Lights Out

The Sapphires

AUSTRALIAN
BOARDING
SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION

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EDUCATION
...thinking differently

CONTENTS

An Exciting New
Chapter for ABSA

AUTHOR
Dr T F Hawkes, Chairman
Australian Boarding Schools Association

There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fame and fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries.

Julius Caesar
Act 4, Scene 3

The best time to step down from a leadership position is when you don't want to. It generally means that the position is compelling enough to attract a replacement of high quality, and the organisation healthy enough to withstand a change of leadership with impunity.

Such is the situation with ABSA. We have a high quality replacement as leader and we have a healthy organisation. With these accumulated blessings, it is now appropriate for me to step down as Chair. This will be my last epistle on this particular page of Lights Out.

Our new Chair is a gem and has served as a Board Member of ABSA from its very earliest years of formation in 2007.

Garth Wynne is currently Headmaster of Christ Church Grammar School in Perth, Western Australia - a role he has had since 2001. I do not think I can improve much on his profile recorded on the Christ Church website that reads:

Garth is currently a director of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) and the chair of its West Australian Branch (AHISA WA). He also represents AHISA on the board of the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA). Garth is a foundation board member of the Western Australian Anglican Schools Association (WAASA) and is the WA representative on the management committee of Anglican Schools Australia (ASA). He is the regional vice-president (Australia/New Zealand) and one of four Australian trustees of the International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC). Garth serves as the chairman of the Future Footprints (indigenous student support programme) Managing Committee for the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA). Beyond the education sector, he is a board member of Anglicare WA.

Prior to his appointment at Christ Church, Garth had a varied career in education working as a boarding housemaster and in a range of roles primarily concerned with the

administration of pastoral care in independent schools in Australia (Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia) and the United Kingdom.

Garth is married to Annie, and they have three adult children: Emma , Amy and Lachie.

All this is splendid, but what is really important is that Garth is a gifted educator, a natural leader and great company. I have been enriched by his faithful support over many years. We are lucky to have him as our new Chair of ABSA.

As for the health of the organisation, ABSA's profile as a leading educational body in Australia has never been stronger. This is largely due to our Executive Director, Richard Stokes, who gives ABSA its energy and, importantly, its continuity.

It was 'The Australian Boarding Staff Association', that merged with, 'The Australian Residential Schools' Association', back in 2006 that led to the formation of ABSA. I was Chair of one organisation. Richard was Chair of the other. We have worked in unison ever since. Richard's prodigious energy, organisational skills and vision will ensure ABSA remains focused on its mission.

The mission bears repeating as we reflect on the health of our organisation. The ABSA mission is to:

… promote the interests and well-being of boarders, boarding staff, boarding parents

and boarding institutions in Australia. It will function as an umbrella organisation which fosters collegiality and professionalism at a regional, state and federal level. ABSA will advance the profile of boarding and best practice in boarding. It will facilitate communication on boarding matters between schools, hostels, educational bodies and governments both in Australia and overseas.

It is because we are comfortably advanced in fulfilling this mission, that I feel able to step down as Chair. What ABSA has achieved in the last six years has been significant, and this is a tribute to the ABSA Board and my Deputy, Pauline Turner, and Treasurer Madonna Hennessy. They have both been a wonderful support to me – and will continue in their roles for some time yet.

Under the leadership of its Board, ABSA has made significant strides in the fulfilment of its goals which are:

Membership
To have a membership that is inclusive of all employers and employees within the boarding school sector of Australia. (We have nearly 100% membership of recognised Australian Boarding Schools.)

Professional Development
To provide effective professional development for staff in order to promote best practice within Australian boarding institutions. (Our Biennial Conference, other conferences, workshops and Duty of Care training courses are well attended and held in high esteem).

Leadership
To give leadership to the boarding school sector of Australia and represent its interests in policy formation at all levels of decision making. (Our links with Government are strong and we have been able to work hand-in-hand with Government to solve many problems, such as visas for GAP students. More recently ABSA has initiated putting in place national boarding standards and is currently working closely with Standards Australia in this endeavour. Over the last two years, ABSA has also partnered in some of the most significant research ever done in boarding, anywhere in the world).

State Divisions
To fulfill the ABSA Mission not only at a national level, but at a regional level, by supporting active State Divisions who represent the

needs of their state constituents. (Our State Divisions are now all operational and functioning well.)

Marketing
To promote the work of ABSA as the peak body representing Australian boarding institutions and to market its member schools to the public. (Lights Out is one of the best boarding industry publications in the world and the ABSA website has become a major resource for boarding schools in helping them with professional development, marketing and recruitment.)

Finance
To retain ABSA's strong financial position while funding the growth and development of the Association towards the fulfillment of the Mission and Goals. (ABSA is in a strong financial position – a position that enables it to maintain a full-time Secretariat, and fulfill its purpose as Australia's leading professional organisation for boarding schools.)

Although I am stepping down as Chair, I will remain actively involved with ABSA. There is still work for me to do in ratifying our national boarding standards, writing a curriculum for boarding houses, updating Duty of Care and assisting with the lobbying of Government.

Finally, I convey my very warmest thanks to many of you for your encouragement and support, particularly in those early days when we decided to establish ABSA. It has been a thrilling adventure – and I count it a privilege to have been able to share in it with you.

> "Best time to step down from a leadership position is when you don't want to"

Sapphires School Production

AUTHOR
Richard Stokes & Tom Dunsmore
Australian Boarding Schools Association

Recently we were privileged to be able to attend the Worawa production of The Sapphires. The stage play holds particular significance for Worawa, as the Principal and CEO, Lois Peeler, was one of the original Sapphires, and the audiences was blessed by a performance of Ngarra Burra Ferra by three of the original group.

The program from the night tells the story of the Sapphires:

The story of the Sapphires is significant in Indigenous history. The Yorta Yorta people have a long and remarkable history of using non-indigenous institutions and processes in attempts to obtain recognition of their interests. The Sapphires is based on true experiences of young women from a Yorta Yorta family

whose ancestral homeland is in the heart of the Barmah Forest on the banks of the Murray River. The Briggs family, once residents of the Cummeragunja Aboriginal Reserve, are known for a number of achievements in Aboriginal activism, health, education, sport and the arts. The love of music transcended the hardship experienced by the family; concerts, choirs and talent quests were a means of income generation when Aboriginal people were unable to find steady employment.

This was the starting point for the Sapphires story - the love of music and commitment to

Aboriginal advancement and social justice took the girls to Vietnam to perform for the troops.

Worawa Aboriginal College is Victoria's only Aboriginal school. Situated to the east of Melbourne on the former Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Worawa Aboriginal College is a full boarding school for Aboriginal young women in the middle years of schooling. The college continues to honour the ideals of its founder, Aboriginal visionary Hyllus Maris through an integrated education, culture and wellbeing curriculum.

The Worawa Model of learning involves Aboriginal value and ways of Knowing, Doing and Being.

"Spectacular production!
Something we will never forget!"

Mental Health and Wellbeing

AUTHOR
Smiling Mind

Mental health and wellbeing; online interventions and support in education settings; Mindfulness Meditation and Smiling Mind.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to revel in their youth. These days, the old saying 'youth is wasted on the young' seems ironic.

For the older generations who still espouse this belief, it is easy to forget the pressure felt by youth to achieve, the angst that accompanies decision making, and the overwhelming paralysis that accompanies the question: 'What do you want to do with your life?'

Society, like youth, is undergoing constant and rapid change—a flux that sometimes feels like a rollercoaster of new challenges and exciting prospects. While we eagerly encourage our young people to seize all opportunities and reach their full potential, it is important that we also help them to effectively manage all that is thrown at them in their day-to-day lives.

Being young is a juggling act of learning, studying, extra-curricular activities, keeping fit, eating healthily, having a social life and, of course, reporting it all on social media. As a result, mental illness in young people has never been more prevalent—in some areas of the world it ranks as the most common ailment in young people aged 15-24.

"What do you want to do with your life?"

To offset this trend, we need to provide this demographic with tools and strategies to cope with the challenges of everyday life.

While there's no silver bullet that will guarantee mental health and wellbeing, research shows that it can be effectively supported by online platforms and interventions. Young people increasingly see the internet not only as a portal to information and entertainment but as a setting in which they live their lives.

