosophy to cater for the needs of young adolescents and their current future paths. These education transition times are not organised, not precise and at times, messy - not exactly an organised persons ideal world. However, these education transitions are also relevant and key to our student's futures.

If teachers are going to be truly dedicated to their students' futures and cater to the needs of the young adolescents within our care, they need to continue with, and focus on the teaching and imbedding of 21st Century Skills within our curriculum. We need to continue with the ups and downs, the messy classrooms, the new teaching methods, the disorganisation, the consistently updated curriculum documents and negative opinions that come our way. We need to lean on each other and know that as professionals, today, we are doing the right thing for our future world leaders.

Kristy Matthew
Kristy.Matthew@riverside.qld.edu.au

TransitUs

Nicole Adams

Meredith Roe

Summary

New online learning opportunities in Western Australia have given rural, remote and regional students the opportunity to connect with their peers from around the state through TransitUs – a new transition to boarding program being piloted by Catholic Education Western Australia. The TransitUs program has been developed in consultation with three boarding schools, students, community and their parents and aims to build confidence in students and their parents.

The blended learning program focuses on developing existing knowledge about boarding, building friendships, relationships and networks, improving technology skills and introducing new life skills needed in an urban setting. Boarding staff, parents and current boarders have been involved throughout the 4-part program:

1. Community visits – to commence relationship-building and to share information about the program

2. Forum – a Perth-based, day-long program for students to teach them the skills needed for their first year of boarding. Parent workshops and a social gathering were also included in the Forum.

3. Connect – this 8-week online program allowed students to take a deep dive into life as a boarder and to learn more about their future boarding school. Students completed weekly challenges based on the Western Australia Curriculum's General Capabilities and discussed the outcomes in a regular Skype call with other participants and the program coordinators.

4. Virtual Celebration – a fun way to celebrate new friendships, skills and knowledge.

The program has been well supported by families, schools and CEWA, and feedback to date has been very positive. Before we provide a more detailed description of the program we thought it would be useful to share our reflections of our experiences transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Nicole's Story

When I think back to one of the most daunting days at school, for me it was the first day of high school as a "Day Bug". I had my new uniform on, my bag brimming with files and books and a brave face on. The trepidation I felt at the thought of having five teachers a day, rather than just my usual one in primary school, or how I was ever going to stay organised with a locker that barely fit everything that was in my bag, or how I was ever going to find the right room when the school was four floors of classrooms that looked the same, was huge. But, as I got out of the car, and mum reassured me she would be here waiting for me at 3.25, I watched as similar girls with the same level of unknown, walked not from the car, but from the boarding house. Even in my naïve state, I thought to myself, how scary to do this so far from home.

Meredith's Story

As a new boarder, my trepidation, anxiety and fear were no different from Nicole's experience above. However, before I'd even arrived at school for my first morning, I'd had to negotiate a new routine including shared bathrooms, breakfast with a large group, lunch making, 'duties' such as breakfast set up or dishes, packing my school bag (what do I take?), and making it to the bus to school on time….all while dealing with homesickness.

These thoughts have stayed with both of us some twenty plus years later. In our time as an upper primary or secondary teacher, the concept of transitioning to high school is one that has always been at the forefront of our minds, questioning how we can do this better, particularly for those that have the additional challenge of transitioning to a boarding environment.

Leading the Way

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) is embracing virtual learning opportunities for its students in remote, regional and rural areas of WA. A new pilot program called TransitUs is being run this year, designed to give rural Year 6 students and their families support during the transition to secondary boarding school. TransitUs aims to build parent and student confidence in transition to boarding, to connect new and current boarders, their parents and the boarding school, and to develop new technology skills.

CEWA supports TransitUs through a four-part strategic lens:

1. Engagement – engagement of parents, schools and community to achieve positive community and educational outcomes.

2. Accessibility – accessibility of Catholic education in rural and remote regions of WA, for the marginalised people and areas of WA.

3. Affordability – affordability of Catholic education in marginalised communities of WA.

4. Diversity – diverse models of Catholic education to provide parental choice, best practice educational opportunities and high-level student engagement.

Enabling Factors

These opportunities for students to connect have been enabled by a system wide digital transformation called LEADing Lights. With all CEWA schools and offices now operating in one digital ecosystem, staff and students can collaborate using the same powerful suit of Microsoft Office 365 (O365) tools.

LEADing Lights utilises a common platform to deliver engaging and collaborative learning experiences and support. Teachers in CEWA schools utilise Microsoft's O365 suite of tools to share lessons, provide feedback, create collaborative learning opportunities and to communicate with students, school-based mentors, parents and other colleagues. The use of Microsoft Teams and OneNote is also reflected in the TransitUs program, with program coordinators connecting in Teams and sharing weekly challenges with students in OneNote. The tools of Teams and OneNote were chosen as they provided a holistic learning environment where all resources and activities could be accessed by coordinators and students. It also allowed seamless collaboration, conversation and connections to occur.

This technology and its affordances are new for all CEWA students. Having to learn new technology skills is an additional challenge for boarding students, many of whom come from schools external to CEWA and who have limited exposure to the type of technology skills required for secondary school. Removing this challenge by providing an opportunity for parents and students to become familiar with its use was a one of the focus points for TransitUs. The creation of a new Virtual School Program Manager role at CEWA also presented the opportunity to utilise best practice in virtual learning delivery, for use beyond the classroom.

TransitUs

The focus of the program is engagement. During its development, we considered engagement through the lens of cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement. While these are three stand-alone facets, they are deeply related to each other and have implications for student success.

While TransitUs is built on all three, there is an emphasis on the emotional element. Emotional engagement refers to a student's working and personal relationship with their teachers and peers. This is supported by the need for a sense of belonging and social connectiveness and feeling safe in their environment. This sense of belonging, safety and foundation of strong, meaningful relationships is imperative for a student who is moving away from their home environment.

Program Overview

We worked with three schools; a co-educational secondary college (Edmund Rice College), one all-boy (Mazenod College) and one all-girl school (St Brigid's College). We collaborated with key stakeholders from all three schools and a community engagement consultant to develop a program that would address the broad needs of new boarding students. Knowledge around key factors like the importance of building relationships, supporting students during homesickness and boarding life, as well as engaging in secondary school activities and academics were the three main themes. From this we developed a four-part program underpinned by these themes. At each point in the four-part program feedback was collected from the various stakeholders so that the impact of each stage could be identified. While formal feedback was gathered by using surveys and qualitative verbal responses, ongoing communication and commentary from stakeholders was also a valuable insight in to the impact of the program. Once the program (outlined below) was developed, communication was

sent to approximately 25 families, with a final number of eleven students signing up for the full program.

Four Part Program

1. Community Visits:

Community Visits are the first component of the program, where boarding staff and TransitUs coordinators met with parents and students in their own communities to explain the TransitUs program. During the visit, we took the time to build relationships with the students and their families in their own communities. We also used the opportunity to share information about the program and answer any questions. These visits were held in community cafes and were informal in nature to allow for relationships to develop. Interestingly, students quickly began developing friendships, where social media accounts were exchanged, and commonalities identified. The parents also developed relationships, and knowing they were from the same community areas, began to develop their own support networks, as they too were preparing for their own transition.

2. Forum:

The second component of the program was a full-day Perth-based forum. Students had the opportunity to meet boarding staff, other Year 6 students and to connect with their new boarding school buddy; a current Year 7 boarder. The day's program was intentionally aimed as a time for developing friendships. This was done through:

- activities which targeted life skills needed in an urban environment,

- building on existing knowledge about boarding school and

- exploring the technology they would use in the online component and at school next year

- engaging in team building challenges.

We began the day with ice-breakers to reduce the nerves of some of the students and to establish the foundations of the relationships moving forward. The students spent time with buddies from their school to learn about what boarding is like and what to possibly expect. We

then headed off to the local train station to teach the students how to buy a train ticket and catch the train in to the city. While in the city, students purchased the food they needed to complete our next session; a group-based 'Master Chef' challenge. The goal of the challenge was to make a dessert dish for our group dinner. Once the cooking was complete, we spent time teaching the students how to use the O365 tools, specifically Microsoft Teams and OneNote - the tools students would be using for the online component.

While the students were commencing their day, parents participated in an information session about the program and learned about the O365 tools. At the end of the day, parents re-joined the group and participated in a student showcase of skills learnt and a shared meal which was an important opportunity for boarding parents to connect and network.

Feedback from the students included the desire to extend the one-day forum as an over-night camp so that they could experience staying away from home for a night. We found this to be an insightful piece of feedback and one we are cognisant of implementing in future iterations of this program.

3. Connection:

CEWA has embraced a system-wide technology platform through the Leading Lights initiative which provides a safe place for students to connect online. Even though students were at different non-CEWA schools and all over the state, providing a CEWA account allowed all students to join the program using Teams and OneNote.

When planning the program, tasks were created based on the General Capabilities of the West Australian Curriculum. The tasks were purposely designed for students to learn about their new school and each other, while applying their technology skills. For eight weeks, the students joined a weekly online Teams session where we would discuss the activities they did the previous week and introduce the new tasks. Each week the students' skill set grew, with each feeling more confident to try tools within the Microsoft Office Suite as well as needing less support from their parents.

The activities that were created each had a specific purpose for its inclusion. Some tasks were specifically designed for the students to get to know each other, particularly in the first week with

an 'All About Me' task (students shared about their lives) and our 'Distance in a Day' task (students shared how many kilometres they travel in a day in comparison to how far a boarder travels). Our second category of task linked to STEM and we found that the high levels of cognitive engagement increased students' motivation in wanting to share what they had created. This worked especially well as the students became more comfortable sharing online to the others in the group. The third type of task linked to learning about their new school. In one, they needed to deep dive into the school's website to create a 'boarder's bucket list' of things they wanted to try next year. And in the other task, they needed to identify the values of the schools and share how they demonstrated those values. Our last type of activity linked to feedback. We were conscious of the importance making the transition process a positive one, so tasks were created to gain insight in to how the students were feeling, and the impact of the program. While students were only required to be online during the calls, ongoing conversations were had in Teams during the week and budding friendships were clearly being created.

4. Celebration:

In recognition of their new friends, knowledge and skills, the students, their buddies and parents participated in an online celebration. The celebration signalled the completion of the TransitUs program and highlighted the ongoing support for the students, families and community. A package containing letters from their buddies, their house mothers, small school gifts and a letter from the TransitUs coordinators was included. In addition, a letter from a current boarding parent was included for the participating families.

Feedback

The TransitUs program has been well supported by CEWA and its participating schools. It has received positive feedback from parents and students and demonstrated positivity toward all three categories of engagement. At each feedback point, the evidence suggests that students are feeling more confident in their:

- knowledge about life as a boarder and what to expect (behavioural engagement).
- ability to use the LEADing Lights technology platform and Microsoft O365 suite of tools to share, collaborate and communicate (cognitive engagement).
- relationships and connections that they have built with other (new and current) boarders in the program (emotional engagement).

"TransitUs has been great because it's given me more confidence about going to boarding school because I know more people who will be there and how it all works." (Future Year 7 boarder at St Brigid's College).

"I really wish we'd had something like this when I was new to boarding. It's good because you get to know the boarding

house from the perspective of the boarder and getting to know people beforehand." (Current Year 7 boarder at Mazenod College)

"I'm really pleased [my child] could be involved in TransitUs. He was a little apprehensive about going to boarding school but now he can't wait to go!" (Parent of a future boarder at Mazenod College).

Challenges

One of our biggest challenge this year has been the timeframe of the program. From inception to completion the total timeframe has been five months. During this time, consultation with external and internal stakeholders, governing bodies and families needed to happen quickly. As a result, some families were not able to participate.

When speaking to some schools, they spoke of a specific set of needs, particularly those who had Aboriginal students who came from community to boarding school. While we intended to differentiate the program to suit the varied needs, we didn't have students join the program. Our goal for next year is to extend the program to accommodate a broader range of specific needs.

Learnings

From the feedback we have collected thus far, some key learnings have been identified. One is the importance of the community visits. Families expressed gratitude regarding those in the program making the time and effort to travel to a convenient location for them. Often, having to travel to the city is difficult or costly for families, whereas a trip to a nearby town is much easier.

