



EVERY OPPORTUNITY.
TOWNSVILLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Five Things I Wish I Knew

*An Australian Boarding Schools Association Presentation
By Jaye Beutel*

1

About Me...

- **Head of Boarding** – Townsville Grammar (Co-ed)
- **QLD State Committee Member**
- **Boarding Experience**
 - *Rockhampton Grammar School*
 - *Whitsunday Anglican School*
 - *John Paul College*
 - *The Southport School*
 - *Townsville Grammar School*

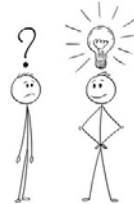


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Purpose of this presentation...

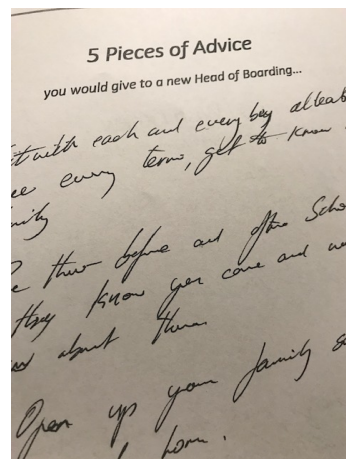
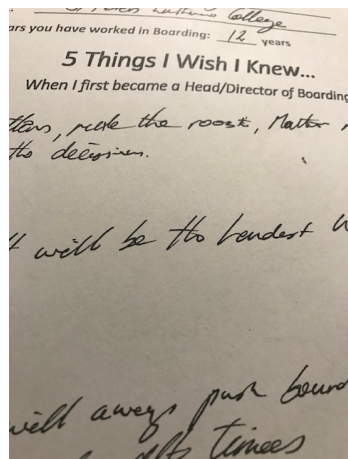


- **Wisdom** (maybe) - Unpack advice from those who have been in the game for a while, lifetime or just a few more years.
- **Perspectives** - Understand that while boarding is essentially the same service from school to school, how we provide this can be completely different
- **Relationships** – how building and maintaining relationships is at the cornerstone of all things boarding.



3

Handout...



4

Five Things I Wish I Knew



5

You won't always know what you are doing...

- **You won't always know the answer.** It's okay to tell people you will get back to them.
- **Not every parent will like the way you run the Boarding House.** There will always be a few who will question everything... I mean everything.
- **You can never please everyone**so do what's best for your boarders – the betterment of your boarders and or house, comes first. It's easy to justify.



6

Listen.....then listen some more..

- That I **needed to listen more** and **speak less** when dealing with boarders.
- The most important breakthroughs with young people (and team members) comes from listening to what is said and more **importantly, what is not said.**
“Be comfortable with the awkward silence”
- Talk, but more importantly LISTEN to **your community**



7

Personal Investment...

- **Emotionally**
- **Physically**
- **Time Management**
- Impact on finding the **“Balance”** – work life, family life and YOU...
- **Lifestyle**, not a job



8

Annette Boyle – St Hilda’s (Gold Coast)



9

Annette's Extended Interview: *Takeaway points...*

How to....

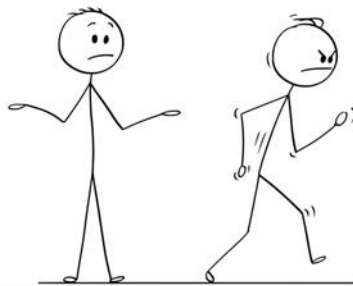
- handle **difficult conversations**
- handle **crisis/critical incidents**
- handle **staffing/teams**
- manage **delegation** – outsource
- manage **different cultures**
- more about what the **young people of today** enjoy



10

Annette's Extended Interview: *Takeaway points...*

- Not to be trapped into dealing with only boarders who are **repeatedly in the NEWS**.
- **Make yourself accessible** to all boarders, particularly the ones who don't naturally stand in the spotlight.



11

Kim Holman – SPLC (Indoorpilly)



12

Kim's Extended Interview: *Takeaway points...*

- How great an impact a leader in boarding could have **on a boarder**.
- How far a **kind word** at the right moment goes...
- Not to take myself too seriously – **learning to laugh at myself** is a great gift.
- The awesome **responsibility and privilege** of the role of Head of Boarding.



13

THINK, PAIR and SHARE



In your table group.....

1. Share how long have you been in your current role?
2. Are there any areas you wish you had known more when you started? Why?
3. What has been the “unexpected” since taking on your role?



14

Annette Boyle – St Hilda’s (Gold Coast)



15

Mark Oliphant – Toowoomba Grammar



16

Building Relationship...

Building and maintaining positive relationships is vital to your leadership of a boarding community.

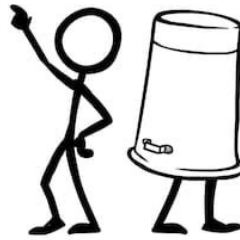
- **Boarders** – know their story
- **Staff** – know their strengths, limitations and their “buy in” factor.
- **Parents/Families** – your greatest billboard

“Relationships are a rock-hard currency when things aren’t going well”



17

Some advice...



- **Communicate with parents as much as possible.** The more information they have the better.
- Be a **presence** in your boarding house
- Boarders can be teachers too. **Each boarder has a story** that is unique, becoming part of that story is a life lesson in itself.



