

How do boys learn best?

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**Term 3, 2012 Sabbatical Report.**

**Focus - "How do boys learn best? What are the most effective ways of motivating and engaging boys?"**

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- **Dr Andrew Martin** – Keynote speaker, IBSC Conference (International Coalition of Boys' Schools), Melbourne.
- **Andrew Fuller** – Keynote speaker, IBSC Conference, Melbourne.

## **Purpose of the Sabbatical Study.**

1. To investigate what is currently regarded as 'best practice' in engaging and motivating boys in order to maximise their learning opportunities, educational achievement and their whole school experience.

This investigation will include what researchers in the field of boys' education regard as 'best practice' in engaging and motivating boys.

The investigation will also include what a range of schools – primary, intermediate, and high schools, state and private schools, co-educational and boys - only schools – are doing regarding motivating and engaging boys.

2. The investigation is undertaken with the aim of reviewing how Napier Central School currently engages and motivates boys with the view to making recommendations which arise out of the investigation.

## **Background Information.**

Napier Central School is a Decile 9, U5 School on 'the hill' in Napier. At the beginning of December 2012 it had 332 pupils comprising 177 girls and 155 boys. There are 14 female teaching staff. The males on the staff include the principal, caretaker and cleaner. My Board of Trustees wanted to be assured that, despite an all female teaching staff, that boys at the school were being motivated and engaged in their learning.

## **Methodology.**

My overall 'big picture' intention was to –

- undertake professional reading around what is regarded as 'best practice' in motivating and engaging boys.
- interview and observe my own staff regarding their teaching of boys to see 'where we were' before the investigation began.
- review the programmes on offer at Napier Central School to see whether we offer a range of academic, sporting and cultural activities for boys.
- attend the IBSC Conference at Scotch's College in Melbourne.
- visit a range of schools in Napier and Hastings.
- visit a school in the US ( San Diego) and England (London) to get a US and UK perspective.
- review our current strategies, identify areas for development and improvement and make recommendations for implementation to the Senior Management Team, staff and Board of Trustees .

In July 2012, I attended the IBSC Conference in Melbourne, Australia. There I heard several speakers specialising in the education of boys including Dr Andrew Martin and Andrew Fuller. Attending the Conference also enabled me to make a number of contacts, both in

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New Zealand and in San Diego, California and in London, England. There was a lot of very valuable informal discussion with fellow teaching colleagues which both confirmed our present practices and suggested fine-tuning and new approaches.

During the course of the sabbatical, I visited Frimley Primary School in Hastings and Napier Intermediate School which had boys' (and girls') only classes as well as co-educational classes.

I visited two private schools - Hereworth College which specialises in the teaching of Year 1-6 boys and Lindisfarne College in Hastings which specialises in the teaching of Year 7-13 boys.

I visited two state secondary schools - Napier Boys' High School and St John's College.

In the US, I visited the Boys' Army and Navy Academy in Carlsbad, California and St Augustine's High School in San Diego. In London I visited the City of London School on the banks of the Thames, beside the Millennium Bridge and directly in front of St Paul's Cathedral.

It was a great pleasure to visit the above schools and have colleagues share with me their practice. Without exception, the colleagues I encountered were enthusiastic, passionate and professional leaders and teachers who wanted to hear about my study focus, give advice and share opinions. I am very appreciative of the frankness and honesty of the advice and opinions offered and in almost every case, of the personal or school research also shared with me. I came away with a huge amount of data and research to digest and assimilate.

The themes that were introduced at the IBSC Conference were seen in every school I visited – whether they be Primary (Year 1-6), Intermediate, Private Year 1 -6 boys School, Private Year 7- 13 boys' school or the State Year 9-13 Secondary Schools. One of the main themes of the IBSC Conference, mentioned by speakers such as Andrew Fuller and Andrew Martin, was the need to develop in boys the attributes of 'Emotional Intelligence' such as determination, persistence, perseverance and buoyancy. Developing those skills in boys was a need that came out in every school I visited whether at the Primary, Intermediate or Secondary level. Boys at each school were at different stages on the continuum that is 'emotional intelligence'.