Secondly, bringing students together during the Forum was particularly beneficial. Students developed relationships with their cohort of boarders as well as their buddies. As this relationship was already developed, students were more at ease with each other online. Often, the students were already talking via messages in Teams before the weekly call commenced. As the program unfolded, it become apparent that this program would easily transfer to other transition contexts such as the transition from primary to secondary and from secondary to post-school destinations.

Looking Ahead

The pilot program will soon be completed and a full review and evaluation of its purpose, outcomes, program components and support will be undertaken. As we have several boarding schools in our system, schools will be able to use

a packaged version of our program, including and implementation toolkit that can be tailored to a school's needs. Doing this, has ensured a sustainable and scalable approach to the program, meaning it will go from a system led, school supported, to a school led and system supported program. Again, the system-wide digital platform including Teams will allow all schools implementing the program to be able to network, collaborate, share resources and share feedback and reflections during their implementation.

Conclusion

Based on the feedback gathered to date, the program has been a success. A time is scheduled to meet with those in the initial consultation process to complete a thorough analysis of the program to ensure the product provided to schools is effective, positive and tailorable to their school's needs.

Those who have participated in the program have enjoyed seeing the students grow in their technology skills, their knowledge of their new school and environments and develop friendships. We anticipate that TransitUs will have a positive impact on the students next year as they make their transition.

Nicole Adams
Digital Transformation School Program Manager
Catholic Education Western Australia
50 Ruislip Street
Leederville WA 6007
nicole.adams@cewa.edu.au
Ph: 6380 5168

Meredith Roe
Virtual School Program Manager
Catholic Education Western Australia
50 Ruislip Street
Leederville WA 6007
meredith.roe@cewa.edu.au
Ph: 6380 5168

TRANSITUS FORUM

Parent & Student feedback

100%
OF PARENTS BELIEVED THE TRANSITUS FORUM WAS VALUABLE FOR THEM

100%
OF PARENTS BELIEVED THE TRANSITUS FORUM WAS VALUABLE FOR THEIR CHILD

100% OF PARENTS
- Appreciated being able to meet other boarding parents
- Learnt enough about Teams and OneNote to help their child with the online progam
- Know how to access help for the online program if needed

100% of students learnt something new about their boarding school

AS A RESULT OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE TRANSITUS FORUM...

9 of the 10 students met new students from their boarding school

8 of the 10 students feel more confident about boarding school

7 of the 10 students made new friends

8 of the 10 students know how to use the technology for the online part

8 of the 10 students feel comfortable with the others they'll be online with

8 of the 10 students would be happy to catch a train with their friends

0 of the 10 students felt TransitUs made them worry more about boarding

City Week Program: Scaffolded Team-Based Learning and Community Engagement

Jarrod Johnson

Linda Westphalen

City Week is a scaffolded team-based research project undertaken by all students in Year 9 at Pulteney Grammar school. In groups, students choose a research topic, seek out and conduct interviews with people across the Adelaide CBD to develop their understanding of the topic, then present their findings in an eight-minute recorded documentary and a trade display. The displays are viewed on a public Expo night attended by parents, invited guests and the wider community. The students engage with the attendees to pitch their findings and delegates then vote on the best project. From the submitted documentaries, the best two from each class are shown at a Film Festival where a judging panel choose the winning entries. This authentic learning allows students to explore a topic, work under pressure, take control of their learning and present their findings to an audience beyond the classroom.

The Process

Getting Students Started

The City Week experience starts the same as any other problem-based learning task. At the end of Term 2, Year 9 students are brought together and the whole process is explained. Students then have the holidays to nominate who they want to work with, and these preferences are carefully managed to select groups of students, who will complement each other's skills, temperament, experience and interests.

Once in a group, the students brainstorm the topic that they want to research based around the theme for the year. Recent themes include "Redesigning Adelaide", "Contributing to the greater good of Adelaide", and "Impacting Adelaide", with the idea to create a theme that will allow the freedom to explore any area of interest, but also to give some direction to the research conducted throughout Term 3.

Scaffolding from school

Working on a large, problem-based learning task for an extended period of time with the same group of students requires scaffolding. Initially students attend two workshops to develop their group work and negotiation skills which fosters teamwork, delegation and ownership, and second conflict management training for when the best laid plans are in doubt.

To prepare the students for collecting their primary research, there are a series of expert lectures. For example, Dr. Christina Jarvis has travelled around the world and worked with many volunteer organisations in Africa where she spent time collecting stories. Her presentation explored the ideas behind storytelling, and making the interviewee comfortable in sharing their experiences. Libby Parker is a journalist who has interviewed musicians from all over the world and worked on a number of magazines and news productions. She took the students through a session on how to ask pertinent questions and conduct an interview in a positive and professional manner. Nathan Bazley, the host of Behind The News (BTN) gave a very enthusiastic performance on shot lists, camera angles and producing a documentary that delivers a coherent and interesting story. These training sessions were reinforced by the English teachers in class while studying documentary texts and techniques. The inclusion of outside experts gives the whole project an extra element of professionalism and the opportunity for the students to ask specific questions that perhaps may not have been able to be answered by their teachers.

Dealing with risk is a fundamental for any school, whether this relate to conducting scientific experiments, attending off-campus excursions or experiencing camps in remote locations. To prepare our students for travelling around Adelaide's CBD, they practice by selling badges to promote Legacy Week. The cohort of Year 9 students travels to Legacy SA, collects a donation kit and then moves to a designated corner in the CBD to sell badges. The students interact with the public and represent both the school and Legacy SA. The students all have their mobile phones with them, with their numbers recorded in the school database for emergencies, and roving staff move from group to group to check on their progress. This is the first trial towards City Week and it gives students the opportunity to get comfortable being on their own in the CBD, and the teachers a means to determine if students need extra support with their group.

In-class research development

The research topics the students come up with are diverse and generally represent a shared interest of the students in the group. Topics from 2017 include:

- How does building design affect wellbeing?
- How well does the city of Adelaide support people suffering from mental illness?
- How are people living below the poverty line supported?
- What is the impact of the returning veteran?
- How does Adelaide support victims of domestic violence?
- What support exists for a new immigrant to Adelaide?

It is very encouraging that although Pulteney Grammar is a high fee, independent school, the students still have a great connection to their community. They have strong beliefs about the rights of individuals and often choose topics that will develop their understanding and appreciation of their extended community. Their topics are devised by the students with encouragement from staff to help frame their guiding question. No topic has yet been rejected, although students with potentially confronting research are supported with counselling and strong mentoring from staff.

Once the topic has been selected, the students delve into the research that is available, thereby preparing themselves for interviews that will have real depth, not just questions that could be searched up on Google. Students draw upon their networks of family and friends, and the connections beyond these, to create opportunities to interview the people who will give the best research outcome. More than 130 scheduled interviews took place during City Week in 2017, with people including CEOs, Government Ministers, University Lecturers, famous sports celebrities, volunteers, migrants, homeless people, and members of the community from all socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Generally, the first interview will be the parent of someone within the group, which gives the team confidence with their subsequent interviews. Interviews are organised via email, phone calls, and personal connections to take place during City Week, with most interviews booked weeks in advance. However, a great number of interviews arise through connections that develop early in City Week. One team went

to interview a member of council, who then put them in touch with a number of other people with whom the students would not have realised were related to their project. This development of their personal network is a powerful skill that will become more and more useful as the student progresses through their studies and into the working world.

In the lead up to City Week, the English teachers work on a documentary unit of learning for the term with the students, because the final assessed piece is the group's City Week documentary. The scaffolding that takes place includes developing shot lists, storyboards, camera angles, capturing overlays, and techniques for editing the final piece. Students design their entire storyboard before City Week, with all their expected interviews planned, and the whole documentary basically scripted. Usually most of these plans change as the week progresses: interviews are added, information is discovered that takes the story down a different path, or sometimes because the footage leads to a new angle. The students are engaged in this form of skill development as it is interesting and authentic. They know that if they make a mistake it will have a very real impact in their final piece and how they present. Just getting an interview recorded is sometimes a challenge as students arrive to an office and then need to ask permission to film, set up their camera equipment, test the microphones before they even start their interview. One interview that took place with a busy CEO finished with the students realising that they had forgotten to start the recording. However, the executive was so impressed with the questions that the students were asking and

the depth of the prior research that he was happy to re-record the piece. This is not always the case. Sometimes an interviewee will ask not to be recorded electronically. The students then have to take notes and create the answers in their documentary through clever camera angles, cuts and verbal feedback from the group. This is all part of working dynamically iteratively and overcoming obstacles.

City Week Preparation

Sending students unaccompanied into the Adelaide CBD for up to six hours a day means that there is a high element of risk. If something goes wrong, there is no teacher around to help. Therefore, the school has put into place as many strategies as possible to reduce this level of risk.

Of the 95 students involved in 2017, only four did not have a mobile phone that they keep with at all times during the day. The school records each student's phone number into the school database so that any student can be reached at any time. Additionally, if there is an emergency, the students can use their phone to immediately call for police, ambulance, the school and their parents. The school is also currently in the process of working with a company to track student phones in real time so that we can locater where they are, and with a geofence in place, identify if the students have stepped outside of the city boundary. This is expected to be in place by next year. Additionally, students must always remain with their group and never split up.

City Week takes place in the second to last week, Week 9, of Term 3. Before leaving campus, each group must fill out a sign-

out sheet which identifies the members of their group, the main contact phone number, where they are heading to, and when they expect to return. This must be signed by one of the leadership team to approve their excursion and students are encouraged to go out for at least an hour. This is to encourage teams to be careful in their planning and to identify clear reasons for their excursion, and not just heading out for lunch. Once their paperwork is signed, they head to the Middle School Front Office and, as a group, are sighted by the receptionist and their form is placed on the City Week board to track all groups. The students also sign out electronically on the school system, so in the event of an emergency, we can identify exactly who should be on campus.

During the time the students are off campus, members of the leadership team will randomly contact groups via SMS to check on their progress. Students will call to rearrange their time of return if an interview running late, public transport is missed, or if, as sometimes happens, one interview leads to an introduction and a follow up interview. This process of giving the students accountability for their actions is a key point to City Week, and fosters responsibility and independence. This is continued in Year 12 when students have the option to leave campus if they have no classes, taking care to record their whereabouts in the school database. The freedom to act as an adult and independent learner is highly valued by the students and prepares them for Higher Education.

"City Week"

During City Week, Week 9 of Term 3, all lessons are cancelled

for Year 9 students. Classrooms remain open and staff maintain their normal lesson schedule to act as supervisors and to support the development of the students' documentaries and trade displays. At some stages of the week, all twenty-five groups may be off campus so supervision is combined, allowing staff time to complete reports, plan lessons and work on alternate integrated projects. Other times, all students are on campus and these rooms are a hive of activity as students continue their research, build their booths and edit their films. This is one of the most interesting times to visit groups as they always have stories to tell about the interviews they have conducted, the footage they have captured, or the free stuff that may have been donated towards their trade display by an engaged participant. Cancelling a week of lessons was originally difficult for staff due to the pressures of curriculum, but the success of City Week has clearly emphasised the importance of conducting large, authentic, problem-based tasks that are student directed. Each year we try to integrate more aspects of the curriculum into the City Week project with subjects using the final product to demonstrate learning in context.

Scavenger Hunt

City Week itself begins with a short presentation and then a ninety-minute Scavenger Hunt on the Monday morning. Photos have been taken of restaurants, clothing stores, statues, famous places, and street art and put together into a series of booklets. Each booklet contains a map of Adelaide with a path marked out that criss-crosses the CBD. The story goes that a member of staff has walked around and taken photos and

the path represents where they walked. All photos can be found somewhere on the trail although not all trails contain a photo. Each booklet is also slightly dissimilar with a different set of four statues, shops, restaurants and street art. Therefore, groups do not benefit from working together, as one group may find all their photos on one trail while another group may find none. When a group identifies the place in the photo, they must take a photo with all members of the group standing in front of the waypoint (minus the camera person). All groups must return by the end of the ninety-minutes or they will score a zero for the activity. On returning, a staff member checks through the photos and ticks off all the checkpoints that have been collected. Generally, each picture gets a score, but collecting a set, for example: all five squares of Adelaide CBD, scores double. Additionally, as each group arrives they get to choose the site of their trade display from the map of the final event. Students need to balance colleting as many photos as possible, with returning on time, and getting a preferred booth location. Students that split up during this activity incur an automatic zero for the activity, potentially lose their freedom to leave campus for the day, and are counselled as to the dangers of leaving group members behind. To check on students during this time, an SMS is sent to each group with the instructions: "Welcome to City Week, hope you are doing well. Please send the last photo you have taken in reply to this text. Mr. Johnson". This is a method to check that the groups are all still together as all members should be in the photo, and is also a way of collecting photos for printing.