Ninety-eight per cent of young people aged 14-25 use the internet, and 71 per cent of them access it via their smartphone—there is a significant opportunity to reach the youth market through these channels.

A natural progression, then, is to provide online mental health interventions within educational environments. The highly accessible and cost-effective nature of online platforms—whether website or App-based—allow young people to access credible, age-appropriate mental health resources with an assured sense of privacy and anonymity. In addition, online mental-health platforms allow them to sidestep the stigma sometimes associated with traditional forms of support.

Organisations such as Australian not-for-profit, Smiling Mind, have drawn on this connection and now provide free, online and App-based programs based in Mindfulness Meditation to young people in schools and communities across the world.

Developed by a team of psychologists with expertise in youth and adolescent therapy, Smiling Mind is described as modern meditation for young people. Their program is a series of unique web and App-based Mindfulness Meditation and wellness programs, and consists of four age-specific programs: 7-11 Years, 12-15 Years, 16-22 Years and Adults.

Smiling Mind's programs are free and simple to use. With Mindfulness Meditation as a guiding principle, they are designed to assist with stress, anxiety, resilience and mental illness, and to improve educational and learning outcomes. Smiling Mind's mission is to help create happier, healthier and more compassionate young people by giving them accessible, lifelong mental health tools. Smiling Mind's vision is for Mindfulness Meditation to be included in school curricula by 2020.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mindfulness training cultivates present moment awareness; an understanding that in the present moment, worries about the past or future have no place. This provides a much needed escape for many young people—a chance to momentarily stop and reboot.

In recent years, the popularity of Mindfulness Meditation in the treatment of stress, resilience, anxiety, depression and other physical and mental illnesses has surged. Institutions such as UCLA, Harvard, Oxford, Monash and Melbourne Universities have implemented clinical studies into the positive impacts of Mindfulness Meditation; Smiling Mind has adapted these techniques to provide preventative mental health tools for young people.

Smiling Mind was launched in October 2012 to address the high rates of diagnosable mental illness in young people, particularly anxiety. A range of community organisations now utilise Smiling Mind's free programs—from individual trauma counseling services and local health professionals, to post-disaster crisis support organisations—as well as nearly 50,000 individuals and 1,100 primary, secondary and alternative education institutions.

The Smiling Mind education programs are free, highly accessible and flexible. From math classes to health classes and homework groups, Smiling Mind's online delivery and short, guided content allows for regular and engaged use.

The Mindfulness Meditations can be used in the classroom under the supervision of a teacher or as a self-guided program outside of the education environment. The meditations are delivered via mp3 format, so once a teacher presses 'play', the participants are guided by recorded instructions—no teacher training is required.

Smiling Mind has also developed a Sport Program in partnership with Cricket Australia's Sport Psychology team to improve wellbeing and performance within the context of sport, and also as a means of engaging young males in mental health and meditation.

It is important that we collectively raise awareness of the mental health and wellbeing of young people, by continually evolving our channels of engagement, both in and out of the education environment. Accessible online, proactive programs and activities for young people, like Smiling Mind, are relevant, costeffective, engaging and effective.

Today's fast-paced, performance-based society places significant pressures on young people. Our challenge is to bridge the divide between the urgency to achieve and the importance of discovery, growth, and the joy of being young.

For more information visit:
www.smilingmind.com.au

Smiling Mind is currently in partnership with Monash University undertaking evidence-based research on its programs in schools.

The Architecture of Boarding Houses

AUTHOR
Peter Mayoh
Founding Director
Mayoh Architects, Northbridge, NSW

Common Room, Kevin Fagan Boarding House, St Ignatius' College

As the director of Mayoh Architects, and as a past boarder myself, it has been a privilege to design numerous boarding houses for various schools across Sydney. These include boarding facilities for:

-           Abbotsleigh School for Girls
-           St Joseph's College
-           The King's School
-           St Ignatius' College
-           Tudor House
-           The Hutchins School, Tasmania (design advice only)

These projects have involved many approaches to the design of boarding houses, such as:

- Refurbishment of old buildings to new boarding houses appropriate for today's standard of boarding
- Conversion of large dormitories into sleeping modules of four bedrooms each
- Positioning of boarding units amongst a Blue Gum High Forest
- Renovation of old wings to add light and breakout spaces to previously dark corridors

In all cases, we have defined a boarding precinct, where students feel as if they are coming home from school at the end of the day, and we have strived to emphasise the key advantages of boarding in each house we've designed.

Past & future of boarding

It's an important starting point for us to recognise the value of boarding in today's schooling system, in order to achieve a successful design. While some aspects of boarding from 50+ years ago have fallen by the wayside (fortunately, in some cases), the original values and ideals remain. Boarders hold an important role within the school system, where they become the 'backbone' of the school, living their life there from day to day. Distinguishing dedicated spaces and zones for boarders within the school campus emphasises this importance.

While in the past boarders were accommodated in dormitories of up to 80 students, leaving little room for privacy or modesty, the benefits of bringing boarders together from a range of backgrounds can still be applied to a modern boarding house. This can be done through various models of joint sleeping arrangements, where at the entry year of boarding students are accommodated in rooms of eight or four students, moving up to shared twin rooms, and finishing with individual rooms for senior years.

Boarding precincts & domestic environments

Most boarders today live in busy schools, and it can be easy to get overwhelmed by a large school campus. We believe a 'master planning' approach is important in order to separate a living precinct from a learning precinct. This can be done through landscape

separation, and the use of different building materials, creating a different atmosphere than that of the main school campus. As well as its surroundings, the boarding house itself needs to be more identifiable with a domestic home, rather than a school campus building, so that students can familiarise themselves with a domestic environment.

A concern of all boarding environments is that a new boarder does not become overwhelmed by the numbers of fellow students and disappear into isolation behind a "closed door". One method of achieving a more familiar, family-type atmosphere is breaking down the sleeping facilities into nodes or modules of eight - twelve rooms, through the inclusion of breakout spaces that clearly separate each sleeping module. The breakout spaces also provide an opportunity to bring light and ventilation into the house, to avoid long, dark corridors, as well as creating intimate meeting zones for students.

Similarly, achieving a warm, domestic environment for the recreation areas, both indoor and outdoor, encourages socialisation within the boarding house. This is achieved through clear distinction of active and passive recreation areas, the inclusion of a BBQ, and plenty of lawn space to encourage outdoor activity. Simultaneously, the relationship between indoor and outdoor recreation areas is a key focus in our designs, to provide flexible spaces that can be adapted to suit most forms of recreation and socialisation.

Interior planning
Parents play an important role in boarding, and their relationship with the boarding house is a significant one. There should be clear definition lines of a front door and entry point for parents, transitioning to the point where the house becomes the private home of all the other students, not just their children. This can be varied for special events, such as house dinners and celebrations. Concurrently, the inclusion of a 'parent zone' adjacent to the front door – consisting of a private room and bathroom facility – is beneficial as it further emphasises the importance of parents and allows them to feel welcome and looked after. These rooms can be utilised for important discussions with their children, or simply to freshen up after arriving from the country before venturing out to the city.

Most boarding houses have a range of supervision accommodation requirements, ranging from individual short stay units for university students, to one bedroom apartments for young couples, to accommodation for a full family who are responsible for the house. All these units should be planned and positioned strategically to give the best opportunity of supervision throughout the full extent of the boarding house.

Senior Boarding Houses, Abbotsleigh School for Girls

Lights Out

The Architecture of Boarding Houses

> **"Achieving a warm, domestic environment for the recreation areas"**

It is a requirement to provide accessible boarding facilities within boarding houses, and we have designed dedicated bedrooms and bathrooms for people with a disability. This allows a school to fully comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, as it provides full accessibility for boarders throughout their schooling career. It also not only benefits disabled students, but provides students with sports injuries adequate access.

Materials and finishes

Interior materials and finishes are an important factor in setting the tone and atmosphere of each house, as boys and girls will have different demands. Finishes and colours can also be used to differentiate between various boarding houses within one school campus. Regardless, the finishes need to be robust enough to avoid excessive maintenance, whilst refined enough to emphasise respect towards the house. Additionally, any house memorabilia and decoration that can be showcased throughout the house will ensure that the students treat certain areas with respect, as most students take pride in their house history and heritage.

It is important that the finishes of the bedrooms are neutral enough to form a backdrop to any individual form of decoration or interior design, as it allows each student to express their personality within their own room. This approach allows any coloured doona or other decorative element to blend well within the space. Additionally, plenty of pinboard space enables students to showcase posters and family photos, without the concern of damaging walls.