## **What the research says about teaching and engaging boys .**

In the year preceding the sabbatical, I read extensively around the broad topic of boys' education.

Below is a summary of the main themes arising from the research. All of these main themes came up at Conferences and in the schools I visited as part of my sabbatical research.

1. **Know and manage boys' brain and body learning chemistry.**

There are structural and chemical differences between the brains of boys and girls. Accept and appreciate that fact. ( Leonard Sax, 2006) Realise that everyone has their own learning style. Identify that and teach accordingly. As an overall group, boys have different learning styles to girls. Boys lean towards the visual-spatial/ kinaesthetic while girls lean to the linguistic. Teach to their learning styles.

Allow and cater for adrenaline and testosterone surges in boys. Involve boys in movement and boisterous ( controlled) behaviours. ( Joseph Driessen, 2011. **Ross Scrymgeour**, 2011).

2. **Build on the visual.**

Boys' brains tend to be graphically oriented so make the most of movies, photographs, computer games and graphics, video, comic strips and cartoons. Drawing or doodling actually helps a tactile person to stay "online" so that they listen better ( Maggie Dent). King, Gurian and Stevens argue that "visual-spatial activities reach a broader spectrum of learners, harness learner strengths, help to stimulate and develop more neural pathways and help close the gaps for both boys and girls. They can be absolutely essential for some learners." (King, Gurian and Stevens, 2010. Joseph Driessen, 2011.)

3. **Know your students.**

Tune into the core nature of each boy. What do their bodies seem to need. What things hold their attention and what things shut them down? Are there multiple ways to accomplish the same task?

Building relationships with any child is essential. Give each boy and girl individual attention. Inspire them to aim for high standards. Celebrate progress and achievement. Meet and greet at the start of the day. Know their interest, sports and hobbies. Share a bit of who you are. ( Joseph Driessen, 2011.)

Maggie Dent agrees, adding "Unless you can build rapport with a boy, you will struggle with your ability to connect and communicate with him. To build rapport, we need to better understand how boys see the world, what they need and what challenges them." ( Dent, Maggie, 2011) .

"Boys learn through their teacher, rather than just learn from what is taught. Indeed boys who feel liked, valued and accepted will perform better in the classroom." ( Dent, Maggie, 2011) Similarly, Nigel Latta argues the two most important factors for success in school are intelligence and self esteem. "Of all the thousands of studies, of hundreds of thousands of kids around the world, the two factors that have been demonstrated time and again how boys ( and girls) perform in school are intelligence and self –esteem – how smart you are, and how good you feel about yourself."( Latta, Nigel, 2009)

4. **Use hands-on, interactive learning.**
5. **Add movement.** Infuse movement into learning activities. Have regular brain breaks- get up and move. Kent Miller ( 2011) argues for two or three activity sessions per day, including running. Wall touches and outdoor sports. Miller observed that outdoor activities were more successful in calming boys than activities in the gym. Lack of walls and boundaries gave boys free rein over their environment. Once back inside, boys needed 10 minutes or so to settle down then the following 45 minutes were productive.  
  
“Physical activity and movement helps boys’ brains to remain alert and active.” Gurian. (2011). Boys enjoy drama and role play. “They need balls to kick, things to climb and to pit themselves against a challenge.” (Ian Grant)
6. **Use adventure contexts.** ( Joseph Driessen, 2011.)
7. **Incorporate student interests and choices.** “ For both boys and girls, motivation to learn can be the difference between success and failure. ”( King, Gurian and Stevens, 2010. )
8. **Demand a strong work ethic.** ( Joseph Driessen, 2011.) Set goals and coach boys how to persist ( Ian Grant)
9. **Communicate what you expect.** ( Joseph Driessen, 2011.)Have high standards. Be positive.
10. **Clear rules and boundaries.** Joseph Driessen and Maggie Dent both urge teachers to have clear rules and boundaries for boys. So too argues Ian Grant in “Growing great boys.” Be firm but fair. Have boundaries. Be consistent and predictable.
11. **In conflict situations,** stay cool always. Minimise emotions. Keep instructions and talk brief ( Driessen). Maggie Dent writes that boys are often overwhelmed by their emotions and cannot express how they feel. “ Many school still use shame, sarcasm and strong criticism when dealing with poor boy behaviour.” ( Maggie Dent) ). “They need ... a zero tolerance towards ridicule.” ( Ian Grant.)
  