Pulteney Money

Pulteney money is the currency used during City Week for rewarding achievement in activities and for students to spend on hiring services and items, and paying for consumables. Initially, each class was given an allocation of coloured card and stationary, but this was easily wasted as there was no cost to the students. Pulteney money was introduced to promote ownership and budgeting. Each currency note was edited to incorporate the faces of leadership with the higher value reflecting the position in leadership. The principal is, of course, on the one-hundred-dollar note. These notes were printed single-sided in colour, laminated and placed in a locked safe until distribution. Showmanship is important and gives a sense of realism for the students. The tuck shop was also informed, lest some Pulteney money be used to purchase food with fake money. It was found that students were much thriftier with budgeting their spending on coloured card and stationary. In the first year of implementing Pulteney money, actual costs to the school for stationary was quartered and there was little to no wasted resources found in the classrooms. With Pulteney money as the currency, students earned money via the Scavenger Hunt, through

the morning challenge activities and also their project work leading up to City Week was graded and then converted to spending money. This money was spent on their trading booth, with higher costs for places near the door or for powered booths, on tables for their booths, and in purchasing specific supplies from the Art rooms. Often in schools students will head to the Art room for paint, papier mache, string or other consumables. Using the Pulteney money allowed the Art Department to track what had been used and to put a value on it. At the end of City Week, the Art Department simply took their Pulteney money back to the Middle School and their budget was credited to make up for the extra expenses.

Tours

During City Week, a series of enrichment tours were planned for the students. These were trips to places that may cost money and that students would not have the opportunity to organise for themselves. Tours of Adelaide Oval, Haigh's Chocolate Factory, Adelaide Town Hall, Adelaide Festival Theatre, Adelaide Town Markets, to name a few, were booked and students signed up to attend one session. This is a way of making sure that every student gets the opportunity to travel off campus at least once and to initiate some research. Initially, the students just

had to attend the tour that was booked for the year. However, it was soon apparent that many of the groups found no connection to the tour with their research question. To accommodate the wide range of topics, a large number of small tours were identified and students chose the tour that either augmented their research or were something that they just found interesting.

Mentoring

City Week is a balancing act for students between conducting interviews, taking footage for their documentary, designing their trade display, attending tours, budgeting their money and trying to fit in lunch breaks to their favourite café or food store. Some groups work through this successfully, while others find the pressures difficult and conflicts arise. Sometimes it is trivial, such as where to go for lunch, or what colour the background of the trade display should be, but other times there may be a splintering of a group or the breaking up of a strong friendship. The staff are prepared to support the students and each group has a mentor who has chosen to work with the group, based on their research topic. The mentor's role is to encourage the students to work together and plan their research. In the lead up to City Week, students meet with their mentor who normally shares a passion for their topic and often has connections to the industry. During City Week, the team meet with the mentor regularly and explain where they are up to, what their next strategy is and how the group is working. The mentor may also act as a mediator for groups when there are conflicts and report back to leadership if necessary. At the end of City Week, the

students write a Thank-you card for their mentor. Mentors nominate themselves for the position and choose the group they want to work with. Interestingly, the mentors are often non-teaching staff. This may include the school treasurer, groundsman, or community relations manager, and also draws on staff from other parts of the school, such as the Early Learning Centre. The strong sense of community at Pulteney means that all staff want to participate in this big event and normally the mentor list is easily filled. This extended mentor group also gives the students the opportunity to work with staff that they may not previously had any contact with, and so extends their understanding of the breadth of the school community.

Culmination of work

Trade Display

Following City Week, the students work towards preparing their Trade Display for the City Week Expo. This occurs on the Wednesday night in the last week of term. During Tuesday morning, 56 display boards are delivered to the school and these are erected in the Hall to form a wall around the outside and four freestanding letter Y arrangement in the centre. Groups in the middle have four boards, (1800mm high x 1200mm wide) of space to present their work. Groups around the wall have three boards of space, but have power to their booth. All material is attached to the boards using Velcro, which allows for easy placement, repositioning and pack down. Students design their booth to showcase their research and deliver their findings. The students are given a double lesson on the Wednesday to put together their

booth; however, students normally spend time after school Tuesday, as well as recess and lunch time putting the finishing touches to their display. Generally, students spend an extra two to three hours of their spare time working to improve their booth, demonstrating their desire to produce a great piece of work and the total engagement they have with the project. During this time, other classes in the school make time to visit the Hall to see the booths developing. We have found that, although the Expo night is the showcase, allowing the younger students the opportunity to see the Year 9 students in action gives them a much more realistic idea of the depth of work that is involved in this large, collaborative, problem-based task. Many students go away and start planning what they want to produce and who they want to work with, years before they have the chance to participate in the event. Meanwhile, the Year 9 students get to discuss their booth in an informal way with students from the school, which helps them to work on their pitch to visitors, identify elements that may be missing from their trade display and gain confidence in their understanding of their topic.

Many groups create a theme for their display, such as:

- A crime scene, for the group investigating crime in Adelaide

- A nightclub, for the group looking at the Adelaide music scene

- A rainforest showcasing sustainable Adelaide

- A war memorial addressing the impact of the returning veteran

- Two contrasting office spaces looking at the impact of building design on wellbeing

On the night of the Expo, students arrive by 5:45pm to make final touches to their trade display before attendees enter at 6pm. More than three hundred people, including parents, invited guests, mentors and staff spend ninety minutes walking through the Expo interacting with the students in the twenty-five booths.

As the City Week Expo has developed, the layout has become more elaborate, going from two boards covered with A4 sheets of paper and static information, which attendees would stand and read, to the four boards of space used now. Students now put up less formally written material as a static display, and instead use large cardboard posters, and large font, containing pertinent information, quotes or statistics in a more interactive mode. This tends to draw the audience to the booth and allows the students to engage in conversation to discuss their findings. This change has seen the students deliver a much more interesting presentation, and they have a greater understanding of their topic. Parents have commented on the amazing depth and investment the students have of their research.

Once the attendees have completed a tour of the room, they cast a vote of the best three booths on the night. The votes are tallied and the 'winners' of the Expo are announced at a subsequent assembly.

Pack down occurs on the Thursday morning. The use of Velcro fastenings in all of the material from the booths enables pack down within fifteen minutes. From the voting, the top three displays are identified and the substance from these booths is transferred to three

permanent boards in the corridors of the Middle School building. This work is displayed for a year until the next City Week. This permanent arrangement rewards the winning groups, helps to set the benchmark for the next year, gives inspiration to younger students and showcases City Week for any visitors to the Middle School.

Documentary

At the same time as the students are generating their Trade Displays, they are also compiling all of their interviews into a coherent eight-minute documentary. This is a new aspect to City Week that initially started as a one-minute pitch or advert to encourage delegates to visit a group's booth. This was then adopted by the English faculty and scaffolded by incorporating a documentary unit into the Year 9 curriculum in Term 3, with the final piece of assessment the City Week documentary. Each group submits their documentary to their class teacher who grades them all, and the students in the class then vote on which two they believe are the best in the class. The class winners are then submitted to a Film Festival which takes place on the last afternoon of Term 3 in the Hall. Two of the films are screened during a Middle School assembly to showcase what the students have produced. Following this, the Year 7 and Year 8 students are dismissed to lunch, while the Year 9 students stay on for a sit down lunch and screening of the remaining documentaries as a Film Festival. A judging panel is also present, and includes the Head of English, and invited guests. In 2017, Dr. Christina Jarvis and Libby Parker returned to see what the students had produced, incorporating what they had learnt from their lectures. This team of

assessors reviews the documentaries while the students watch the films from all classes and selects the top three, which are announced on the day. The winners are announced at a subsequent assembly. Previously, the documentaries were basically as string of recordings of interviews, stitched together with some introductions of the interviewees, background of the topic and some connecting questions. With the inclusion of the documentary experts to the student learning, the standards of the documentaries have been lifted to produce recordings of exceptional quality that, through clever camerawork, overlays and dynamic cuts, tell a coherent story about the group's topic. This opportunity to demonstrate their learning in an authentic way, not just to a single examiner, but to a much wider audience exemplifies and validates the reasoning behind City Week.

Although allowing all the students to see the best documentaries is great, and showcases success, one downfall is that the parents do not get to see what their children have worked so hard to produce. All films are uploaded to a hosted space and a link to their video is provided to each group, which allows parents, friends and interviewees the opportunity to see the finished product; however, this does not allow all parents to see all videos in 2018. Therefore, we plan to run the Film Festival on the same night as the City Week Expo on the floor above the Trade Displays in the new Middle School building. This will enable parents to choose which cinema they want to attend during each session of screening. This will take place in the hour prior to the Expo so that parents can then move downstairs and engage with the students from the documentaries. An enormous amount of work goes

into generating the Trade Displays, but represents only half of the work produced by the students in a single week. The documentary festival planned will address the other aspect.

Debrief – Post-submission

In recent years, we have found that once City Week is over, students have hosted the Expo and submitted their documentary there is a feeling of loss or anti-climax within students after such a busy, stressful time in their lives. Therefore, on the Thursday, immediately following the City Week Expo, the students go through a process of debriefing. A panel visits each class and one by one, each group reflects on how their group went during the term and City Week.

The three questions that are formally asked are:

- "What did your group do well?"
- "What could your group have done better?"
- "What advice can you give next year's Year 9 cohort and/or the teaching team?"

The reflective process is recorded using Swivl. Notes are also taken, and students are encouraged to be as honest and open as possible. This formal process gives the students a chance to celebrate their success and allows the panel to support the group's development as they wind down from the excitement of City Week. This process of reflection enables staff to draw out issues that may have arisen in the group that were not previously discussed and, in some instances, counselling is used to repair some relationships. The advice that students make for

the next year's group are noted, as well as the suggestions for how staff can improve the process. The top groups are also invited to present at the introduction to the new Year 9 students in the following year.

Assessment Modes

There are many modes of assessment that are taking place throughout the term and City Week. Generally, assessment at schools is often through a test or submission of a formal piece of work. However, the whole process of City Week delivers many forms of formal and informal assessment and many forms of feedback. Ultimately, assessment reports to students and parents how each is progressing and to determine their level of understanding.

In the realisation of City Week there are many different means of assessment and feedback that are taking place to inform the parents and students of their progress by:

- Parents through discussion
- Parents and invited guests through votes
- Parents through viewing booths – this is authentic assessment as the parents can compare their child's booth with others

- Interviewees as part of an interview
- Peers through viewing of trade displays – the Year 9s on the night, and all other Middle Year levels before the Expo during development of the booth
- English teachers through traditional marking of the Documentary
- Peers through watching documentaries
- Humanities teachers through traditional marking of the Research project
- Assistant Head of Middle School through marking of trade display
- Self and peers through the debriefing process

To have so much depth of analysis in one large, problem-based learning task that is integrated across many subjects, means that authentic learning is embedded within the process and develops students who are independent, forward-thinking learners able to celebrate success.

City Week relies on a team of teachers who are supportive, and are involved in choosing groups, scaffolding learning, providing opportunities for students to grow via 'productive failure', developing independence interdependence, planning and organisational skills, risk management and assessment, communication and reporting, media and marketing. City Week is an investment in our Middle School students with far-reaching learning opportunities that travel into Senior Years of learning.