Conclusion

We are fortunate enough today to see a boarding system within Australian schooling that has evolved and developed over time to become a positive choice made within many families for their children. Boarding clientele now includes families from a range of backgrounds, such as:
- International families
- Professional families from traditional rural areas
- Families from growth centres such as Newcastle, Campbelltown, and Wollongong (in the NSW context)
- Families from the city

This ensures continual demand for appropriate boarding facilities, as well as an expectation from families to provide a caring and nurturing environment for boarders. The architecture of boarding houses plays a major part in this, as it is influential in ensuring each boarder is able to thrive in the boarding environment, succeeding as both students and people.

Broughton Forrest House, The King's School. Image courtesy of Michael Anderson, Paramount Studios

7 Essential Steps for Creating a
Filing System

AUTHOR
Tracey Lawton
Online Business Development Strategist
Office Organisation Success

"Papers here; papers there; papers everywhere!"

I know… you probably think of filing as the most boring job in the world, and there are probably a 101 other things that you would prefer to do instead. However, as a solo business owner, it is down to you to do the filing and stay organised. As a result this is one of the areas that a lot of solo business owners find overwhelming – they simply do not know where to start, or how to systemise their business.

The more piles of paper there are, the more overwhelmed they feel!

Creating and maintaining a filing system is the very foundation that your business is built on, so this is the first system you need to put in place – an efficient and effective filing system. And one that is simple to use too!

With a proper filing system in place you will very quickly and easily be able to find the information you need, when you need it.

Let me share with you below my 7 easy steps for creating your ideal filing system:

1. Determine your storage needs. Whether you decide to opt for a plastic filing crate, or a dedicated filing cabinet, one thing you need to keep in mind is that you will need TWICE as much space as you think you'll need.

2. Decide how you naturally look for information. This will determine what your filing system will look like, and how you will set up your files. For example are you a person who thinks in alphabetical terms, or does categori-sation serve you better? Remember – this is YOUR filing system so you need to do what works for YOU.

3. Categorise your filing drawers/crates. For example if you have a two-drawer filing cabinet, use the top drawer for business files and the bottom drawer for personal files. You decide how best to categorize your filing drawers. But don't just put all your files together in one drawer without any system otherwise you won't be able to find anything again!

4. Gather your supplies. Tabbed file folders work best simply because there are no holes to punch or fiddly clasps to undo. You simply drop your papers into your file – making filing your paperwork a cinch!

5. Create quick and easy access to your day-to-day files. A stepped-sorter holds approximately 8-10 files which step up the further back they are – making your files easily visible. Keep this on your desk, and store in it those files you know you will need access to every day.

6. Now move on to your PC filing system. Your PC is a very large filing cabinet, so it makes sense to create a similar filing system here as you did for your paper files. That way you do not have to manage two different filing systems – it's the same system except one is physical, and the other is electronic.

7. Create a system for your emails. Again, follow a very similar or the same system for creating email folders as you did for your paper and PC files. Outlook and Thunderbird allow you to create different mail folders.

Consistency is the key to an easy-to-use, successful filing system. Create the same files and folders for your paper-based system, your PC system, and your email program.

About the author:
Online Business Development Strategist, Tracey Lawton, teaches online solo service professionals how to create the essential online marketing and office organisation systems needed to build a more streamlined, systemised, and automated online business so that they can get more clients, more profits, and more freedom. Check out www.officeorganizationsuccess.com for free how-to articles, resources, tips, and tools, and sign up for your free "Office Organisation Success Toolkit".

Using Mobile Technology to
Manage Boarding House Activities

AUTHOR
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What started as a discussion with a boarding house master has resulted in a boarding house management software system that boarding staff and parents can use from their PC, laptop or even their mobile device.

When Michael Holland (Director of Boarding, Guildford Grammar, Perth) explained to me the manual processes used to manage and track school boarding house activities I put my 13 years of teaching experience to work with my tech savvy business partners and the result is REACH, a comprehensive school boarding house management system which automates and tracks school boarding house procedures and activities.

The objective was to remove the mountain of paperwork from the Head of Boarding's desk and replace it with an easy to use software portal with accompanying mobile app. Automating the process with technology would not only deliver substantial efficiencies but it would also deliver greater control with strict procedures and data capture for reporting. The result is a powerful tool for schools to manage risk more effectively and which provides a thorough audit trail of boarding house communications, approvals and activities.

The initial building block for REACH was with student leave and in particular managing the leave requests and approvals process. It was obvious from the start that mobile technologies were going to play a role in delivering the most effective solution for instant communications between staff, parents, guardians and hosts. A smartphone app would also allow for rich text forms to be submitted by parents and for quick and easy response by boarding staff. So we set about constructing the REACH system.

It became evident as we developed this system and communicated with various Heads of Boarding that we could deliver much more than just a leave management system and the REACH project quickly morphed into a much grander plan. This involved creating additional modules for attendance monitoring, student pastoral care, electronic check-in and check-out, notifications and news, student location tracking and a kitchen meals predictor. Then, with all this data capture, REACH also required a detailed and flexible reporting module.

Using Mobile Technology to
Manage Boarding House Activities
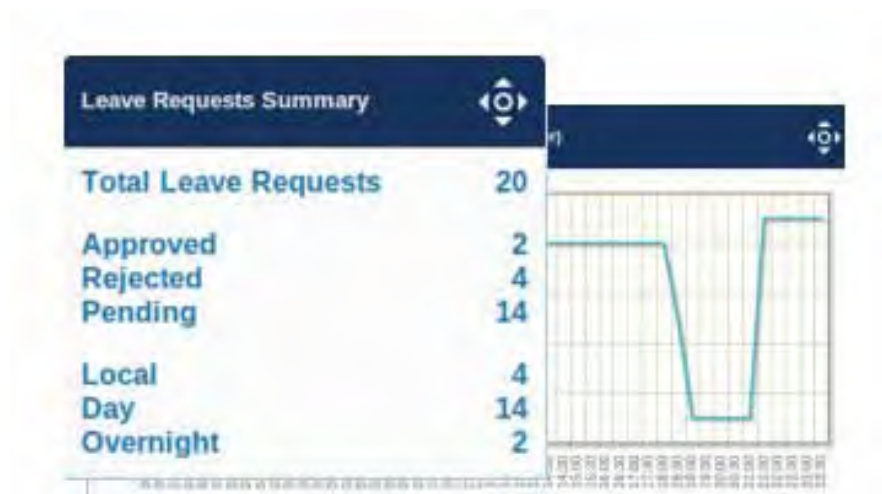
"Easy to use software portal with accompanying mobile app"

Testing the system became the task of five pilot schools across four states and the results have been very pleasing. Parents have loved the convenience and immediacy of their REACH mobile app whilst Heads of Boarding have found they have greater control and are saving hours in their weekly work routine. REACH is providing accurate data management with procedural controls and reporting that helps those schools to manage their duty of care.

The end result is a robust school boarding house management system which operates on PC and mobile devices and which covers the whole range of school boarding house activities. REACH also has the ability to export all activity data from the REACH system through API data links to existing school databases.

REACH is available by subscription as a fully integrated system or a stand-alone Leave Management Module. All schools are invited to register for access to a free working demo of the software.

REACH was officially launched at the ABSA National Symposium in August and all member schools are entitled to a special introductory offer which includes free use of REACH in their school for Term Four of 2013.

Contacting REACH:

Ph: 1300 215199

steven@touchline.com.au

www.reachcms.com.au

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From Strength to Strength
- Helping Indigenous Students make the Transition from School to Fulfilling Careers

AUTHOR
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Australian Indigenous Education Foundation

The AIEF Transition Support Program

For some students, deciding what to do when they leave school is a simple choice, for others, it takes more time to decide. Some may have a clear idea in their mind, while others struggle in uncertainty as they consider the many options available to them.

For others still, these options may be fewer, and issues such as remoteness, financial pressures or even a lack of self-belief may hinder a student's outlook after school.

Schools do all they can to ensure that students are able to aim high and pursue whatever they wish after they graduate, but the challenge often comes when the time at school is coming to an end, when students step out into the world on their own, when it's up to them to determine their path, to make the most of the foundation their schooling has given them.