12. **Have fun.**

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## **Napier Central School.**

**In Term One, 2012 I interviewed the 12 teachers at Napier Central School about how they motivated and engaged boys. Below is a summary of their individual comments. The number in brackets indicate the number of teachers saying similar things. I have grouped their comments under the general themes ( above) from my readings.**

1. **Know and manage boys' brain and body learning chemistry.**  
Boys have different needs and wants to girls and react to different things. (2)  
Be aware of differing learning styles (4)  
Girls have better fine motor skills than boys. Boys often struggle with writing and presentation. Don't expect as much from them as you do girls. They have other strengths and abilities. (3)
2. **Build on the visual.**  
Appeal to boys attraction to visual presentations – photos, video, games (1)
3. **Know your students.**  
Boys like games (5) and challenges and competition. (6)  
Sometimes boys need to be assessed via means other than writing ( eg: questioning/ verbal responses) to draw out their full understanding. They don't have the vocabulary, the speed and ease with words that girls often do. Take more than one answer to questions. (3)  
Boys enjoy working in groups and teams and with buddies ( 3) .  
As a teacher be a good role model. Have good male role models in the school in a variety of sporting and cultural roles – tennis, softball, chess, guitar, drums.
4. **Use hands-on, interactive learning.**  
Teachers need to use a range of techniques to engage boys and a range of rich, varied, visual and hands-on experiences. (8)  
Have plenty of physical activities, science activities (paper planes, gliders, parachutes, helicopter, propulsion jets. Land yachts) technological challenges – catapults, cranes - interactive and "hands-on" activities. (4)  
Discovery Time is good for them with a variety of activities (1)
5. **Add movement**  
Have plenty of physical activities (4)  
Recognise that boys are more physical than girls. Boys twitch, fiddle, move and are noisier than girls. They need to do less sitting down, stand up, stretch and move around regularly. They can't sit still as long as girls. Boys need micro-breaks in between periods of intense concentration. (8)
6. **Use adventure contexts.**
7. **Incorporate student interests and choices.**  
Focus on the relevant- the what and why we are studying certain subjects.

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8. **Demand a strong work ethic.**

Have high standards. Be positive. (1)

Give boys short goals ( eg; write two sentences) to aim for. Pace lessons appropriately for boys. (1)

9. **Communicate what you expect.**

Boys like positive specific praise(4)

Boys like getting rewards (3).

Boys need clear concise instructions, often repeated in a variety of ways, often visually. (3)

Teachers need to break instructions down into smaller chunks for boys - lists on the whiteboard – first do ..., then do..., thirdly do ... (3)

Prepare boys for the end of a lesson – give them ‘warnings to finish work in advance’. (2)

10. **Clear rules and boundaries.**

Be consistently friendly, firm and fair.(4)

Boys need to know clearly what is expected of them. Have high standards and expectations and expect them to reach them. (2)

Boys need to know the rules, the boundaries and consequences of their actions. (2)

11. **In conflict situations.**

Don't 'talk at' boys (1).

12. **Have fun.**

Recognise boys unique sense of humour/ use humour in the classroom (3)

Introduce competition to writing (how many sentences can you write in 10 minutes? Work to the clock. (3)

**Napier Central school programmes that cater for boys.**

**As well as interviewing teachers, I reviewed the programmes we provide at Napier Central School and found that Napier Central School engaged and motivated boys by**

- having a wide range of interesting topics that appeal to children/ boys.
- having a wide range of sporting and cultural activities to chose from.
- having ability groups within classes.
- having extension groups in curriculum areas such as Maths and Technology
- having interschool competitions in a wide variety of areas – Athletics, BP Technology Challenge, Chess, Football, Netball, Rippa Rugby, Tennis, Triathlon, Cross Country.
- having high academic standards and expectations.
- having clear consistent rules and consequences for behaviour.
- having clear and consistent behaviour and discipline procedures for teachers to follow.
- encouraging boys to set themselves challenging academic, physical and social goals.