Jarrod Johnson
Jarrod.Johnson@pulteney.sa.edu.au

Linda Westphalen
Linda.Westphalen@adelaide.edu.au

For more information about the City Week Project a YouTube video can be accessed from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIFeoyv5hW0

or
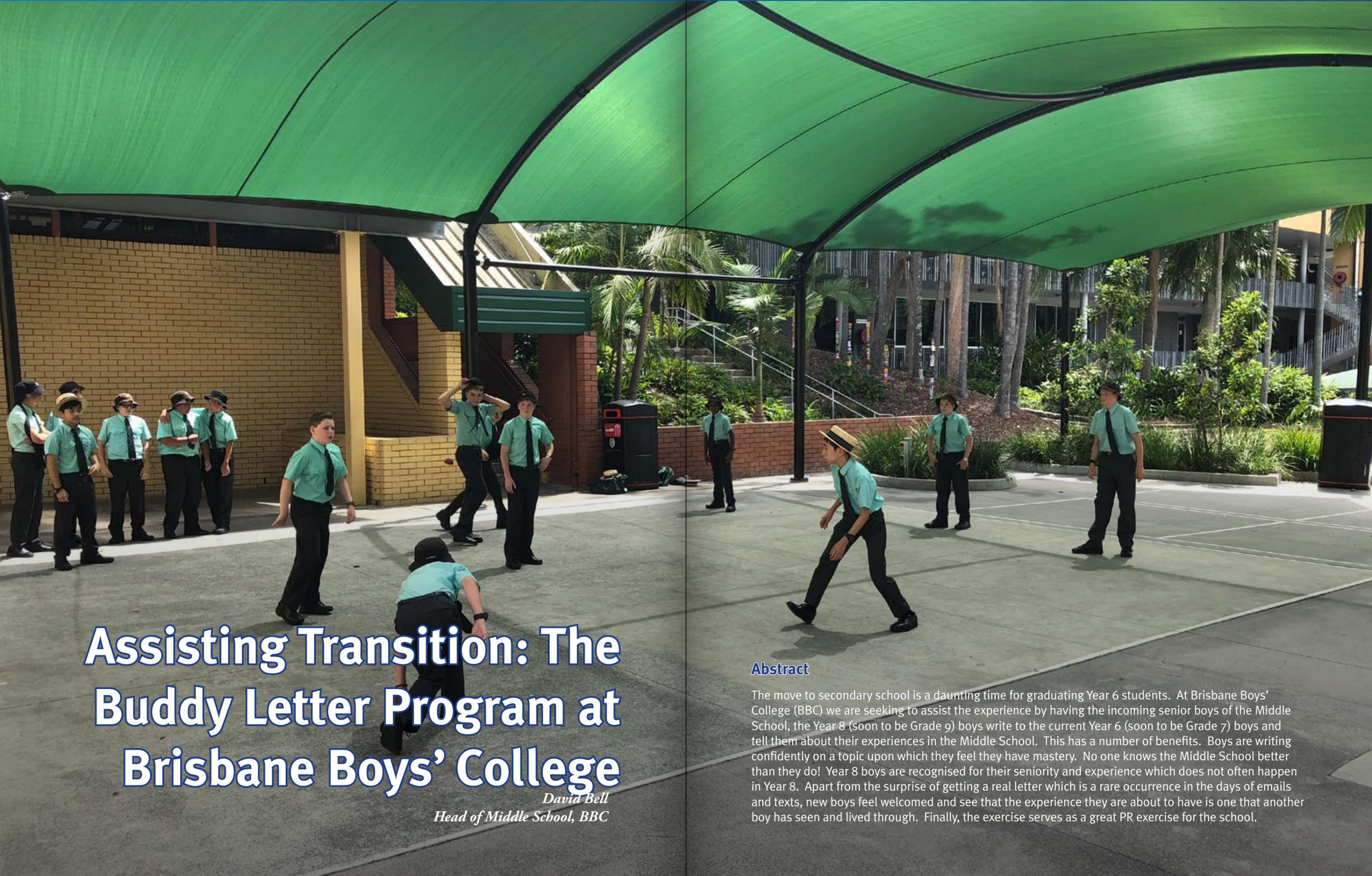
Assisting Transition: The Buddy Letter Program at Brisbane Boys' College

David Bell
Head of Middle School, BBC

Abstract

The move to secondary school is a daunting time for graduating Year 6 students. At Brisbane Boys' College (BBC) we are seeking to assist the experience by having the incoming senior boys of the Middle School, the Year 8 (soon to be Grade 9) boys write to the current Year 6 (soon to be Grade 7) boys and tell them about their experiences in the Middle School. This has a number of benefits. Boys are writing confidently on a topic upon which they feel they have mastery. No one knows the Middle School better than they do! Year 8 boys are recognised for their seniority and experience which does not often happen in Year 8. Apart from the surprise of getting a real letter which is a rare occurrence in the days of emails and texts, new boys feel welcomed and see that the experience they are about to have is one that another boy has seen and lived through. Finally, the exercise serves as a great PR exercise for the school.

Introduction

I will open this article with an admission. The 2018 Year 8 boys at BBC have not yet done this task. They will be doing it towards the end of this year to assist our new boys coming into Year 7, 2019. How can I be so confident it will work? Easy. I used the same process at another Brisbane Great Public Schools Association (GPS) school in a previous Middle School role and it worked well. In those days, no boys had their own laptops and class bookings had to be made in the 'computer labs' – remember them? The secret was to have boys write to a template. This assisted the process by prompting the author to concentrate on his experiences and as the supervising teacher, I moved around checking and tweaking letters where need be. When the work was finished, the letter was printed and ultimately sent. The ease of logistics was that virtually all classes in that Middle School were of the same number. It was very easy to administer this project as all incoming boys in 7A

were buddied with the incoming 9A boys, 7B with 9B and so on.

So what did the template look like? I provide a general outline of one below which can be adapted to any school setting. No major expectations were placed on the writers although dotted lines on the template suggested relative amounts of information required in each area. For obvious reasons the letter was not to be too brief as it would convey an uncaring tone but neither was a manifesto required. The main rule of thumb developed was that the letter attempt be completed within an A4 sheet of paper.

The salutation was left blank at the top of the letter, simply, "Dear," so a name could be hand written to give a personal touch. This was done by me as when pairing the 9A- 7A buddies and recording who was with who. I kept the sign off simple, with "Yours sincerely," and had the boy type his name below this so the reader was spared the need for a forensic handwriting specialist to decipher his handwriting.

The first paragraph was about the author's personal details. His name, his class, what primary school he went to and where he lived. If he was a boarder, he would mention his property or district and say what sort of agricultural focus his family had had or, if he was from the local town, what his family did there. Boys are pastorally allocated Houses so it is important to indicate the House and Housemaster and what he sees is positive about House membership. If there is an Old Boy connection, boys should mention their relatives who have backgrounds at the school because this helps to strengthen community ties. Travel to school

is a useful component of this part of the letter as oftentimes new day boys will be forced into a new level of independence very quickly which may involve a combination of public transport options. Demystifying this can be reassuring for new boys to hear.

The next paragraph is about what the author does during the school day. It lets the author speak of their favourite subjects and why they like them. Further, it lets them speak of what they do at morning tea and lunch breaks because this is often a concern for new boys. If the school has expectations about co-curricular, spiritual or service involvement, the next paragraph outlines the author's connection with these and the reasons they enjoy that pursuit. It does not matter that a letter from a mad keen rower or rugby player goes to a chess playing musician. The opportunity to understand and value diversity of talent is a strong cultural marker at BBC. If the author has any advice to pass on in the relevant areas, he is encouraged to do so in order to further personalise the letter.

A further paragraph explores some reminiscing by the author about their own time as a new boy transitioning from Year 6 into Year 7. What were their concerns at the time? How did they work around them? With their hard won experience, if they had a tip(s) they would now pass to the Year 7 version of themselves, what would it be? Invariably, many concerns felt by the incoming students will have been addressed by the older boys and this will help to normalise the feelings of anxiety and hopefully dissipate them.

The penultimate paragraph is about solving problems specific to a Week

1 experience as a new boy. Boys would frame this along the lines of, "the three main issues I had in my first week were…." and then the author provides the solutions for these. New boys are also advised who the author feels is/are the best people to see at the school if they have an issue they feel they cannot solve. Whilst this is essentially about directing their peers towards recommended help, it was also a good indicator to me as to a boy's version of the efficacy of support services/ personnel on campus. I will almost guarantee that operating combination locks and reading school timetables will be at least two of the three areas mentioned.

The final paragraph is very important. Whilst there is an expectation that the cheery, informative letter will, to this point, have covered almost all of

the transition issues, there remains one final component. In the sign off, the author offers his new buddy a chance to make contact to discuss any part of the letter or to develop and elaborate on any points and this needs to be done in a manner which ensures the new boy can get in touch. Is it via social media or a text or a phone call? Boys should not forget to indicate whether they will be away and uncontactable over Christmas as the worst crime a new Year 9 can commit is to write this letter and spruik his willingness to help and then not respond if called or to be generally incommunicado. At my previous school, local wisdom held that a consistent 25% of Year 7 boys made contact upon receipt of the letter. The 75% who did not chose not to for various reasons. Many already had older brothers at

the school and "already knew" the school. Some boys were too shy. Some boys forgot. Some say they did not feel they needed it and all are valid responses.

It is hoped that the use of this sort of transition contact can best assist the new cohort to feel happy and connected which means a better start for the new boys and a calmer start for key pastoral staff and parents. With relationships being such an important consideration in the Middle School, the incoming Year 7s who already have an older 'buddy' are off to a good start.

David Bell
dbell@bbc.qld.edu.au

Continuity of Learning and Curriculum: Is This the Missing Factor from your Transition Processes?

Joanne Gilmore

St Michael's College

I looked forward to being able to be challenged with my learning.

I would like to tell them about how much effort I am willing to put in my learning and behaviour at St Michaels College.

The way I like to learn e.g. hands on instead of listening for a teacher talk for ages

(Year 8 Students talking about what they wanted secondary teachers to know about them)

Change is an inevitable part of life as children mature and the transition from primary to secondary schools is regarded as one of the most difficult of these changes (Zeedyk, 2003). For some students, transition can be really difficult due to a discontinuity in educational practice and social structures. Transition is not an event it is a process. A useful analogy is to view transition as a series of bridges (Howe, 2011). These bridges are referred to as the bureaucratic, social, curriculum,

pedagogical and management of learning bridge (Howe, 2011). Research (Evangelou, 2008; Galton; 2003; McGee, 2003) suggests that since the initial metaphor was coined by Barber (1999) many schools have the first two bridges in place well but there is scope for improvement in the other three.

Globally there are concerns about the perceived 'drop' in student achievement and this has been attributed, in part, to unsuccessful transition processes. Research in

the UK (Evangelou, 2008) and New Zealand (Mullins, 2000) turns focus to the pedagogical implications for this. Barber (1999) observed that most students begin secondary school with enthusiasm and that the drop in academic achievement is more likely attributed to a lack of 'knowledge sharing' between primary and secondary phases and that low academic expectations are placed upon the new students who then report boredom (McGee, 2003). Citing the work of

Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell and Mockler, (2007) the Department of Education in Victoria notes in their transition framework research paper (2016) that current thinking is that students in this phase do not need a 'slightly upscale' primary curriculum nor a 'downscaled 'secondary curriculum.

Successful transition is one whereby students are able to seamlessly shift from primary to secondary school whilst continuing to learn and develop (Evangelou, 2008). Surely, there is food for thought here? Put simply if the core business of a school is learning why is this bridge the least well built?

Context

I recently completed a research project for my Masters of Education at University of South Australia and chose to focus on this issue due to changes looming on the horizon for my current workplace setting. In 2019, all year 7 students in Catholic schools in South Australia will transition into secondary school. Catholic Education South Australia has made this commitment, as currently South Australia is the only state where Year 7 undertake their education in a primary setting (Catholic Education South Australia, 2016) . Clearly this change provides an opportunity to examine current transition processes with a view to enhancing learning outcomes for students.

The Research Process

The study was conducted throughout early 2017 at St Michael's College in the western suburbs of Adelaide. At the time of the research, the college was divided across two separate campuses, the primary campus (R-7) catering exclusively for boys only and the

secondary campus (8-12) is co-educational. The research project investigated the current transition process with a focus upon continuity of learning for students. The data used was from student, staff and year 8 students who had been active participants in a recent transition process. The research approach was designed to provide a snapshot of the current transition

process and used a mixed method approach that included:

- A survey of Year 8 students in the first weeks after transition.

- a survey of teachers across both primary and secondary campuses

- semi structured interviews with leadership

Table 1
A brief overview of the current transition process

Pre Transition		Post Transition
Term 3	**Term 4**	**Term 1**
Cluster Meetings- principals/deputies Principals Tours	Leadership Visits to feeder school including Learning Support staff Transition day Visits- students Additional activities – St Michael's College Primary students. Data and Information sharing organised by Catholic Education South Australia Parent Information Evening	Orientation Day 1 and 2 – modified timetable Parent Welcome Evening – Camp

Table 1 provides an overview of the current transition processes already in place. The project examined many aspects of transition however the findings presented here are those that particularly relate to continuity of learning.