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) is helping Indigenous students take this step and make a successful transition from school to careers or higher education through the AIEF Pathways Program. A central component, the AIEF Transition Support Program, provides practical support and guidance for Indigenous students on AIEF scholarships as they prepare for life after school.

In partnership with leading boarding schools across Australia, AIEF provides boarding scholarships for Indigenous students and seeks to ensure that the positive outcomes achieved throughout schooling translate into meaningful and productive lives after school. AIEF believes quality education is the key to unlocking Indigenous disadvantage, and education should lead to productive and fulfilling career pathways.

> **"92% of graduates have successfully** transitioned from school to further study or employment**"**

In the AIEF Transition Support Program, dedicated Student Support Managers provide individual one-on-one case management for Year 12 students to help define and gather information about their strengths and career interests and aspirations, and work intensively with them to help them achieve those aspirations in a sustainable way.

The program is complimented by other components of the AIEF Pathways Program, which focus on areas such as mentoring, work readiness and skills development.

The program focuses on the practical arrangements for a student's first year out of school, including study and career plans, financial support and living arrangements. The program provides not only practical assistance but encouragement, accountability and a sense of support that helps students to feel confident and well-equipped in their post-school lives.

From Strength to Strength
- Helping Indigenous Students make the Transition
from School to Fulfilling Careers

AIEF Student Support Managers travel to AIEF Partner Schools around the country, meeting individually with students in their final year of school. They help students assess their capabilities and goals to determine a suitable pathway after school, and assist with everything from resume writing to researching apprenticeships and tertiary courses, and to determining available accommodation. They are focused on equipping the students with everything they need to succeed and navigate the often unfamiliar world outside of their school environment.

AIEF then continues to monitor and track these graduates, providing ongoing support as needed. The Student Support Managers stay in contact with alumni and remain available for assistance and advice.

The goal is for students to achieve productive career pathways – to pursue whatever their interests may be and to support themselves in the process, whether that is through university study, TAFE, apprenticeships, traineeships or employment.

Since AIEF was established in 2007, 92% of graduates have successfully transitioned from school to further study or employment, embarking on their chosen career pathway.

Students like Nathan, who graduated from AIEF Partner School Marist College Ashgrove in 2012. Nathan took part in the program

and worked closely with AIEF Student Support Managers to determine his plans after school. Nathan considered several options and received assistance in his application for a Diesel Fitting Apprenticeship which he began with AIEF corporate partner Leighton Contractors in 2013. Nathan is grateful for the support he received; "If it wasn't for your support and help with the resume I wouldn't even have the opportunity."

The Transition Support Program is able to utilise the opportunities like this available through AIEF's corporate partners. These partners support AIEF's work and share its values. They therefore often have established Indigenous employment programs and offer traineeships to suitable Indigenous candidates. Depending on a student's interest, these partners can provide great opportunities after school.

"I'm very happy to be a part of the Leighton family… I look forward to getting up in the morning and heading off to work and learning the tricks of the trade as a Diesel Fitter. I am surprised to see how big the company is and looking forward to the future that lies ahead of me."

Another student, Katelyn, found the program to be extremely valuable as she considered her post-school plans. Katelyn attended AIEF Partner School Presbyterian Ladies' College in Sydney, graduating in 2011. During her

From Strength to Strength
- Helping Indigenous Students make the Transition from School to Fulfilling Careers

time at school, Katelyn was unsure about her post-school plans and didn't consider her abilities great enough for her ideal degree at university – "I was applying for courses I didn't care about as I didn't think I was smart enough to study what I really wanted."

Katelyn worked closely with AIEF Student Support Managers who encouraged her and, based on the potential they could see, grew her confidence to believe that she was capable of undertaking her preferred degree, Law. Katelyn also worried about where she would live and how she would manage financially. The Student Support Managers worked closely with her to find an appropriate place to live while studying, and identified scholarship opportunities to assist her financially.

Now in her second year of a combined International Studies and Law degree at The

University of Technology in Sydney, Katelyn is grateful for the support. "I would not be where I am today without the opportunity given to me by AIEF to attend an amazing school, and their continuous ongoing support throughout my school years and university degree," says Katelyn.

For these students who have been given the best chance at a productive career pathway the support is greatly appreciated, and many attribute their success, in part, to the assistance and encouragement they have received through AIEF.

At most however, their stories are testament to their own hard work and determination; realisations of AIEF's mission to provide access to educational opportunities for Indigenous children, helping them to build a brighter future for themselves and for the nation.

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) is a private sector led, non-profit organisation focused on empowering Indigenous children in financial need to build a future through quality education and career pathways at Australia's leading schools, universities and companies. A product of strong partnership between the Australian Government and the private sector, AIEF is building a $140 million fund to help open the doors to leading schools and universities for 7,000 young Indigenous Australians.

AIEF partners with leading boarding schools across Australia to provide scholarships for Indigenous students. These schools have established Indigenous education programs and close relationships with Indigenous families and communities, providing high-quality educational opportunities to students who are enthusiastic about learning and eager to unlock their potential.

Boarding House Staff are Professionals
not Parents or Friends

AUTHOR
Andrew Knott
Special Counsel
Tresscox Lawyers

Boarding house staff (whether qualified teachers or not) need to consider their interactions with students carefully. They need to ensure that they do not become too close to the students either in a physical sense or in an emotional or familiarity sense. All boarding house staff need to see themselves as professionals in a position of trust in relation to the students in their care. This is equally true where the age gap between young boarding house staff and the students in their care is relatively short. It is the position rather than the age which determines the obligation to maintain an appropriate distance when acting in a supervisory position and a position of trust.

The importance of this conduct will increase over the next few years. Issues to do with child protection are major issues at the present time. The Federal Government has budgeted over $400 million over a period of more than four years for the Royal Commission into child abuse in institutions. There are a number of other inquiries presently underway or having recently reported. Accordingly all regulatory bodies and all employers reviewing the conduct of teachers and other boarding house staff will expect them to be aware of the importance of maintaining appropriate professional distance.

One of the risks with younger staff is of seeking to become friends, and this resulting in over-familiarity, either in terms of being with a student when others are not present or in terms of physical contact or emotional involvement or discussion of personal issues which are properly the responsibility of other staff.

A case approximately a decade ago involving a teacher (but in our view just as relevant when considering the position of boarding house staff who are not teachers) contains the following passage:

'In common with other professions, the teacher is in a position of trust. It is often said that a teacher is in loco parentis to a student. However, this does not mean that a teacher must literary act as a parent of a student. Indeed, he or she must not do so. The teacher must maintain a professional detachment from a student. His role cannot be that of a parent. Further, he cannot be the "best friend" of adolescent girls (or boys for that matter).

Accordingly, actions such as lying on the floor with students to watch videos, letting students draw on his hand in class, and discussing intimate details of students' sexual lives, are inappropriate. This is not just because of the potential for the development of sexual relationships but because they inappropriately cross the boundary between student and teacher.

(X) assumed a familiarity with his students that would not otherwise be present between a 38 year old man and adolescent girls. He could only maintain such familiarity by reason of his position of authority over them. Over time, the students who had initially welcomed this familiarity, came to see it as "creepy". They sensed that the teacher had crossed over the boundary.'

These very wise words should be borne in mind by all boarding house staff.

Supervisors and managers obviously have a responsibility to clearly communicate with staff, especially new or inexperienced staff, these principles and the expectations which those managers or supervisors have of boarding house staff. They also need to review and monitor the behaviour and provide counselling (and in extreme cases appropriate disciplinary action) for the protection of the students (and as a result of the organisation to which they are responsible).

Managers and supervisors should create an environment in which young staff feel free to approach them for guidance as to what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. Communication in a candid and supportive way is a great step forward towards ensuring an appropriate culture in boarding houses which takes account of contemporary concerns, values and expectations.

> **"One of the risks with** younger staff is of seeking to become friends**"**

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Succession Planning in Boarding

AUTHOR
Ed Swanwick
Housemaster, Royle House
The Scots College

In their best selling business leadership text, "Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies", Jim Collins and Jerry Porras note that "all leaders, no matter how charismatic or visionary, eventually die." Whilst this statement may seem rather morbid and macabre, it effectively points towards a key challenge facing educational institutions today; that is, how to plan for leadership succession in the midst of a global educational leadership shortage.