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- developing in boys the 'key competencies' of (i) Thinking (ii) Using language (iii) Managing self (iv) Relating to others (v) Participating and contributing. The Key Competencies really are 'key' to developing in boys the skills and abilities they will need life- long.
- encouraging and developing in boys a core set of values under the acronym 'RIPE' - Respect, Integrity, Perseverance and Empathy.
- providing a wide range of sporting activities eg: volleyball, basketball, tennis, rippa rugby, soccer, cricket, softball, Tee ball, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, triathlons, optimist yachting.
- providing annual camps such as Stoney Creek where boys can do rope and confidence courses, ride a flying fox, build fires and cook sausages and damper, use BMX and mini- motor bikes, do orienteering and problem solve. Camps always have a strong representation of dads working alongside students.
- providing a wide range of cultural activities eg: Choir, Orchestra, Chess, Kapa Haka.
- Providing an adventure playground where boys and girls can take risks, compete and challenge themselves.
- having male role models in our school for a range of sporting and cultural activities eg: Ian Hall – coaching Softball, Tee ball, Rippa Rugby and Soccer, Bernard Carpinter - chess, Jason Alexander - guitar, Cameron Budge - drums, John Phelps – ICT, Ehaia West - rippa rugby, Karl Bauerfeind, Kevin Alexander and Jason Curtis, parents - soccer, Grant Hastings - softball, Simon Winter - tennis, Leith Hallyar (parent) and Chris Curry ( student teacher) - basketball, Philip Boyle – cricket.
- realising that boys like 'hands-on' interactive activities such as those provided for in Science and Technology.
- continuing to have 'authentic' learning contexts relevant to the 'real' world.
- having competition, games and fun in the classroom.
- having micro-breaks during the day to break up periods of concentration.
- providing leadership roles for boys.

This is a very comprehensive range of academic, cultural and sporting opportunities and was on par with any of the schools I visited, state or private, co-educational or boys only.

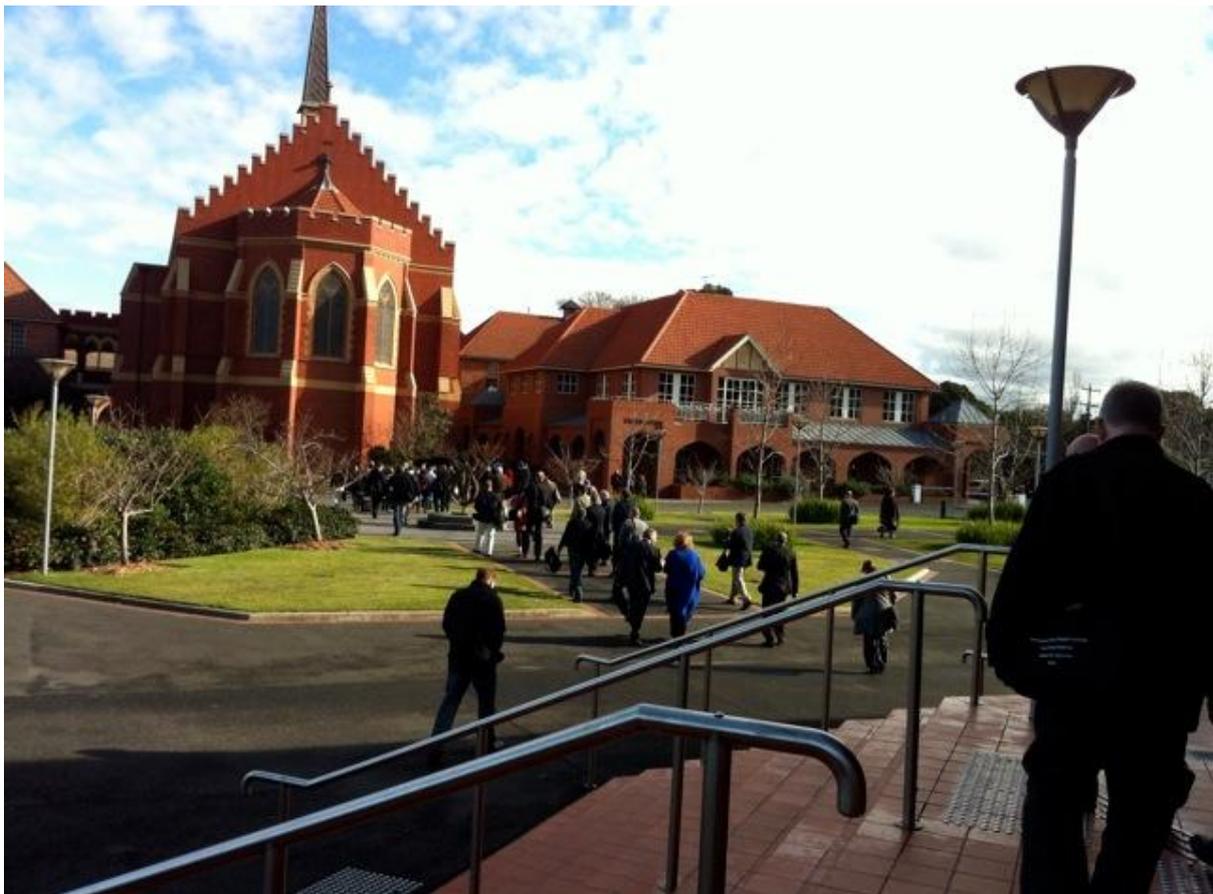
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## Findings –