The first aspect explored was the attitude of teachers towards the mandated change of moving Year 7 from primary to secondary school (CESA). Teachers were surveyed across the primary and secondary campuses and 79% were in favour of the change. The reasons for this pointed overwhelmingly towards matters related to learning such as academic readiness, ACARA, national standards and "bringing South Australia in line". There were also some teachers who articulated the personal and social capabilities and level of maturity of those in Year 7. However, 14% of teachers were undecided and wanted more information. The question then

arose that if the vast majority of teaching staff were in favour of the change what are their perceptions of how well students make the current transition at Year 8. What are the specific areas of concern? Where can we make improvement?

Research conducted in the UK was then used to develop a series of transition indicators. The following table highlights a holistic picture of successful transition. Students rated themselves across a range of successful transition indicators. Table 1 below shows the individual items on which students were asked to rate themselves using the scale 1 – does not describe me , 2-somewhat describes me, 3-describes me , 4 -describes me well, 5- describes me extremely well As outlined in the table these indicators are derived from the EPSEE project (Evangelou, et al., 2008)

Table 2
Successful Transition Indicators Overview

Successful Transition Indicators	Survey questions	Content analysis –Themes and Aggregate Index
Developing new friendships and improving self-esteem and confidence Settling so well in school life that parents have no concerns	I have lots of friends I feel more confident now I am at secondary school I find it easy to settle in well I know who to ask for advice I have joined lots of clubs and activities at secondary school	Personal and Social Capabilities
Experiencing curriculum continuity Showing an interest in school and school work	I can manage my homework tasks I am willing to learn I make good use of class time I am interested in what I am learning I am pleased with my progress in learning	Academic Readiness
Getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease Institutional adjustment	I am in the routine of wearing the school uniform I am good at organising my PE kits and other equipment I can use the locker system I am good at getting to class on time	Organisational Aspects

Figure 1

Successful Transition Indicators
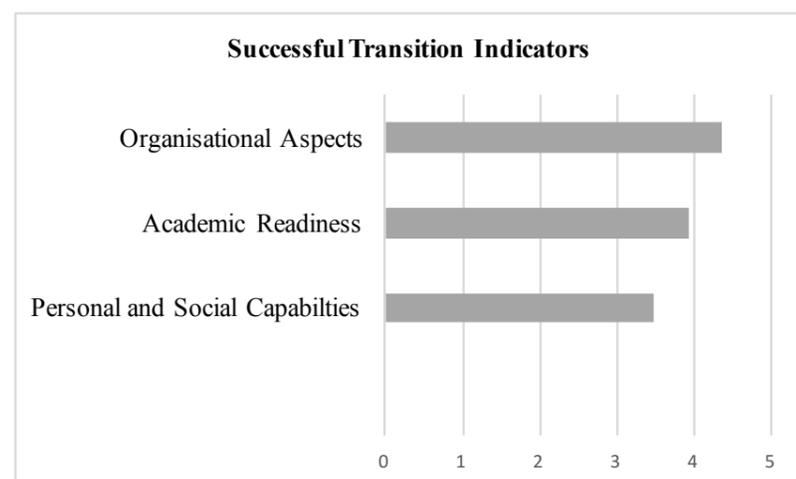
Means scale
1 does not describe me
2 describes me slightly well
3 describes me moderately well
4 describes me very well
5 describes me extremely well.

Taking into account that this data was collected early in Term 1 Figure 1 suggests students feel more in control of new routines and organisational aspects of school life than personal and social capabilities at this point in transition. Ultimately, continuity of learning is just one aspect that signifies transition has been successful for students. Students should feel prepared and challenged, and they should be able to build upon the progress they have made at primary school.

The research further identified *continuity of learning* for students during the transition process as including the subjects, skills, new routines and interactions. Students were asked, with regards to transition to St Michael's College, *what were you looking forward to? What were you worried about?* Responses from students were focused on matters associated with learning. Many students responded with a mixture of comments such as fresh start, independence and teachers. Students from year 8 in term 1 commented that:

I was looking forward to having a change from primary school and getting used to a new school culture. I want to follow on from primary school and work hard at a new school.

I looked forward to being able to be challenged with my learning.

The students who attend St Michael's College come from a wide variety of feeder schools and this is often a reason that is cited

as being a barrier to continuity of learning. Primary schools are not homogenous and the experience of students is varied. One participant commented that:

For the bigger feeder schools I go to the class before we meet with the teachers and present to them more about St Michael's. So, what the place looks like what subjects we offer, the uniform. So just kind of they get to see me as a face and they know my name.

If students were concerned about learning was this actually a focus of the transition process? The teacher perception about continuity of learning as a focus was ambivalent only 56% of respondents believing that continuity of learning might be taken into account during current transition processes.

The interviews with staff in leadership positions explored the notion of continuity in learning in more depth. Respondents commented upon the need for collaboration and discussion of curriculum matters. It was perceived that the large variety of feeder schools made this a difficult task and that primarily the focus in current practice was on the personal and social aspects of transition.

For example one participant commented that:

It wouldn't just be our school .Just generally it (transition) has had a pastoral focus. The academic focus has been pretty much adhoc.

Leadership highlighted that current transition processes cater for organisation and structural needs of students and that as leaders acknowledged continuity of learning during transition was an area for future development. This is echoed in the following comments:

I feel that there needs to be more collaboration and discussion just to look at the units we teach in Year 7 and the units in year 8, as I am sure there is overlapping going on.

But I think that would be really great particularly with 7/8 as the curriculum band we really should be getting together and having a consistence and continuity in programming and planning.

The research then turned to an examination of what students actually thought about the continuity of the learning in terms

of their subjects. The interview data also highlighted aspects of the transition between the primary and secondary campus being advantageous for those students. Three of the interviewees reporting the St Michael's College boys have a range of advantages. They commented that:

Our boys have a basic advantage in that they know the school the routines, behaviour expectations, uniform and they get to see the school from De La Salle day. So all those things give our boys a bit more of an advantage.

We are in a unique position here because we an R- 12 school even though we are two campuses. It is an r-12 school so we have fairly good communication between the two campuses.

Table 3 below compares each feeder school against the aggregate of the transition indicators in index form. The chart denotes that there is not a large degree of difference between schools. Students from 'Other' feeder schools rated the lowest in academic readiness which suggests a gap in transition arrangements for these students.

Table 3
Successful Transition Indictors - Aggregate Index (Means)

| Feeder School	Agg transit	Personal Social	Academic Readiness	Organisational Aspects
St Michaels	3.9374	3.3455	4.0303	4.4364
Feeder school 1	4.1944	3.8200	4.1833	4.5800
Feeder school 2	3.8367	3.3200	3.8500	4.3400
Other	3.8213	3.4435	3.8116	4.2087

Interviews with the leadership team implied that the range of experience at primary school is a factor in successful transition. The following is an exemplar of the general feeling amongst the leadership group:

In my conversations with Year 8's I ask 'what do you think of high school so far? What's different? And they will say "it's horrible my primary school didn't teach me anything and they have made that assumption and judgement based on what they did last year. Whereas kids from other schools say "it's easy I think my primary school prepared me really well. But we don't monitor that aspect of learning per se.

To explore aspects of academic readiness further the core subjects of Maths, English, Science and ICT were examined in more depth, and students were invited to consider how the subjects compared between year 7 and 8 in terms of interest, easiness of the work and whether they felt prepared. Figure 2 below shows 47.6 % of students find Science very interesting followed by English (33%) ICT (19% and Maths 15%. At the extreme ends of the scale, 19.6% of students were not interested in Maths and 33% of students were extremely interested in Science.
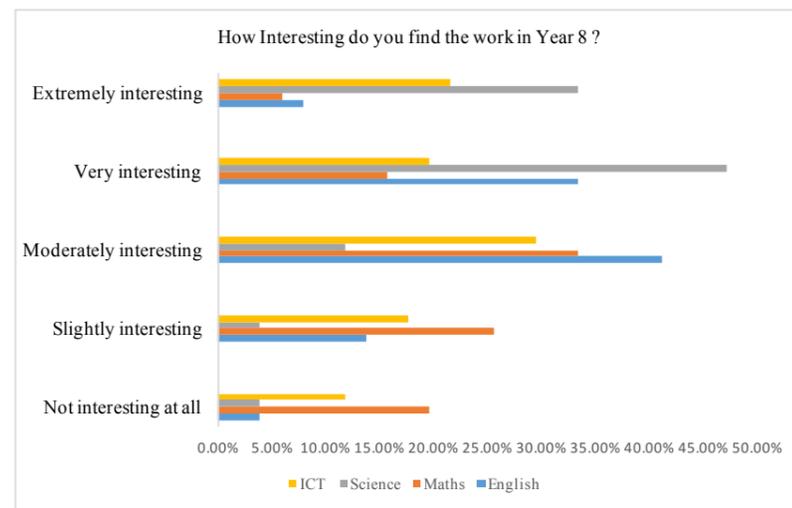
Figure 2

Valid % (Scales **1**- not interesting, **2**- slightly interesting, **3**-moderately interesting, **4**- very interesting, **5**-extremely interesting)
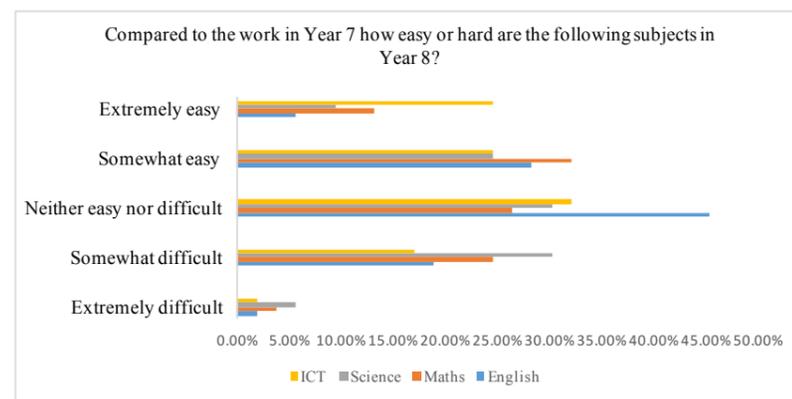
Figure 3

Sliding Scales Extremely Easy – Extremely Difficult -Valid %

The most desirable indicator in terms of successful transition is that subjects are neither easy nor difficult. Figure 3 shows on a subject basis that 45% of students rated English in this scale and ICT was rated as this by 32% of students. Science was rated as somewhat difficult by 30% of students and Maths was rated as somewhat easy 28%.

Table 4 shows correlations between the variables of preparation in Year 7 and the interest level in specific subjects studied at St Michael's College.

Table 4
Correlation Year 7 Preparation and Interest

		English	Maths	Science	ICT
English	Pearson Correlation	1	.517**	.445**	.425**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.001
	N	53	53	53	53
Maths	Pearson Correlation	.517**	1	.353**	.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.010	.185
	N	53	53	53	53
Science	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.353**	1	.459**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.010		.001
	N	53	53	53	53
ICT	Pearson Correlation	.425**	.185	.459**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.185	.001	
	N	53	53	53	53

The results suggest that feeling prepared in English assists with interest in other subjects.

The following table shows the correlation between the variables of academic readiness, Year 7 preparation and ease/difficulty of specific subjects.

Table 5
Correlations - ease, academic readiness and Year 7 preparation

		Extent of academic readiness	English	Maths	Science	ICT
Extent of academic readiness	Pearson Correlation	1	.477**	.150	-.128	-.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.285	.360	.006
	N	53	53	53	53	53
English	Pearson Correlation	.477**	1	.154	-.200	-.220
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.272	.152	.113
	N	53	53	53	53	53
Maths	Pearson Correlation	.150	.154	1	.003	-.446**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.285	.272		.984	.001
	N	53	53	53	53	53
Science	Pearson Correlation	-.128	-.200	.003	1	-.235
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.360	.152	.984		.090
	N	53	53	53	53	53
ICT	Pearson Correlation	-.374**	-.220	-.446**	-.235	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.113	.001	.090	
	N	53	53	53	53	53
					. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Of interest in these results is the relationship between ICT and the level of academic readiness the negative value indicates a strong disconnect between the two variables. The same negative relationship can be seen with ICT and Maths preparation. The relationship between academic readiness and the ease of English is significant. These results suggest further investigation into the provisions for ICT at the college.