Due to factors such as the retirement of the baby boom generation, early retirement precipitated by years of standardised reforms and increasing demands to bring about rapid improvements and an insufficient pool of suitably qualified and prepared replacements, the education sectors in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia and New Zealand are currently experiencing a shortage of suitably qualified educational leaders.

In a boarding context, this trend poses an even greater problem. It is no secret that good boarding staff are hard to attract and keep. The demands that boarding places on the day to day lives of the staff, particularly those in residence, means that only the most committed of educators are willing to take on a role in boarding. With such a small pool of personnel to draw from, the global shortage of educational leaders means that many educational institutions experience difficulties when seeking to appoint quality educational leaders to lead their boarding communities.

"all leaders, no matter how charismatic or visionary, eventually die"

In light of this, the need to plan ahead for the retirement or departure of current leaders is arguably nowhere greater than it is in boarding schools. The good news is that there is much that school leaders can do to ensure that there are sufficient teachers within their own institutions who are ready and able to take on greater leadership responsibilities. Doing so is an integral part of planning for leadership succession.

Experts in the field of leadership succession such as Hargreaves and Fink (2006) have found, not surprisingly, that the most successful examples of leadership succession in educational institutions were planned for well in advance of the incumbent's departure, and were specifically designed to either allow for the continuation of the directions and goals of the predecessor in successful schools or departments, or to create discontinuity or a change of direction in failing or cruising institutions. Where a school or department is viewed as failing, the case for introducing new leadership "blood" capable of forging a new direction is strong. In the case of succession planning for continued success, however, successions work best when insiders are groomed as successors.

The Scots College, Sydney provides a good case study for internal leadership succession in a boarding context. In 2010 Scots created a new role in boarding, that of the Assistant Housemaster. Whilst there is nothing revolutionary about such a position, in many boarding schools the role is usually performed by a junior member of staff who is several years off being ready for the significant demands of leading a boarding community. At Scots, the position was designed to attract quality staff who already had some leadership experience and were seeking an opportunity to develop their leadership potential further.

At the time, Scots were enjoying solid boarding enrolment numbers and a good level of satisfaction amongst the boarding community. However, as two of the five housemasters at the time were coming to the end of their tenure, the Principal, Dr Ian Lambert, saw the need to plan ahead for the impending succession of this important leadership role within the College.

The creation of the role of Assistant Housemaster was a deliberate strategy devised to attract strong candidates (both internal and external) into the Scots boarding community. It was in keeping with current educational leadership theories relating to the need for succession planning such as that of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) who argue that certain key principles need to be followed when grooming internal successors. Their research

found that the grooming of future leaders was most successful when the potential successors were identified early, were exposed to all aspects of the position they were set to take on through a process of shadowing, mentoring, coaching and training and when they were given challenging tasks and goals coupled with regular feedback.

The role was designed to do just this; the new Assistant Housemasters were appointed a good 12 months prior to the end of the outgoing Housemasters' tenures, and worked closely with their Housemasters as they took on a wide range of leadership responsibilities within their houses. The close relationship that developed between the Housemasters and Assistant Housemasters meant that the latter were given plenty of advice, guidance and feedback on the vast array of leadership responsibilities they were exposed to, better preparing them for the significant challenge of leading their boarding communities.

The result has been that, since its inception, the three Boarding Housemaster vacancies that have come up at Scots have all been filled by AHMs who have had at least a year preparing for the role, gaining a deeper understanding of the inner-workings of the institution and getting to know the boarding community better. This has ensured a smooth transition for boys, parents and staff during the Housemaster succession, an event with the potential to be a highly emotional and anxious experience. The creation of this role has also freed up Housemasters to spend more time and energy on strategic matters, developing stronger links with the Scots boarding community and dedicating more time to the marketing of boarding at Scots.

By planning for the continuation of success through grooming leaders from within

(amongst other strategies), Scots boarding has been able to sustain and build further upon the success it was enjoying in 2010 to the extent that the current length of waiting lists for boarding places is unprecedented and the approval rating of boarding in recent leavers' surveys has been unsurpassed by any other area of the College.

The creation of this role has been part of a wider strategy of Dr Lambert's to develop a culture of collaborative, distributed leadership similar to that espoused by experts in educational leadership such Spillane (2012), Reynolds et al. (2000) and Fullan (2007). The benefits of this culture have reached beyond boarding to strengthen other areas of the College. For example, the leadership skills the Assistant Housemasters have developed are suitably transferable to other areas of the College and have held them in good stead to take on challenges outside of boarding. As such, along with the three Assistant Housemasters who have been appointed to Housemaster posts, two other Assistant Housemasters have recently been appointed to Head of Department roles.

Whilst the Assistant Housemaster role as it exists at Scots may not suit the leadership models in many other boarding institutions, this is just one step that can be taken towards developing a collaborative culture of distributed leadership. Given the extensive research conducted over the past decade that demonstrates the benefits of creating such a culture within educational institutions, there is much to be gained by senior leaders of boarding schools giving more time and thought to developing a range of strategies to achieve this and to developing the leadership potential of their staff.

Building Resiliency,
Maintaining Connectedness

AUTHOR
Celia Mara
Head of Boarding
Toorak College

"Yes, thank you very much; I am delighted to be able to accept the position of Head of Boarding at Toorak College".

I said these words in May 2011, in preparation to commence this new role in January 2012. To say it has been a steep learning curve is an understatement. To ask have I enjoyed the ride and I am enjoying the challenges – yes I am, as each day is completely different and to get to know the girls 'out of office hours' is always a pleasure. I am a member of the Head of Year team, which is the key pastoral team in the school. This allows me to have input into how the girls are travelling at their respective year levels. We meet weekly with our Deputy Principal and I have found this team a great resource and support network for me. My role changed this year as I was appointed as a member of the College Executive. This move confirmed the support of the Principal and the School Board in relation to Boarding and its development at Toorak College. This move sees me as the key contact between the Day and Boarding school and to provide leadership and vision in line with the College's strategic aims and integral to setting future directions and proactive in future planning. I work closely with, and have been supported by, our Head of Physical Resources, Community Office, Enrolments Office and Catering Department to ensure that the service we provide to our girls, is a student centred one.

"Be assertive, not agressive"

Outside of Toorak College and what has also helped my journey has been the collegiality of my ABSA colleagues. They have openly provided me with guidance, information and most importantly a good listening ear. A great resource for anyone new to this area of our profession.

At our most recent Victorian Professional Learning day we engaged with Georgi Coaghlan, who took us through a modern day boarders 'Tool Bag for Life'. From this session two key words that have resonated with me are RESILIENCE and CONNECTED-NESS.

Within a residential setting, how do we develop resiliency in our young people and in such a social media world how do we, as adults, maintain that connectedness with them and provide for them to feel connected to their community?

I recently attended The Girls in Education International Conference; the theme of this Conference was Engage, Energise, Empower – Strategies to Maximise Potential.

The Conference opened with an introduction to 'Project Rockit'. PROJECT ROCKIT was launched in 2006 by Rosie and Lucy Thomas, two Melbournian sisters who saw the opportunity to build youth leadership, citizenship and resilience by tackling the issue of bullying in school communities. These young girls are insightful and wise beyond their years. I could see how very quickly they could connect with our students and provide them with strategies to navigate what can be a bumpy road.

However it was keynote speaker, Dannielle Miller who certainly made an impact on me. Dannielle's session was entitled "Supporting Girls to successfully navigate Girl World."

Dannielle is one of Australia's foremost educators, authors and media commentators on teenagers today. Her book "The Butterfly Effect" I believe, is a must have on the shelves of any girls Boarding House. This book will introduce you to the tools to develop a deep and connected relationship with teenage girls. It offers practical and powerful strategies and opens up new ways of looking at self-esteem, resilience, body image, friendship and also focuses on overcoming the fear of failure and finding positive role models.

One of the valuable tools that I feel can be used with our girls is her 10 step model on 'How to make up after a fight'.

At the conference Dannielle role played this with Dr Sally Cockburn, aka Dr Feelgood. This was a great way for us to see a plan in action. With Dannielle's permission, I have reprinted her 10 step model and hope that you may find this useful to work with your girls in developing their resiliency and deepening their connectedness.

Building Resiliency,
Maintaining Connectedness

How to make up after a fight.

1. Plan ahead. You know how Harry Potter always had Dumbledore to turn to? You need one too! It can be (Name of teacher/Staff member/Supportive adult) who you can talk to when you are upset with someone.