### **The International Boys' School Coalition (IBSC) Conference.**

From July 9-12<sup>th</sup> 2012, I attended the 19th annual conference of the 'International Boys School Coalition' (IBSC) held at Scotch College in Melbourne, Australia. The IBSC is a coalition of independent, parochial and public schools from around the world dedicated to the education and development of boys. The 2012 conference theme was *Unearthing Creativity* and was based on the premise that boys like to create and to make things happen: create music, poetry and art; create games and sports; engage creatively with technology; create humour; create friendships and relationships; create trust and belonging; create lives of significance for themselves.

The Conference allowed us to hear from engaging keynote speakers and participate in workshops given by educators from around the world. Delegates were able to reflect on how they currently teach boys and to look ahead at 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. A very valuable part of the Conference was enjoying stimulating conversations with colleagues who are also passionate about quality teaching, and the teaching of boys.





The following are summaries of the presentations made by two keynote speakers.

### **Andrew Fuller:**

Andrew Fuller is a Fellow of the Department of Learning and Educational Development at the University of Melbourne. Andrew has many years' experience working with Australian and international schools and their communities and is the author of several best sellers, predominantly on Emotional Intelligence. Andrew is a strong proponent of fostering resilience and emotional intelligence in boys, a theme that was echoed in most schools I visited.

Andrew's address was entitled "A positive mind set." Andrew argued that some people, no matter how naturally talented or clever they are, talk themselves out of having a go or putting in that extra effort to really succeed. Their own attitudes sabotage their chances of doing their best. They try to excuse themselves by saying "This is too hard. I'm tired. I can't be bothered. "

When teaching boys, Andrew Fuller argued that teachers need to -

1. Have clear signals about who's in charge. Boys like teachers who are fair, funny and respect their point of view. Let boys know who's in charge. Spell out the boundaries and the consequences.
2. Have high expectations of them. Beware of the "That's good enough! She'll be right" mentality. Expect them to reach your expectations. Get them to put in the hard yards. Let them know you can't get extraordinary outcomes from ordinary actions. Anything is possible but nothing is easy. Excuses

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are the main sabotages to success in boys. Foster resilience, determination and persistence in boys. Fall down seven times, get up eight times.

3. Set powerful goals for them or get them to set goals for themselves. Do or not do- there is no try!

There are two types of goals-

- 'Looking good' goals which motivate you to try harder
- 'Getting better' goals help you to get better when times are tough.

The future is now! Be who you want to be – now!

4. Get boys to play to their own strengths. Don't compare themselves to others. Get them to compete with themselves and beat their own personal bests.

5. Treat them with respect. Respect them for who they are because they will sense it. Value them and prove it in words and actions.