Furthermore, the subject specific results of ICT, Maths and Science indicated no significant relationship between interest, engagement and the level of preparedness amongst students. Therefore, the results in subjects other than English suggest a degree of discontinuity

of learning. However, English as a subject had a significant relationship with preparedness and interest levels in Maths and ICT. This suggests that literacy levels are important for student engagement in the curriculum and the scope to improve continuity of learning for all students is through transition activities with a focus on literacy.

Another factor is the notion of curriculum continuity; this is a slightly different lens and requires the current year 8 students to articulate how the learning experience of Year 7 prepared them, in terms of skills and content, for new learning experiences in secondary school. Teachers' perceptions about the potential for *"dip in learning"* because of

transition (McGee, et al., 2003) indicated that 26% disagree with the potential for a *"dip in learning"* whereas 27% strongly agree that there is a potential for a *"dip in learning"*. Other research suggests that Science teachers often accept and value discontinuity of learning as it affords an opportunity to reshape the perspective of students with regard to this discipline (Rice, et al., 2011).

The findings were therefore inconclusive and suggest that at St Michael's College curriculum continuity in some learning areas would be beneficial for continuity of learning of students. However, at present this is not a factor that forms part of the current transition process.


The extent to which Year 7 were prepared for Year 8 in terms of subject.
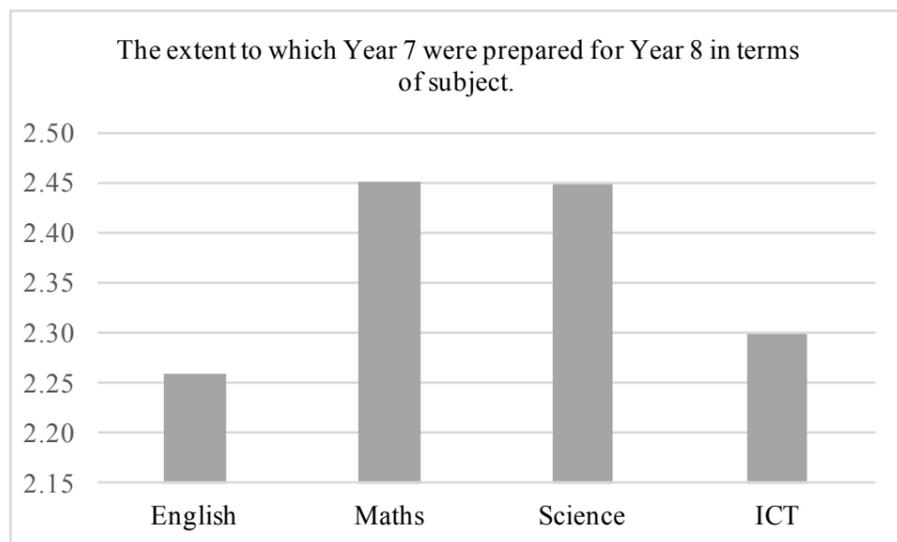
Figure 4
Means (Scale **1**- very prepared, **2**- prepared, **3**- not prepared)

The graph shows that students were perceived as prepared in all subjects but just slightly more prepared in Maths. This is an interesting comparison to the student responses. This graph also contradicts the perception of one of

the interviews who spoke at length about issues with Maths.

I would change is the whole curriculum issue especially the maths. Doing something more , putting something in place where

students could be exposed to the teaching and learning that's required to get them up to speed when they get too to high school. That would be one of the things

The participant went on to further state that:

I suppose as far as curriculum and it predominantly comes from the maths department is that kids coming to Year 8 are in so many different places on the on-the continuum. There's no... Different teachers do different things at different schools.

One of the biggest change to routines for students is the change from one class teacher to a series of specialist subject teachers. If we look closely at what students were saying in the survey they were looking forward to the change and most of this positivity included new opportunities for learning. Students noted that:

I was looking forward to meeting new people and generally starting a new school year with different teachers, people and being in a different environment"

"I was looking forward to having a change from primary school and getting used to a new school culture.

The interview data highlighted the importance of the team of Year 8 Pastoral Care teachers in terms of continuity of learning they attend a range of transition events and closely monitor students post transition. In addition, it was reported that the year 8 teachers liaise closely with learning support and engage with data throughout the first term. Comments included:

A positive is the pastoral care teachers are just exceptional. The work they do on that day one is

just imperative, in terms of getting to know year 8 students. How that student comes away at the end of the day and how they feel about starting high school, which is a very traumatic experience for some. And yet a really, really exciting time for others. So that's really positive. I think the people in the team at the moment currently is a big positive.

Sutherland (2010) identifies that the largest barrier to transition is the difference between primary and secondary teachers namely the notion of "two tribes" (Sutherland, 2010, p. 84) and states that "as long as two tribes persist transition between primary and secondary schools is likely to continue to disadvantage pupils who need support from the educational system." (Sutherland, 2010). The report goes on to state that within the UK, there is an emerging focus upon middle years and that this offers opportunity for new partnerships and goodwill that provide a real opportunity for change in the way students are supported during transition with respect to their learning needs (Sutherland, 2010). This correlates with research into transition conducted in Western Australia (Coffey, Berlach & O'Neill, 2011).

Where to from here?

Continuity of learning is a facet of successful transition and the indicators that show that students feel prepared for their new learning experiences, are interested in subjects and feel that they are making progress. Findings from this research suggest that students who responded to the survey experienced successful transition.

The successful transition indicators illustrated what successful transition means for these students. Those students who adapt well to organisational aspects of transition (lockers, punctuality, changing classrooms) are more successful in terms of academic readiness (engagement, preparation, ability to manage homework). This suggests that in terms of continuity of learning the most important processes are those that support students' ability to adapt to the organisational changes such as new locations, rules and expectations.

However, students transition from a wide variety of feeder schools, including a large cohort from the primary campus of St Michael's College itself. The exchange of information and data during the transition process is of considerable importance for the provision of continuity of learning of students. Results of this research suggest that data should be as rich and varied as the students who make the transition. Data collected via meetings is thorough, both quantitative and qualitative in nature. However, it is not clear how this data is used to support continuity of learning of students. The exception is those students who require learning support, as these students are students are monitored and tracked closely. The involvement of primary school teachers in the transition process and their knowledge and understanding of the learning experiences at primary school is often under-utilised. At the time of the research there was no provision to overcome this.

Students at primary school who have developed an independent approach to learning can have this compromised in the more complex environment of secondary school.

Secondary teachers sometimes need to recognise that "students do not come to school from nowhere but laden with experiences from primary school where they have been learning as pupil for six years" (Galton, 2000, p. 361).In order to support students' continuity of learning, shared understanding and information about pedagogy is crucial. Within Australia, the literature produced by the Victorian Department of Education supports the idea of bridging units; as a way of enhancing continuity of learning and providing a platform for collaboration between the primary

and secondary school teaching staff (Department of Education and Training (Victoria), 2016). In short, to ensure continuity of learning and to support students during transition from primary to secondary school a more holistic approach is needed. An approach that goes beyond sharing quantitative data about students or curriculum content

And the information that students would like to share with their new teachers is just as rich and varied. Year 8 students commented that:

Am I ready and capable for year 8? If not, what could I improve on?

Teaching us ways to study would be much better than just handing us work to study and note

So what are some of the ways that St Michael's College has enhanced the transition process to improve the potential for continuity of learning and minimise any potential "dip in learning"? (McGee, 2003)

I want to follow on from primary school and work hard at a new school."

"Looking forward to the challenges and new learning and a bigger and more diverse community.

The transition of students from primary to secondary school is not an event it is a process. Students are required to make numerous transitions as they traverse the educational system. However, the transition from primary to

secondary school is the most significant mid-point of this series of educational transitions for each student. As educators, we should ensure that this transition is a confident step forward and not a stumble into a gap between two systems.

Joanne Gilmore
Joanne.Gilmore@SMC.sa.edu.au

Aim	Achieved	Current developments
Expand the scope of transition arrangements to include activities that focus upon learning and academic needs.	Parent Survey of transition needs expanded to include learning needs and sent to all new parents in Term 3 New documentation being developed that emphasizes this new focus Use of ICT to improve data sharing across all aspects of transition.	New activities being developed during Orientation week that include study skills focus that supports autonomy in literacy and numeracy including the first weeks of school Development of an online space could provide an opportunity for students and parents to engage with materials that relate to frequently asked questions that arise due to transition and that there should be a renewed focus on Learning needs.

And as we move into the next phase? The aim will be to develop approaches that bridge the gap between primary and secondary schooling approaches such as Joint professional learning using ACARA in assessment and pedagogy. Teachers need to develop knowledge and understanding of the key differences in pedagogy; child centered (primary school) to subject centered (secondary school). The focus will also be to develop collaborative practices to enhance the continuity of learning for all students e.g. bridging units with a focus on literacy as an ongoing and integral part of the transition process. Collaboration should involve both an online and face-

to-face component in order to overcome existing barriers to the sharing of resources, moderation of student work and the evaluation of materials and bridging units.

Conclusion

Overall, the research on the current transition processes at St Michael's College, was able to provide a rich picture of a variety of aspects that are part of the process of transition.

A strong area of success for St Michael's College is the current provision for student wellbeing and considerations around the organisational and structural aspects of the transition process.

The range of events pre-, post- and during transition meet the needs of students and parents who feel welcomed a key factor in the successful transition process. It is after this decision and feeling welcomed that learning needs become a focus.

Continuity of learning is an area for development and findings demonstrate that this has not been a priority in current transition processes. Teachers were positive about the move of Year 7 to secondary school they perceive it as having merit for students. Students were also enthusiastic and up for the challenge as evidenced by the following comments:

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Positive Pooches at Woodvale Secondary College

Veronika Sutton

Woodvale Secondary College (WSC) is a government secondary college in the north metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia with a student population of 1600 students. For the past four years staff at the College have been working on embedding Positive Education with a whole school approach. Martin Seligman's (2008) model of Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment and Health (PERMAH) has underpinned the approach adopted by the school. PERMAH was originally embedded into the Geelong Grammar School. At WSC PERMAH has been incorporated with explicit teaching into Health Education classes Years 7-10 with age specific curriculum developed and linked to the Western Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum.

As well as Health Education teachers explicitly teaching PERMAH, all teachers at the college have adopted a whole school approach to Character Strengths, Growth Mindset and Mindfulness. These aspects of Positive Education are demonstrated in learning areas, through posters displayed around

the college and highlighted at assemblies. In the 2017-20 WSC Business Plan, Positive Education evolved into Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEW) of staff and as well as students. Each learning area adopted a SEW focus that is linked to texts, assessment outlines, explicit teaching and professional learning. For example, Arts have a focus on Mindfulness, Physical Education on Engagement, HASS on Resiliency, Technologies on Positive Relationships, Science on Solution Focussed Dialogues, English on Appreciative Inquiry and Mathematics have Growth Mindset.

There are many *Positive Parenting* workshops facilitated by leading teachers in Positive Education at WSC. These evening workshops reach out to the community for parents to learn strategies such as Growth Mindset or Building Resilience. WSC has also developed a *Positive Parenting Guide* for parents as a result of conducting parent forums and focus groups to find out what parents wanted from the college and what teachers wanted from parents. The *Positive Parenting Guide* is

distributed to all parents and is on the website. Complimentary copies are also given to all local primary schools and, overall, has proven to be a very popular publication.

The *Positive Pooch Program* is the term coined at WSC for the companion dog program. It was introduced as a Positive Education initiative two years ago and has drawn great, positive attention to the college.

Two years ago a teacher volunteered *Boots* the greyhound to be a subject in an Animal Studies class. The Animal Studies teacher was impressed with *Boots* and his calm, affectionate nature and suggested the teacher talk to the Teacher in Charge of the library, as she had been looking at possibly getting a companion dog for the library to help the anxious, lonely, stressed students who were hanging out there. She had investigated the possibility of Vision Australia dogs in training but they as they would not be able to be handled by students this was not going to be an option. *Boots* has proven to be was a perfect choice and the rest is history!

The Associate Principal had to get permission from the Principal, District Office and the Department of Education Western Australia regarding issues surrounding ethics and insurance. All permissions were obtained fairly quickly and without issues. WSC also had to develop a Risk Management Plan. Staff and parents were notified and had the opportunity to raise any concerns. The only concerns raised were around fearful students and allergies.