2. Aim for privacy. No problems are worked out well in public. Don't bring in your friends to back you up or their friends to support them.

3. Focus on how you feel. Your sentences should start with 'I'. eg. "I was really hurt when I heard that this had been said about me" or "I felt unsure about our friendship when I heard that…."

4. Be specific about the hurt caused and what caused it. Don't bring up the past; focus only on the actual incident that has hurt your feelings here and now.

5. Just as you need to have some time to plan how to deal with this, you need to give this to the other person too. So say "I am feeling hurt about what others are saying you said about me. I would like to sort that out with you and so can we catch up at lunchtime today to talk about it?"

6. Be calm.

7. Be assertive, not aggressive. Make sure you recognise the difference between those two!!!

8. Expect your friend to pay attention. If they are on their phone or something say, "I can see you are busy texting, we can talk about this after school if you would like".

9. Although this needs to be done privately, if you feel you need support bring a neutral friend; someone who is not for or against either of you.

10. End on a positive note. Agree to be friendly to each other even if you can't be friends.

www.enlighteneducation.com
www.projectrockit.com.au

Establishing Rituals
for Good Communication with Your Children

AUTHOR
Mary Sayer
Facilitator & Community Builder
Open Conversations

"Each child with each parent for at least 5 minutes every day"

Over the years I have asked many groups of parents about their concerns and challenges in raising their teenage children. Having been a high school teacher it seemed a healthy strategy to be checking in with parents and pooling that secret intelligence which enabled us both to ensure their children were thriving in their journey to adulthood.

Time and again responses were like refrains which spanned the decades…new names, but not new experiences.

"I'm not sure what's going on for him at present. I can't get a word out of him."

"All we seem to do is fight!"

"I'm trying to hold the line, but she keeps playing one of us off against the other and it's really hard."

"She shares sometimes and this sounds terrible, but it's usually when she wants something."

"I miss the little boy I had from three years ago."

These and thousands of other very familiar lines form what I call the refrains of the "Parents of Teenagers' Chorus". The song is not a solo by any means – it's definitely a choir piece! The question is, how can we better manage ourselves while it is in play?

No one person has all the possible answers to that question. In fact that is a wonderful thing, because it keeps calling for creative responses. It would be a really healthy conversation for school communities to begin a parent blog about, as an ongoing and active support for them.

For me it comes down to a few key practices or rituals which need to become embedded all through primary school, so that by adolescence when the neurons are dying off and then re-forming (which scientists say can take several years to achieve!), there is the space for teenagers just to run on auto-pilot with what are old and familiar behaviours.

Below is my list of rituals. There obviously will be others to add. Rituals though, are repeated practices based on significant meanings, in this case, forming the foundations of solid family communication:

1. Dinner Time – Set the parameters from the start: Good manners, lots of sharing (even arguments), fun and laughter, serious times, praise for each other, thanks for those who prepared and cleaned up the meal.

2. One-on-One Time – Each child with each parent/significant adult for at least five minutes every day. No expectations about the quality of content shared. Just establish the habit, thus normalising being together. This is also very helpful for parent/parent too!

3. Special Occasions – Identify them, mark them, get everyone involved in preparing for them. Totally have fun!

4. Marking and Holding the Line – Ensure from as early an age as possible that children know what is allowable and expected and what is not and WHY! Teach them that no amount of complaint or refusal, or white-anting, or playing one-against-the-other (be that parent/parent or parent /friend's parents!) will alter that. The early days with this ritual are difficult and from time to time re-enforcement will need to occur because children and especially teenagers are incredibly wily, which goes to their creativity (a good thing)! Believe though that young children love this ritual because they need very clear boundaries which secure their world for them. Adolescents secretly appreciate this ritual because it is a face-saver with their peers when they can truthfully "blame" you for their not being allowed to do certain things and it reminds them that you really do care for them.

5. Stepping Over the Line – This will result in reflection time, restitution activity and forgiveness. If trust is breached then there is the need to work out what was the impact and how it is to be rebuilt? It is a useful strategy not to provide the answers to those questions but wait for the guilty party to work it out for themselves. That is a far more long-lasting consequence and often far stricter than a parent would ever impose. It is also the opportunity for a potentially great conversation with them. Forgiveness and moving on are integral to this ritual being effective as a life-lesson. Nothing worse than holding a grudge. Stepping over the line for many children is simply testing the boundaries. It is not a questioning of love or relationships it is simply a challenge to behaviour standards. "What can I get away with right now?"

6. Creating a Village of Care – There may come a time when, for whatever reason, a child will feel more comfortable initially talking to someone else they trust and love. It may be because they are embarrassed about parents finding out. Choosing a few very select relatives or friends who children may bond with – as back-ups, just in case - can be great peace of mind. That way the tag-line: "There is nothing ever so bad that you can't tell one of us", actually becomes believable.

The above six rituals make sense to me and have worked consistently well for many families. If the hard yards are put in while children are young and then if they are held and re-enforced all the way through, there are no surprises for teenage children. Their challenges about how unfair things are and all the other "poor me" claims are easily responded to with – "But Darling, there's nothing new here. It's who we are and how we care for each other and always have. You're that important, we won't be changing anything right now. So make it work. We'll help if you want."

In conclusion, there is an invitation in all this to take stock of how your rituals are working for your family right now. Brainstorm with your friends. Ask your whole family about it. Review what's working and what's not and together re-write the song. That in itself might open up a great conversation!

Lights Out

Suicide

AUTHOR
Dr Michael Carr-Gregg
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Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians, accounting for 25.8% of deaths among 15-19 year old males and 29.0% of deaths among 20-24 year old males in 2011. The corresponding percentages for females in both of these age groups are 21.0% and 25.0% respectively.

Indigenous youth are known to have a much higher risk of suicidal behaviour than their non-Indigenous peers. The causes of high Indigenous suicide rates include social exclusion, substance abuse, socio-economic disadvantage, loss of culture, discrimination, and other social factors. These are compounded by rurality and incarceration; all of which disproportionately impact on Indigenous youth. For Indigenous males aged under 24 years, suicide rates are approximately three times the corresponding age-specific rates for non-Indigenous males, and suicide rates for young Indigenous women are approximately five times that of non-Indigenous young women.

Although suicide is a tragedy at any age, youth suicide generates tremendous levels of distress and loss in Australian communities, especially in a Boarding environment where staff-student bonds are traditionally especially close.

The emotional impact of suicide, especially of young people, has a devastating impact on any school community and often results in a frenzied call for action. Such a response has often produced what psychiatrist Stephen Rosenman (1998) calls a "do something, do anything" flurry of activity.

While this is understandable, Rosenman and others argue that much of this activity often represents an inappropriate knee-jerk reaction, is ineffective (Gunnell & Frankel 1994) and sometimes makes things even worse (Shaffer et al. 1991; Hazell & King 1996). A discussion paper by the Australian Psychological Society acknowledged that despite the fact that, statistically, suicide (and particularly youth suicide) was a rare event, psychologically it is far from rare. The paper states: "It is a salient preoccupation and issue for many cultures, for contemporary Western societies and media and for many individuals and families whose lives have been touched by the suicide death of others" (Graham et al. 2000). Many adolescent psychologists are concerned that with this increasing openness, suicide is becoming more and more a pre-eminent (and unhealthy) preoccupation for many young people. These professionals question the wisdom of talking publicly about the topic, let alone including the topic in the school syllabus. "We have to be really careful we don't add to the sense of despair that's already out there", says Jack Heath, now running the Mental Health charity SANE, which promotes public awareness of mental health problems.

While this has been an ongoing debate within the profession, a consensus has emerged that while one should not censor the subject, it is preferable to reframe such discussions in the context of good and bad mental health, with a particular focus on depression and it is recognized that movies such as Looking for Alibrandi and Romeo and Juliet can act as useful catalysts for such reframes.

The youth suicide industry

In past decades, some schools have elected to directly address the suicide issue by inviting outside community-based groups to run programs with students. Many of these groups lack an evidence base for such programs.

Suicidologists such as Anne Beautrais, an expert who has dedicated her life to understanding suicide and suicide prevention, suggest that there may be dangers in using such groups. While acknowledging that many students will be at best unaffected, she maintains that in every school there may be some vulnerable students who may be adversely affected by such sessions. She singles out those students who (unbeknown to the school) have made a previous attempt, suggesting that they may react more negatively to such sessions in schools. These students would be less likely to reveal suicidal intention or to believe that they could be helped by a mental health professional as a result of attending such sessions.