6. Do not humiliate a boy or make him 'lose face' in front of his peers.

7. Boys are physical. Getting them to move and break up concentration times is a key strategy with boys.

8. Use physical signals when you want attention. Boys are less tuned into facial cues and more able to screen out 'white noise'. Back instructions up with a visual eg: on the whiteboard- so that you can point to it for boys who have trouble listening. Use visuals and animation as often as you can.

9. Fewer rules are better. Have two or three rules that you insist on and apply fairly and consistently.

10. Have two or three core values (eg: honesty, loyalty, being part of a team) that you live by and insist on.

11. Fewer words are better. Make instructions and reprimands 'short and sweet'. Don't belabour the point or you will lose them. Don't yell.

12. Encourage boys to take risks and to realize that it is alright to make mistakes. Losing or failing at something is the one way to get better.

13. Get boys to think of others and to practice gratitude and random acts of kindness.

### **Reflections on this speaker.**

- I liked Andrew's basic premise that many students talk themselves out of 'having a go at something' or putting in that extra effort needed to succeed. Their (often innate) attitudes sabotage their chances of doing their best and they make excuses for themselves. This can happen in students with a range of abilities including the naturally talented and clever. In my 20 plus years as a teacher in schools ranging from Decile 1 to 10 and in my 20 years as a principal, I sense that this happens more with boys than girls. I am just finishing reading and commenting on 333 reports and comments regarding the need to persevere and complete tasks, appears with both sexes but more so with boys.
- Having "a positive mind set" / a 'can do' attitude is essential for boys. Having high standards to aim towards, rather than churning out the merely acceptable and persisting until the task,

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and high quality, has been achieved, is a challenge for boys.

- The various components of 'emotional intelligence' need to be identified and taught.
- I would like to follow up further Andrew's distinctions between "looking good' and 'getting better' goals.

## **Dr Andrew Martin**

Andrew Martin, BA (Hons), MEd (Hons), PhD, MAPS, is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on boys' education, motivation, engagement, and achievement as well as academic buoyancy and courage, pedagogy and teacher-student relationships.

Dr Martin's address was entitled "The Roles of motivation, buoyancy, adaptability, personal best and relationships." He spoke of motivating and engaging boys and continued the theme of developing emotional intelligence in boys.

He spoke of the drive in individuals to learn and the energy needed to work effectively and achieve. He spoke of learning without pressure & learning under pressure.

Dr Martin spoke of 'Booster thoughts' - things which enhance learning and self-belief such as confidence, control, commitment & persistence and composure under pressure. Coupled with 'Booster thoughts' are 'Booster behaviours' - behaviours which enhance learning such as planning work in advance, using mind maps, study management, managing yourself, persistence, seeking help when in difficulty or to clarify learning, good relationship with teachers and involvement in the activities of the school.

As teachers we need to be aware of the concepts of 'booster thoughts' and 'booster behaviours' and attempt to develop and foster these in boys throughout their school careers.

Dr Martin also referred to 'Mufflers' - things that get in the way of a student's learning such as anxiety, failure avoidance, not enjoying school, uncertain control and feelings of helplessness. He also refers to 'Guzzlers' - self sabotage, avoidance, minor tasks, alibis and disengagement. Girls tend to be higher in anxiety & uncertain control whilst boys are higher in disengagement and in buoyancy.

Every boy has a mix of factors. Teachers need to recognise the presence of 'mufflers' and 'guzzlers' in boys and teach and encourage the use of 'booster thoughts' and "booster behaviours".

As teachers, we can help boys to succeed by –

- increasing their self-belief and their chances of success. Get them to break big tasks down into smaller 'bite' sizes by 'chunking'.
- explaining things more than once and in different ways.
- checking on understanding one on one.
- giving boys a choice of activities to do (process differentiation)

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- give boys choice in presentation (product differentiation) - PowerPoint, photos, video.
- talking to boys about other times they have persisted- they need to see they have persisted in the past and can persist now.