WSC set aside an area where fearful students could avoid *Boots* and as greyhounds are low allergenic those concerns were allayed. WSC also distributed information on how to interact with dogs, as not all students have that experience. *Boots* had a two week trial that went exceptionally well.

Greyhounds, with their calm temperaments, are perfect for this work. In 2016, WSC got a second greyhound, *Rush*, to work on Tuesdays and Thursdays as every day was too tiring for *Boots*. Her owner brings her in on a voluntary basis. WSC now have a roster of three greyhounds. The Teacher in Charge of the Fiction Library looks after the greyhounds each of which has their own couch in the library. Temperament is key. It has to be the right dog. They have to love all people and not be phased by crowds and noise.

Boots, *Rush* and *Archie* are walked through the college at break times or they hang out in the Fiction Library where adoring students can sit on the dog couch and cuddle. Their presence has reduced teacher

and student stress, reduced bullying and helped dis-engaged students. The Independent Reviewers attending WSC referred to WSC Positive Education program as "inspirational".

Mission Australia conduct a free National survey each year for 15 to 19 year olds to collect data on mental health. If a school can offer more than three hundred participants, they get individual feedback on the social and emotional wellbeing of their students. WSC Year 10-12 students who partake in the survey have been immersed in Positive Education since Year 7. Each Year WSC students are above the national average for optimism and a sense that they have a future. Other data collected also reinforces that WSC are achieving sound outcomes with their strong focus on Social and Emotional Wellbeing of staff and students. Clearly, the programs WSC have in place are not only innovative, but effective.

Veronika Sutton
Veronica.Sutton@education.wa.edu.au

Middle Schooling: The catalyst for innovation and pedagogical change

Louise Eldridge
Thomas More College

In 2016, the Catholic Education Office announced that Year 7 students in South Australia would join the secondary setting in 2019. Although there are several schools within our local area who cater for students in Reception-12, the concept of Year 7s in secondary school was new to us. At first it was met with some trepidation. What would this mean for us? How would this change the way we teach? How would these students impact on our school culture? One thing for certain was that our college was headed for change and with that, reflection and innovation.

Thomas More College is an 8-12 Catholic college in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. With a cohort of approximately 850 students, the introduction of Year 7 learners would impact the physical space, culture and teaching pedagogy that we were used to. We had a choice. We could either embrace it, or

ignore it and worry about it at the end of 2018. Our leadership chose to embrace it and the consequences and impact on our culture, teaching staff and pedagogy within the school has been unforeseen and is now cause for celebration.

Middle School Pedagogy

There have been many articles written about middle schooling pedagogy and its impact on the adolescent learner. Thomas More College decided to take change slowly and began the project by identifying Rebecca Baker as the leader. Our preliminary research identified that the core teacher model was a worthwhile approach to take and based on that, Kathryn Yeates and I joined the team to explore the contemporary pedagogies of middle schooling. Kathryn is a Maths and Science specialist, and I am a teacher of English, History and Geography who was willing to learn.

The initial stage of our research encompassed a lot of internet searching, journal reading and discussion about what we were finding and learning in our journey. We regularly came together and discussed what we had each identified as the key findings for us to explore further. These findings were identified as the impact of the core teacher model, project-based and contextualised learning, a cross disciplinary and integrated curriculum, authentic assessment, student voice and differentiation, metacognitive growth and grit and the impact of collaborative work.

The evidence clearly showed us the value of the core teacher model. From what we were learning, we confirmed our understanding that relationships were key. Having already identified the core teacher model as an approach we wanted to investigate further, we undertook a trial in semester two of 2017. During this time, although not

using the same specific classes due to timetable constraints, both Kathryn and I taught the same class of year 8 students for each of our subject groupings. Kathryn taught Maths/Science and I had a Year 8 English/Humanities and Social Sciences class. The first observation was that we underestimated the impact that this relationship would have on the students. Both of us felt more engaged and invested in the students' learning and behaviour management was easier. We had already established our boundaries in the previous semester and therefore we were able to offer more meaningful and authentic learning experiences. The students appeared to be happier and engaged in their learning. Unfortunately, the core teacher model we used for the period of the trial, only incorporated the core subjects and not the wellbeing teacher as is suggested as best practice in the literature. We could see however, that this approach would certainly change the dynamic of the classroom for the better.

After the successful pilot project in 2017 concluded, it was decided to implement the core teacher model in 2018, with the view for all Year 7 and 8 students being involved in this model in 2019 when these young adolescents joined our secondary setting. After further research, we decided to experiment with the organisation of the core subjects to help us identify what suited our learning environment best. We decided that several of our classes would have the typical English and HASS or Maths and Science teaching structure, but we decided to try one class being made up of HASS and Science, whilst having a separate English teacher and Maths teacher. This arrangement bought some success, but there is some apprehension

about its suitability for Thomas More College and will be reviewed at the end of 2018. The key element that was altered from the 2017 trial, was that one of the core teachers would also be the wellbeing mentor. Again, we underestimated the impact this would have on the students. These relationships have meant that the students are feeling more settled in the college earlier in the year. Furthermore, as the wellbeing mentors have established better relationships with students, more pastoral care issues have been shared by the students. This has been of benefit for the young people in our care as we have been able to intervene earlier. Whether the number of issues which students have faced has increased more than in previous years we are unsure, but our involvement as part of pastoral care has certainly increased.

Research Focus

Kathryn and I chose to focus on different key ideas from the research. I decided to focus on contextualised and authentic learning, cross disciplinary learning and literacy interventions.

Having a leadership team who believed in the process and supported our creativity and innovation was critical to the success of this project. We were given permission to be innovative and try anything we wanted, as long as everything we tried was based on evidence and met the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum. It also had to have the intention of improving student outcomes. In addition to this, the general capabilities were an element of the curriculum that I wanted to explore further and I decided to make a conscious effort

for the general capabilities to be incorporated more purposefully within my teaching.

At first, it was challenging to create the program with such a degree of freedom. Traditionally I had always taught English and HASS as two separate subjects. It was exciting to be able to combine them together and be creative in my pedagogy and assessment. Semester two of our program was to teach Geography, where we covered landscapes and landforms, urbanisation and natural disasters. When we got to the topic of natural disasters, I decided to try a different approach. Being in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, we are a short drive away from Sampson Flat, the location of bushfires which had devastated much of the area in January 2015. As some of our students may have been to this area before the fires and were therefore familiar with it, I wanted to provide the students with an authentic learning experience. I arranged with the local CFS brigade to visit their station, and the students were able to meet firefighters who had experienced the fires first hand. We were taken on a tour of the local Kersbrook area to see where the fires and destruction had occurred. They met a local business owner who nearly lost their house and business, and were invited to experience the fire engines and use the hoses. We used the opportunity to learn about topographical maps and we looked and explored the area of the fire using these maps before we went.

After the excursion the students wrote letters to the local member of Parliament, asking for additional funding to support the CFS in their activities, therefore making this experience more authentic. The students received a response from South Australia's Minister

for Emergency Services, The Hon Chris Picton MP, addressing their concerns and thanking them for their letters which the students found to be exciting. The assessment relating to the excursion included taking their own photographs and collecting their own evidence to use in their task. There were three different differentiated types of assessment, and the students could choose how to present their work, whilst all meeting the same achievement standards. The quality of the work that they produced was fantastic. They were able to use their own observations and photographs and several students challenged themselves to the hardest option in which they were successful, even though they doubted themselves. This task enabled me to do cross curricular learning as we talked about formal letter writing. I was also able to engage students with the Personal and Social capability as they were developing empathy with people and learning about appropriate ways to discuss sensitive issues with them. What made a difference to the student's approach, effort and product, was knowing that a member of parliament was actually going to read the letters that they had written. Overall it was a resounding success.

To continue with the authentic learning experiences, this year in History we have had a medieval sword play group come and teach our students about weaponry and how to be good knights! The students loved it and learnt more about swords and weaponry than could have been taught from a textbook. As part of their learning for Civics and Citizenship, we have been to Parliament House in Adelaide, inside Government House where the students met the Governor, the Right Honourable

Mr Hiew Le and his wife Mrs Le, and looked at the issues and development of our nation to Federation, at the Democracy Museum in Adelaide. I learnt that it was not just the experiences of these places that were beneficial. Rather, it was catching the train, being in the city, and listening and being respectful of other people, which may be considered to be elements of the hidden curriculum. These authentic learning experiences have proven to be the highlights of the students learning. In evaluations and feedback from students about their experiences, many of them indicated that these opportunities were the richest for them and of the most value.

Literacy Intervention

Many of the students in my class in 2017 were of a non-English speaking background and like most schools, we have students who struggle with their literacy. Therefore, the decision was made to focus on a literacy intervention strategy and students were asked to complete 10 minutes of independent reading or use the online LEXIA language program at the beginning of the first lesson we had together each day. This allowed the students to improve their literacy and we observed considerable growth. This also linked with the Literacy capability. In addition to this intervention, as we have worked with guided reading groups previously, we knew of the benefit of targeting learning around the reading strategies (such as inference, summarising, connecting etc) and the impact these interventions have on reading and comprehension. Because of this, I decided to focus on these strategies and use them in all areas of our curriculum, not just in English but in Geography as

well. I do this by using the reading strategies language when I can, and complete some activities using the strategies, such as visualisation and summarising.

At Thomas More College, we believe in data as supporting evidence as indicators for success. The evidence clearly showed that the students improved considerably in their learning during the 6 months of intervention. Our students undertook PAT-R and PAT-M tests, SA spelling test (SAST) and the TORCH test as a tool for showing growth. We tested students at the beginning of the trial, and then again at the end. At the end of the trial period in 2017, most students showed an increase of at least one stanine level in the six month period. Several students showed a jump of two stanines and one student improved by three stanine levels. Many students increased their spelling ages and this improvement was also reflected in their written work. We believe this has been a direct consequence of the changes in teaching pedagogies.

Having seen the impact of a more authentic and engaging style of learning I reflected on how this could impact my approach with students in the senior years as well. As a Year 10 Essential English teacher, I decided to use a more authentic learning experience for this class as well. These typically disengaged learners have shown engagement with my new approach. After reading the novel "Wheels", by Delwyn Stephens, I decided to get the Department of Disability, Recreation and Sport to bring their "Wheelienet" program to our school where they could learn what it is like to be in a wheelchair. This was another opportunity to explore the

capabilities again, and the focus for this was Ethical understanding. As part of the learning experience, we discussed with our host what it is like to live with a disability, and what his experiences were. We discussed how he integrated within the community with his specific needs, and what challenges he faced. The students sympathised with his story and developed a new understanding and appreciation for the experiences of disabled people.

Again, I underestimated the impact this would have on the students' understanding. Not only were they learning about the experiences of being in a wheelchair, many of them had to overcome their fear of the unknown. To do this they were able to have an open discussion with the visitors about the practicalities of living with a disability and eventually they were able to use the wheelchairs, despite their fears. Of a class of 15, I had two who did not want to participate as they were frightened with the what it would be like. Meanwhile, others were off before I knew it! With gentle encouragement and taking little steps, both apprehensive students were able to get into the wheelchairs and participate with the activities. The ability to face their fears and overcome these, were again identified as an additional benefit of an authentic learning experience. The feedback from these students indicated that they really enjoyed the experience and several commented that they had thought using a wheelchair would be easy, and it was harder to control than they thought. One student was able to show the others up as they had spent some time in their younger years in a wheelchair and were able to show the others a few skills which benefited this specific student's self-esteem. This

experience demonstrated to them some of the challenges wheelchair bound people face in their daily life. It also reflected in their assessment, as their responses to the text showed a greater understanding of the protagonist and the experiences which he faced.

Physical space

Research indicates that the classroom space needed to be different for middle years learners. Previously, I have had classrooms where rows of desks were generally the norm. After doing some reading on different classroom layouts (Callaghan, 2017) I decided to form the desks into small clusters to enable collaboration. In his article, Callaghan suggests that four students would be the optimal number within a cluster, to enable students to feel safe enough to take risks and work collaboratively. I set up my classroom using his principles and included a high table that the students could stand next to or work in small groups on. I also incorporated bean bags for a break out space. This looked different to what I had traditionally been used to and as a consequence, I needed to change how I taught to use the space more productively. When students were working independently, I allowed them to sit where they wanted, such as on the bean bags or on the floor, as long as they were working effectively. The classes were sometimes noisy, but the conversation was generally about the task they were working on, and students were discussing their differences of opinion, questioning what they had learnt or were discussing their observations.