This means that some such programs, no matter how well intentioned, may increase the level of risk for a minority of students. In Australia, a range of individuals (including clinicians, researchers and government departments) has expressed serious concerns about the lack of demonstrated safety and effectiveness of youth suicide prevention programs being delivered by some community-based organisations that focus on education alone. Indeed, some researchers (Patton & Burns 1999) argue that the few studies that

"What's your Boarding School doing?"

have measured the impact of traditional suicide education indicate that their impact is less than positive, for young men in particular, increasing symptoms of depression and anxiety rather than reducing them.

The New Zealand Government, late in 2002, issued a warning to schools urging them to be cautious when engaging such organisations. The report, by the NZ Ministry of Youth Affairs, accuses such organisations of fostering a view that youth suicide is far more common than it actually is, generating unnecessary fear and anxiety and ignoring the fact in most youth suicides there was an underlying mental illness, particularly depression.

What prompted the NZ Government to issue such a warning was the realisation that some of the programs were actively spreading inaccurate information. There was an urgent need for all programs that sought to improve adolescent mental health to demonstrate that they were safe, effective and evidence-based. The frustration for government officials, on both sides of the Tasman, is that many of these organisations receive no government funding, and therefore levers for modifying their approach in line with evidence and best practice are limited if not non-existent.

This is problematic for many academics and government departments because elements of this "youth suicide industry" in both countries have raised large amounts of money and secured significant sponsorships that might otherwise have gone to much needed research programs. But this issue goes far beyond academic sour grapes. It is the manner by which these groups garner such funds and publicity that has attracted the ire of many academics. Some academics accuse the groups of actively fostering a number of public perceptions that are often inaccurate or, at best, distortions of the facts.

These include promoting the following so-called "facts" (often propagated on television or online through well-meaning, high-profile individuals, who are unaware that the information they are given to regurgitate is both misleading and inaccurate):

• That the rate of youth suicide is unacceptably high and increasing (according to the ABS, the rate has actually decreased in Australia each year for the past ten years) (ABS 2013)
• That governments are not doing enough to reduce youth suicide (they have committed tens of millions of dollars since 1999 to youth mental health)
• Advance simplistic and non-evidence based views on causation of suicide in adolescence – ignoring the uncomfortable fact that suicide and suicidality is extremely complex, and is associated with a variety of biological, social and psychological factors, including traumatic life events and/or mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety disorders, and borderline personality disorder.

Suicide

• There's a high rate of suicide among high school students. The latest Government data shows that the highest age-specific suicide rate for males was observed in the 85+ age group (32.1 per 100,000). This rate was considerably higher than the age-specific suicide rate observed in all other age groups, with the next highest age-specific suicide rate being in the 80-84 year age group (24.4 per 100,000) and the 45-49 year age group (23.8 per 100,000). In fact the lowest age-specific suicide rate for males was in the 15-19 year age group (10.4 per 100,000).

• Some of these programs are run by people who have lost a child to suicide themselves, so they must know what it's about. The government should leave them alone. (there's no empirical evidence for this view).

• Community programs that focus on education are doing a great job - at least they're doing something (some may do harm).

Prevention of youth suicide is something all schools including boarding schools can contribute to by promoting good mental health through reputable programs, (such as beyondblue's SenseAbility), by supporting young people, by responding to suicidal young people in a helpful way, and by being better informed about youth suicide.

SenseAbility is a strengths-based resilience program designed for those working with young Australians aged 12-18 years. It consists of a suite of modules developed to enhance and maintain emotional and psychological resilience.

It was created with classroom delivery in mind, but the modules can easily be adapted to benefit young people in other structured environments such as Boarding Schools and youth organisations. The program is based on cognitive-behavioural principles, the evidence-based approach which says that our thoughts play a critical role in influencing feelings and consequent behaviour.

The bottom line is that young people who possess sound social and emotional skills are generally better able to cope with the stressors of daily life. They also tend to have better relationships with parents, teachers, boarding staff and peers, and perform better academically. Very importantly, having these skills makes it less likely that a young person will experience significant mental health problems in the future. This is true suicide prevention work. What's your boarding school doing?

Helpful things that boarding schools can do include:

Suicide

• Promoting online counseling services like eheadspace – place the url on screensavers on communal computers and for primary school students Kidshelpline 1800551800

• Distributing and discussing facts sheets on anxiety, depression and self harm from the following websites:

Youthbeyondblue:
http://www.youthbeyondblue.com

Orygen Youth Health: http://oyh.org.au

Sane Australia: https://www.sane.org

ReachOut: http://au.reachout.com/

• Ensuring staff are adequately trained by encouraging them to participate in specific training:

Undertake courses run by Mental Health First Aid Australia:

https://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/what-we-do/

SenseAbility elearning program:
http://learn.beyondblue-elearning.org.au/senseability/

Ping Pong!

AUTHOR
John Durey
Sales Director
Public Outdoor Ping Pong

Public Outdoor Ping Pong is a maker of permanent, weatherproof, low maintenance outdoor table tennis tables. They have successfully installed tables for over 75 councils (and universities) across Australia, but with a wave of interest coming from universities, schools and most importantly, boarding schools and colleges, the company developed a 'school-specific' table that was cost-effective whilst retaining the robust qualities of a 100% steel table.

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The Benefits of Positive Psychology
on Kid's Education

AUTHOR
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Consultant/Speaker
The Happiness Institute

So what is Positive Psychology? It is the scientific study of optimum human functioning, and is a thriving and exciting field thanks to an explosion of interest and scientific research over the past 20 years. Caring for kid's greater well-being within an education ecosystem is increasingly recognised as a critical influence towards their overall successes in later life. Educators are successfully applying strategies to increase creativity, critical thinking skills and positivity in students, and significantly undermines a culture of bullying.

Teaching positive psychology not only benefits the children in an education system, but also the wider community. Kids are academically competent as well as being prepared to take a place in a complex, dynamic and democratic system. They learn to manage their emotions for the benefit of the wider school community, to use their strengths to preserve self-governance, to work cooperatively, and to build consensus with fellow students from diverse backgrounds. They learn to accommodate different points of view, tolerate political, ethnic and religious differences; and contribute to the greater good through meaningful engagement.

'Positive Education' is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness. The high prevalence worldwide of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should, at best, be taught as early as possible and, at worst, be taught in our schooling systems. There is an ever-growing global body of evidence from well

controlled studies that show an increase in resilience, positive emotion, engagement and self-meaning to school kids from a curriculum that is enhanced by Positive Psychology. In fact, these days the argument is less about the level of benefit Positive Psychology creates and more about how to introduce it consistently and systematically within schools.

For those principals, parents and/or school communities considering the introduction of Positive Psychology within your education ecosystem, the best part is that you won't need to be a 'trail blazer'. It's been done before in Australia and there are some wonderful success stories within a wide range of schools. Geelong Grammar are without doubt the 'vanguard' of schools that completely embrace this stream of psychology, however, other success in the education system that are just as profound but perhaps not as widely promoted exist in schools like Camberwell Primary School (CPS) in Victoria. CPS has discovered through their 'Positive Psychology journey' that learning in an interpersonal development domain supports students to initiate, maintain and manage positive social relationships with a range of people in a range of contexts. It is through the development of positive social relationships that individuals become linked to society, develop a sense of belonging and learn to live and work with others.

In a healthy 'Positive Education' system the implicit teaching of Positive Psychology takes place at each year level and across all aspects of school life, academic subjects, pastoral life and the co-curriculum programme. Studies over the past three decades sug-

> "Positive Education is defined as education for both traditional skills and for happiness"

The Benefits of Positive Psychology
on Kid's Education

gest that (amongst other benefits) a healthy 'Positive Education' system also has a positive effect on depressive symptoms in kids, improves student awareness of explanatory style for negative events and have significant impacts on depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorders.