## Boys need to-

- see and understand that effort, determination and persistence leads to improvement. The same effort, determination and persistence that they apply to sports activities eg: shooting hoops - also needs to be applied to academic work.
- take risks and see that mistakes eventually lead to improvement. Mistakes are indeed 'productive failures'.
- learn to separate their behaviour ( including mistakes) from their overall sense of self -worth.
- be challenged & competitive. Boys need to be encouraged to reduce their focus on comparisons with others and increase their focus on 'Personal Bests' - if they cannot always beat their best friend they can compete with themselves and beat their own last personal "bests".

## Teachers need to-

- help boys to break their goals down into (i) Process goals and (ii) Product goals.
- strike a balance between authority & a relaxed classroom environment.
- strike a balance between serious work & fun. Make schoolwork fun.
- adopt a youthful teaching style.
- provide jobs and responsibility for boys.
- help boys develop "Buoyancy" when faced with setbacks & adversity.
- help and encourage boys to develop good relationships with others, including teachers.

## Reflections upon and points to follow up from this speaker.

- Dr Martin's address about 'emotional intelligence' complements that of Andrew Fuller.
- In my experience, boys do need to see and understand that effort, determination and persistence lead to improvement. They often apply these qualities to sport but not to academic activities.
- Boys do need to take risks and see that mistakes ('productive failures') can lead to improvement.
- I liked Dr Martin's concept of 'Booster thoughts' such as confidence, control, commitment & persistence and composure under pressure which enhance learning and self-belief. How to develop 'Booster thoughts' is an area I would like to follow up.
- 'Booster behaviours' such as planning work in advance, using mind maps, study management and managing yourself are taught by teachers at Napier Central School. The concept is an important one for boys who rush into something unplanned and

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needs following up.

- Dr Martin's concepts of 'Mufflers' – ( anxiety, failure avoidance, not enjoying school, and feelings of helplessness) and 'Guzzlers' ( self -sabotage, avoidance, focus on minor tasks, alibis and disengagement) need further exploration.



## **SCHOOL VISITS.**

### **A: Frimley School:**

Frimley School is a large U6, decile 3 primary school situated in suburban Hastings with a multi-cultural roll. It won the 'Goodman Fielder School of the Year' Award in 2001 and in 2009 was one of the first contributing schools in the Hawkes Bay to introduce both a boys' only class and a girls' only class. Literacy and numeracy are major focuses at Frimley School. Frimley School also has its own specialist music and ICT teachers.

In addition to the Boys' Only Class, boys are being catered for in the school by - Theme and topic selection, Reading text choice, interactive Maths, Science, Technology, PE, formative assessment techniques, using the key competencies eg: managing self and meeting individual needs.

I visited Frimley School because of the innovative reputation of the school and the principal and to talk to the teacher of a primary school's boys' only class regarding his class programmes and teaching strategies.

### **Frimley School Principal, Malcolm Dixon.**

Malcolm is an experienced principal and has been at Frimley Primary since 1993. He has overseen many changes and innovations.

- Three years ago, Frimley School had a difficult group of boys. Murray Richardson, a member of the Board of Trustees, and a teacher at Lindisfarne College, suggested a boys' only class. Teachers volunteer or apply to teach the boys' class. Their tenure is three to four years maximum. Teachers of boys' classes are supported by appropriate Professional Development. The boys' and girls' classes at Frimley are very popular and over-subscribed. Late applications are turned down. There have been parental requests to start a boys' class earlier than the Year 6 level.

In the boys' only class -

- the class teacher makes sure that the topics studied are of interest to boys and that there are plenty of interactive and hands-on activities.
- there is lots of physical activity each day, more so than the average co-ed class.
- the boys lived up to teachers' high expectations of them and their self-esteem was helped.
- the boys' tone, motivation and focus improved.
- boys don't have to impress the girls.
- the class uses local policemen and positive male role models and these are well received.
- the annual camp is a 'Boys Only' camp and teachers expect more of the boys than a camp where there are boys and girls.
- the class teacher makes sure that there are a variety of interesting reading texts for boys including car and fishing magazines.