18

Mark's Extended Interview: Takeaway points... *You can't do it all yourself*

- **Be prepared to delegate** – both for your own sanity and to allow your staff to develop
- **Have a great team** – make sure they know their roles and do the simple things well
- **Train, train and retrain your staff.** Set high expectations. Don't employ someone unless you are 100% sure
- **Look after your staff** - you need good troops in the trenches



19

Madonna Hennessy
(formerly of Somerville House)



20

Madonna's Extended Interview: *Takeaway points...*

- **Don't beat yourself** up if you make a mistake
- **Take a breath.** You will get through it . You can't solve all the problems in the first few weeks
- Having a **good sense of humour** helps de-stress and lightens a job that can be stress-filled.



21

Tony Watt The Southport School



22

Key Boarding Areas

International Boarders
 Indigenous Boarders
 Looking After Yourself

Collection of responses and advice



23

International Boarders

Things I Wish I Knew

Generally, there are **3 reasons** why young people are sent abroad to study and the huge impact that can have on your boarding house

- to **save face**
- **outsourcing parenting**/split family
- a **better life** – university entrance



24

International Boarders

Things I Wish I Knew & Advice

Those sent away because parents are outsourcing their parenting role...

- Hardest to build relationships with and motivate to do anything
- Highest incidences of mental health issues and disconnection from the school and boarding house.



25

International Boarders

Things I Wish I Knew & Advice

Saving face is bigger than anything we as westerners can ever comprehend...

- Always have to allow your international boarders (particularly those of Asian heritage) students to save face without allowing them to get out of whatever it is that you are doing.

Parents need support in understanding mental health, sleep and electronics use and how all 3 are connected.



26

International Boarders

General Advice



- Just when you think you understand your internationals, you will realise you have no idea...
- Learn about the countries your students come from
- If possible to visit the country / learn the names of main cities
- Find out how your students like to relax
- Cooking food is a great leveler (include food from their homeland)



27

International Boarders

General Advice



- Recognise their cultural occasions.
- Learn some key words of their language
- Have a liaison officer / staff member with same language
- Encourage, encourage and encourage
- Do everything in groups
- Communication....even with home (plenty of ways) WeChat, Skype Translator etc.



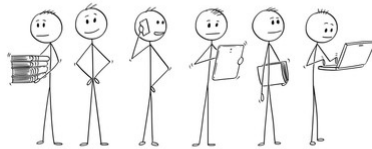
28

THINK and SHARE



In your table group.....

1. Do you have international boarders at your school? If so, how many and where are they from?
2. What has been surprising/or something you wish you had known when you started?



29

Indigenous Boarders

Things I Wish I Knew

The importance of **family connection** whether or not we believe we are offering a better alternative

The importance of building relationships that are **mutually respectful**. These children will not connect with anyone if they feel the efforts are not genuine



30

Indigenous Boarders

Things I Wish I Knew

What **has been modelled** for these children in terms of relationships, interactions with others, dealing with conflict
The extent of **possible trauma** in our indigenous boarder lives.

How **trauma impacts** on brain development and what this looks like in students **rational responses to situations**.



31

Indigenous Boarders

Two Worlds - HOME



- No set **bedtimes or routines**, a number of children share the same bed
- No set **meal times or dining routines**, children independently move from house to house
- **No real ownership** of clothing and other belongings
- Essentials such as toiletries are very expensive in community stores.
- **Generational** poverty and poor financial literacy



32

Indigenous Boarders

Two Worlds - BOARDING



- A **set wake up time**
- Meals with other boarders – **meal time manners and routines**
- Uniforms
- Getting **organised for school** in the morning
- Leaving their **bedroom clean** and tidy
- **Washing** their clothes
- Purchasing toiletries, clothes and other essential items for school
- **Study times** and procedures /assignments
- Having their **own bed and own space**



33

Indigenous Boarders

Advice



- The depth and richness of **indigenous culture** – *my cultural understanding was limited and my learning had to take shape quickly.*
- **Relationships** - share something of yourself, your family, photos, pets etc.
- **Don't assume anything** - that these boarders know how to hang up clothing, put on tights, make a bed etc.
- Don't underestimate the usefulness of **visual reminders about routines**, rules and expectations.





34

Indigenous Boarders

Advice

- **Explicitly teach the behaviours** you want in the boarding house. Be on repeat and don't get frustrated. **Learnt behaviours of 12-14 years are not going to change overnight .**
- **Be Fair and just** - if these children perceive an injustice it will be very difficult to rebuild the trust.
- Don't promise anything if you can't deliver







35

Indigenous Boarders

Advice

- Indigenous kids love to **sleep in proximity to one another.**
- Never ask them to **look you in the eye** - it is culturally inappropriate. When in trouble they will always look down towards the ground
- It is critical to have **staff trained in cultural awareness**
- ABSTUDY...
- **Be prepared to fail**, be prepared to be disappointed,





36

THINK and SHARE



In your table group.....

1. Do you have indigenous boarders at your school? How many? Where are they from?
2. What are some of the challenges you have already faced?
3. Share your success stories...



37

Looking After Yourself



38

The First Year in, is the toughest...It gets better...



39

Final Words...

“If I had known or been told exactly what I would be dealing with, I would not have taken the job.

Having been in the position for a year, I am so glad I did take the job. You will never regret working in this ‘space’ if you have the opportunity.”



40