Having three young kids of my own all recently entering the Queensland education system, the need to give them better exposure to Positive Psychology made me rethink my previous studies in the area and my years of work with The Happiness Institute counselling adults. My belief now is that the maximum benefits of this progressive stream of science are with kids in a healthy 'Positive Education' system. This is the area for greatest 'bang-for-buck' when it comes to positively influencing the course of human-

ity. My recent book, 'Positive Psychology 4 Kids' is a DIY self-help book for children of all ages between nine and thirteen years and my attempt to provide schools, parents and (ultimately) kids a complete summation of the principles underpinning Positive Psychology … but in their language. Not all of us have a Geelong Grammar budget; not all of us have the patience of a saint when it comes to introducing something holistically into an education ecosystem. However, a DIY self-help book for kids is an achievable, inexpensive and potentially life-changing start. Because the facts are becoming unavoidably clear; happy kids achieve better school results, have longer-lasting friendships, have much higher self-esteem and deal with setbacks far more effectively than their peers!

www.positivepsychology4kids.com
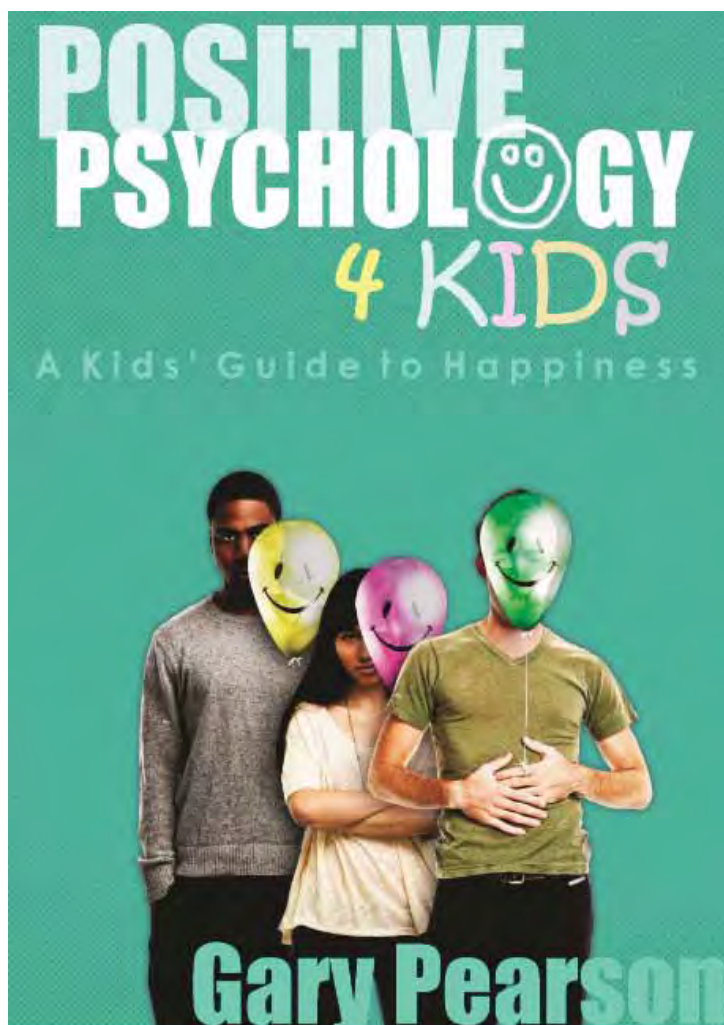
What Not to Do…

AUTHOR
Conrad Mathias
Year 11 Boarding Master
St Joseph's College

The business of boarding is filled with "to do" imperatives. Do this… do that!

There are a few things you should avoid.

• Don't be seduced into any play on words involving sexuality. No matter how tempting it is to play a straight drive with a clumsy remark by a student, avoid buying into stuff like that.

• Don't be seen eating anything which your basic student can't afford or access. Don't turn up at lunch eating a 'Subway' or sipping a 'Zero' coke when the kids are dealing with something they don't like. If you eat in front of the kids, eat what they eat.

"Don't be seen eating anything which your basic student can't afford or access"

• If they have to be dressed in a tie – wear one. A Prince Alfred College, Adelaide, doyen of boarding, once remarked: "you should always be a bit better dressed than the boys…" The same goes for the girls.

• If you lose your temper – and it happens - chill before you impose a sanction.

• Some responses require a second opinion. Get a second opinion before making a response.

Your fall-back position is not always obvious:

• Children tend to err to the right decision.

• The odd bad decision shouldn't tarnish a child forever.

• Conflicts of interest, like Test Matches, are often subject to variables.

Do: Laugh out loud.

You'll be surprised at how many children exclaim: "I've never heard him/her laugh!"

onBoard

boarding management system

onBoard is the first complete electronic management system designed specifically for boarding in the world. onBoard has been developed by those with extensive knowledge and experience in both boarding and information technology industries to deliver the flexibility and information you need on a daily basis.

The built in alert system that works across all modules ensures effective communication within the boarding house, safety for students, and peace of mind for staff knowing that the system will alert to late students, missed medical distributions, as well as having the capabilities to alert staff to students on a daily or weekly basis who are of concern.

onBoard's staffroom is the central hub for all staff, user profiles enable individual specific sharing of information and resources across each of the 10 modules. Managers are able to focus on quality management and workplace performance, whilst having the luxury of the system to analyse and check off basic routines and procedures. Supervisory staff can access information shared with them by those with manager profiles, complete leave, view data entries from the day before, as well as enter medical, behavioural and pastoral information.

Imagine one system, no paper, and more time - onBoard's capabilities will revolutionise, streamline and enhance the systems, processes and performance of your boarding house. It has specifically been designed to enable all boarding houses to work toward being a place of best practice, whether it be in New Zealand, Australia or abroad, whilst meeting regulations and standards.

onBoard comes in two modules, module one is available from 2014. Module one includes all of the operational aspects that make a boarding house work. Module two, available in late 2014 or early 2015 and includes the world leading student tracking system.

To register for onBoard, and to find out more of the features visit our website. Already there is a significant demand for 2014; to ensure you get included in the first round of instalments contact us now.

www.onboard.net.nz

Life Member
Karen Stokes

AUTHOR
The ABSA Board

Karen Stokes has been involved in the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) or its affiliates since 1987.

Two weeks after she married in 1982 she joined the boarding staff of St Peters Lutheran College in Brisbane and since that time has lived and breathed boarding through the support of her husband Richard Stokes, the current Executive Director of ABSA.

The Queensland Residential Schools Staff Association (QRSSA) was formed in 1987 and was joined with TARSA to become the Australian Boarding Schools Association in 2007.

From 1987 Karen was one of the group's strongest supporters, helping Richard with many of the tasks he took on such as Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and President. Her role in the background, especially in the production of Lights Out, or its previous version Boarding Today, was instrumental to the publication's success.

In 1994 the then President of QRSSA wrote "Karen Stokes over the past months has taken on a most important role of the newsletter preparation and I am sure that you have noticed the professional finished product. The Association would like to publicly voice our appreciation of this work".

From ABSA's formation in 2007, and even before that, Karen took on the role of Conference Coordinator, managing registration before and during every conference, attended to people's needs, and ensuring people were never left on their own. Karen did this in her own time. Even to this day she continues to proof read each edition of Lights Out.

Karen's exceptional support of her husband, Richard Stokes, in all matters associated with ABSA has been exceptional.

Every year the Board can choose one person to be awarded Life Membership for service to boarding and this Association, and this year we have unanimously agreed to put forward Mrs Karen Stokes as a life member of the Australian Boarding Schools Association.

Moved: Tim Hawkes
Seconded: Pauline Turner

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Coming Events

AUS

4-5 October 2013
New South Wales State Conference
The Scots College, Sydney

21 October 2013
Queensland State Conference
Ipswich Girls Grammar School

NZ

16-18 January 2014
Grass Roots Conference
Wellington

USA

5-7 December 2013
Annual Conference
Boston

10-12 March 2014
Global Symposium
Philadelphia

UK

11-12 November 2013
BSA and IAPS Joint Conference - Now Boarding
Oxfordshire

24-25 November 2013
SBSA Annual Conference
Norfolk

3-5 January 2014
Annual Conference for Boarding House Staff
Oxfordshire

22-24 January 2014
Annual Conference for Deputy Heads and Heads of Boarding
Leeds

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Download this issue from the
ABSA website:

http://www.boarding.org.
au/1893/our-community/lights-
out/

Would You Like Your Boarding School Featured in Lights Out?

We plan to feature two schools each edition.
All you need to do, is write a brief article
(400 to 1000 words) and send us some
high resolution photos.

Send all files to:
absa@boarding.org.au
by 15th October 2013.

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