I also believe in putting student work on display by placing their work on the walls within my classroom. This approach is not unfamiliar with what happens in primary schools, but this practice tends to stop when they get to secondary school due to students not having a set classroom. The reason I felt this was important, was that many students think there is no point to trying their best because students believed that only their teacher see their work. Consequently, they put in

less effort. However, knowing that others will see their work impacted on their task. The students certainly explored the work around the classroom and their feedback indicated that it made a difference. Our College has plans for a public exhibition of our young people's work where we will invite their parents to see what learning has occurred. This will occur one night after school and allows students to take pride in their work and showcase to others what they have achieved. The aim is to help build the self confidence and self-esteem of students and encourage them to take pride in what they have done.

After attending the Adolescent Success Conference in Brisbane in August 2017, I decided I had nothing to lose and a lot to gain by trying a project-based learning activity. Based on the ideas of Kevin Honeycutt, I set about designing a project which highlighted a significant person from the medieval period. My focus however was not on the person, but on developing the capability of creative and critical thinking. As part of the assessment, students were required to complete a planning sheet where they had to create a mind map showing what they already knew, and key information (e.g. dates, names etc.) that they had discovered in their preliminary research. Next, they had to form their own research question. I wanted the students to develop skills in project management, so they had to develop a plan and document what they were aiming to achieve and when they planned to complete it. In addition, the students were asked to do something creative. I read in a book by Thomas

Armstrong (2006) that students should do something creative every day so decided to try this out by asking the students to do whatever they wanted as a creative element. The students amazed me with what they were able to create. I received re-creations of famous paintings, drawings, songs, poetry, model flying machines, a Royal family tree and even some home cooked Wontons from a student studying Marco Polo. One student made a big foam stone with King Arthurs sword in it, and two students did a modern video interpretation of Romeo and Juliet as their significant person was Shakespeare.

This task demonstrated to me that I need to enable the students to have more creativity in their assignments. They enjoyed this element immensely and the feedback from students was that it was their favourite element of the task. The written research component could be presented in whatever format the student chose, and the numerous ways the task were presented included a blog, video, poster, essay, website, movie and book, and one student submitted a cartoon book on Joan of Arc. Next time, students will be asked to submit their response which must use technology in some

format. Now that the capabilities are more within my conscious, I can see that there are some students who avoid using IT if possible. This does not help them to develop 21st Century skills, so by making it compulsory it will help them to grow. A reflection was required at the end, which asked questions about what they would do differently, where they felt they had been successful and identified what they would have liked to investigate further. This was an attempt to continue to develop their critical thinking capability. The assignment had checkpoints along the way and the students generally managed this well. There is certainly room for improvement and refinement, but I found the students really enjoyed this style of learning and I will continue with this approach into the future. I hope the project began to teach the students about working to a timeline and meeting targets. My students indicated that it has been one of their favourite activities so far this year and is their preferred way of learning.

One of the biggest highlights for me this year as an educator, has been the opportunity to work with Professor Donna Pendergast from

Griffith University. As part of the Catholic Education (SA) Middle School Network, I have been able to meet Professor Pendergast and work with her collaboratively on a project on our approach to implementing middle schooling pedagogies within our school. Working with Professor Pendergast and Dr Katharine Swain from Flinders University within this network, has allowed me to learn about current understandings on adolescent brain development, evidence-based practices and new pedagogy. Working with Professor Pendergast and Dr Swain has been a true blessing. Having the opportunity to work with leaders of middle schooling pedagogies in Australia has been professionally rewarding and enriching and one which would never have happened had the Year 7 students not been introduced to the secondary setting.

The decision to bring Year 7 students into our college has been a catalyst for change and allowed me to be innovative in how and what I teach. As a reflective practitioner, it has given me permission to be creative, take risks, work collaboratively and investigate latest ideas and pedagogies that influence my practice. Using these new ideas and approaches, I have discovered that student outcomes have improved, engagement has increased and in general the classroom is a happier place to be. The introduction of Year 7 students has caused me to reflect on my practice and ask myself the tough personal questions about what I do well, what I do poorly and reflect on the why. My experiences have found that adolescent learners are keen when they see the learning is relevant, authentic to themselves and are able see the improvement in their own skills and learning.

Thomas More College is a different place to be now. Teaching and learning is exciting, and changes are occurring. After presenting our experiences and findings of our research of middle schooling to the teaching staff at Thomas More, we have observed that other teachers are trying innovative approaches to teaching and are reflecting more on what and why they are doing things. We still have a long way to go, but we have been fortunate that the system wide change has occurred and allowed us to rethink our practice, experiment with new ideas and we are seeing the results. The middle schooling changes have not only improved student outcomes but have made me, I believe, a better teacher. I still have much to learn, but this project has enabled me to engage more in professional learning which is purposeful and has had a significant impact on my practice. I will be forever grateful for the experiences and opportunities that the introduction of Year 7 students in the secondary setting has provided to me and the exciting pedagogies, practice and people that I have been exposed to.

Louise Eldridge
leldridge@tmc.catholic.edu.au

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Interview with a Head of Middle School

Interviewee: Matt Pearce

Role: Middle School Learning Leader

School: Cornerstone College

Interviewer: Angela White, Executive Officer Adolescent Success

So Matt how long have you been in your role at Cornerstone and what bought you to your current position?

I've been here 15 years, I started as a technology workshop teacher and then moved onto Head of Technology. I started my role of MS Learning Leader when Year 7 started coming into Cornerstone. My mandate when I started my current role was to develop a middle schools structure within the school, which I've been doing for the last six years. The school was 8-12 and not really focussing on middle school. As part of the Lutheran School network Y7 was bought into the campus. Although I'm a secondary trained trained teacher, I'm an advocate for the middle years. The middle years are not formally recognised in SA yet, so having the freedom to build the school autonomously has been important for me. In the research I done, I found every middle school was different so I had a blank canvas create a model that suited our environment.

What have you enjoyed most about your role at Cornerstone?

Developing as an educator in my understanding of middle school practices. It's all about learning, I firmly believe all good practice in the middle years is just good practice. The Adolescent Success in Singapore conference was a highlight for me as SA educators coincidently met together and from that meeting formed the REAL (Responding to Early Adolescent Learners) group. I have loved and continue to love researching best practice and implementing it in our school. I love getting to know new teachers through the interviewing process and seeing the passionate educators they are. I have loved being part of wider community of educators through the AS network and I have loved seeing kids make mistakes, learn from them and become better human beings through them.

Tell us a about your journey towards accepting a position at the Lighthouse School in Mauritius, how did it come about?

I heard about the school through a friend, Andrew Lines, who took his program The Rite Journey to the school and delivered it to them. He came back and said "I've just heard of the perfect job for you! As an educator you're always looking to be a better person through your work and grow in your own understanding. I spoke to my wife who said 'we could do it for two years'. After an eight month process I finally accepted the position. There were many of skype calls and then my wife and I went over in January and met the board. We also met the students and the staff and got caught in the cyclone! I came back thinking there isn't a reason why we shouldn't do this. We both felt as though we are being lead to this for a reason. I'm on a 2 year contract at the school and can't wait to get started. I am looking forward to building strong relationships with the community.

What can you tell us about your new school?

The Lighthouse School is an Independent Christian School which started up in a house about ten years ago. The students are both local and ex-pats. In 2017, the school moved to a bigger site that has the primary school and the secondary school together on one campus. The school is built in an area that has government housing so they offer 30% sponsorship to students who otherwise couldn't afford to attend. The students have to speak English to attend even though French is the language of the country. The school runs the Cambridge program, some of the funding for this comes through the trust which is set up from England. The buildings are built mainly from donations and loans.

How supportive was Cornerstone College to you taking on the challenge of the Lighthouse School?

Cornerstone see what we are doing as mission to another school and have supported us by ensuring we are coming back to our positions at Cornerstone after our two year contract in Mauritius finishes. This support just demonstrates the character and commitment of Cornerstone College to support another school who needs the help.

What are you most looking forward in your new school, and what do you hope to achieve while you're there?

My role is head of secondary school. I'm looking forward to going in and working with teachers to ensure they are delivering the best programs they can. A significant amount of my role is to help teachers grow in their learning. Some teachers are ex-pats but most are native Mauritian teachers who have been trained on the Island. My role will be to support them in their learning and development in best practice teaching.

What skills, knowledge and experience do you think you'll need to draw on most while you're away?

I will be drawing on the knowledge and skills I have built up over the past 20 years of educating. I will draw on the skills that my mentors have instilled in me and the things they have shown me. I will be learning from the teachers as well and from the people who are in a different community. I'll still be connected significantly to Cornerstone and the staff there, a number of teachers have said they want to come over in their long service leave to help the teachers.

When you think about working in Mauritius for the next two years, what scares you most? What excites you most?

I'm expecting that my work life will have a significant learning curve rather than balance while in Mauritius. We are leaving my family which is a big change I have never lived for an extended time anywhere else in the world but Adelaide so I am scared about the cross cultural aspect of the job. I am blessed to be part of a Lutheran school community which provides enormous support for me as an educator. I will be leaving that and working in a stand-alone school. I am excited about getting to know a new community and making new connections. I think our world even though it's a big place offers us opportunities to grow. I am looking forward to becoming a better educator and a better human being.

We look forward to talking to you again after you've been in Mauritius for a few months. If you were to give advice to other school leaders about taking on new challenges in education, what would you say?

As educators I think we are called to make sure the world is an educated place, I've been blessed to be brought up in a part of the world where the teacher training is excellent, I now have the opportunity to share this knowledge with countries like Mauritius. We encourage our kids to be risk takers when opportunities arise for us to do the same, we should take it. In Australia, we are blessed to have the opportunities to develop as educators in a safe, well-resourced environment. If opportunities arise for us to use our gifts to help others less fortunate, we should take it.

If any educators would like to visit the Lighthouse Mauritius School, there is always an opportunity to support the work that we do. We are always looking for teachers to come and share their experience with the teachers there.

mpearce@cornerstone.sa.edu.au

and in 2019:

matthew.pearce@lighthouse.edu.mu

Information for Contributors

Adolescent Success welcomes submissions for journal inclusion that reflect the aims of the Association and address issues relevant to the middle years of schooling. Possible topics include: the developmental needs and interests of young adolescents; family and community partnerships; varied approaches to teaching and learning integrated curriculum; authentic assessment; school leadership and organisational structures in the middle years; information and communication technologies and resources in the middle years; research findings and future developments in the middle years.

Contributions may take the form of:

- academic and research papers that make an original contribution of an empirical or theoretical nature
- literature reviews
- papers of a practical or applied nature
- reports
- viewpoints
- book reviews

Contributions

- The journal has two levels of acceptance of papers for publication: refereed and non refereed. Refereed papers will have two referees selected from relevant fields of study by the editor. Papers must clearly indicate if they wish to be considered for refereed status. Refereed articles will be included in a specific section of the journal.
- Contributions shall be submitted electronically via email to the MYSA email address, or on CD, as a Microsoft Word document. Articles must be double-spaced, without the use of styles, 12 point font Times New Roman. The submitted article and CD become the property of MYSA.
- All contributors need to complete an Author's agreement form to be submitted with the article.
- Papers should be between 700 and 5000 words in length.

- Each article should have a separate title page that contains the title, the names of all authors, their contact addresses, email addresses, and telephone and facsimile numbers. The names of the authors should not appear on the rest of the paper.
- An abstract of no more than 200 words must accompany each refereed article.
- All references should be placed at the end of text using APA (6th edition). For example:

Journal article
Rumble, P., & Aspland, T. (2010). The four tributes model of the middle school teacher. *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling, 10*(1), 4–15.

Book
Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Chapter in edited book
Ajsen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: a theory of planned behaviour. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckman (Eds), *Action control. From cognition to behaviour* (pp. 11–40). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

- Footnotes are not to be used.
- Figures and diagrams should be professionally prepared and submitted in a form suitable for reproduction, indicating preferred placement.
- Photographs should be submitted separately (not

included within the text). All student photographs, art work, poetry etc must be accompanied by copyright release forms, which are available on the website or from the editor.

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Address for communication:

The Editor
Australian Journal of Middle Schooling
Adolescent Success Inc
PO Box 2175
TOOWONG Q 4066