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**Reflections upon and points to follow up from this interview:**

- As a Decile 9 school, Napier Central School has few boys with behavioural problems. However the challenge is still there to motivate and engage boys and for them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Frimley brings into the school a variety of male role models (as we do as Napier Central).
- We cater well for the interests of boys in reading but having magazines that boys might like to read will be explored further.
- Having a boys' only camp is also an interesting idea and could be done by the Principal and fathers. However we lack the numbers to make this truly feasible. In 2013 there are only 14 boys out of a total Year 6 intake of 34.

**Frimley School Teacher Chris Birch.**

Chris has taught a boys' only class for four years. In 2013 he will return to a co-educational class. He has found that every year has been different and every class has its strengths and weaknesses. Some years have been more challenging than others but all have been rewarding. Chris had a wealth of knowledge to share.

The following notes are from our interview and from his 2012 report to the staff "Boys' education: My Journey."

- The lack of Dads in many households is of concern to the school. Male contact is important in a boy's life whether as a teacher, coach or mentor. Male teachers are role models for the boys.
- When compiling students to go into a class, each class needs to have clear boy leaders who are motivated and engaged in learning, have strong work ethics and interpersonal skills. Boys tend to become disheartened if the student at the top of the class is always a girl.
- Girls are often on top in a co-ed classroom. Some boys get disheartened and think "Why bother?" and give up. In a Boys' Only class, boys have a better chance to be the best.
- Spreading out the male students who have a 'mana' and a 'strong standing' in the school community is also an important consideration.
- Peer work between boys – the 'Master and Apprentice' - works well with boys. The more capable boy is to assist the other and not provide the answer. The 'Master' role also helps the "master" by slowing down the thought processes and enabling the 'master' to see a solution to a problem or to see things in different ways. By teaching others, it clarifies the 'master's' own thoughts. Master students have to ask themselves- "How can I make this simpler?"
- Careful selection of interesting topics, and activities to do within that topic, is fundamental to engaging boys. Murray Gadd has written about 'ownership in education' and how a choice in areas to study, a choice in how to present findings on a topic or a choice in topics to write about, can help to engage boys. When boys are investigating something they are interested in, their independence and enjoyment increases. It is important to differentiate and have a choice of topics and activities for boys.
- Chris has found the science and technology topics where boys get to create and make things, are popular. For a topic on 'Flight and compulsion' in 2009, boys were

helped to create a high pressure water rocket of 120 psi which, when set off, cleared the school grounds. This created engagement, enjoyment and much excitement. Girls are better than boys at sitting down and getting on with the task at hand. Later in 2012, Chris intends to get his boys' class to design and build a drag racer.

- Boys need to manipulate things - they learn by doing. Incorporate creativity and 'doing' into lessons whenever you can - drawing, creating a BMX track, to scale (Maths), 3D- made out of cardboard.
- Some boys need something physical to manipulate while working or listening eg: a stress ball, a pen or pencil to roll around in their hand. You will stop your teaching many times if you pick boys up on everything they do. As long as they are not interrupting others or interfering with the learning of others, let minor things go.
- The traditional model of boys sitting at desks doesn't work. They need to spread out on the floor - starfish style - or at tables. They need to move and come back to their work - they can't stay in one spot for long and can't be confined.
- Our present school system seems to be more tailored to girls - sitting down, concentrating and focusing, language based. With the crowded curriculum, at times there seems to be less PE. Teachers need to keep kids and especially boys active, and let them run off some steam.
- Teachers need to be flexible in their approach to boys. Don't expect the same of them as you do girls. Recognise that boys do need to move more often than girls. The work quality does not change whether lying on the ground or sitting at desks.
- Boys need more physical exercise than the girls. Boys in the boys' class do more PE during the week than co-ed classes. They also have 'micro breaks' whereby they will run one lap of the field or obstacle course during the day. They come back into the class refreshed and ready for the next topic. They often need time to process the last lesson.
- Boys need to be encouraged to take risks and learn from them.
- Boys need to play fast competitive games like rugby and take risks in the playground like tackle rugby and bulrush.
- Boys also need to be encouraged to do their 'personal bests' in a wide range of areas including running, maths, reading and writing.
- Resilience needs to be taught. Some boys are mollycoddled at home by Mums and older sisters. They give up easily and have a tantrum. They need to develop independence and self - reliance.
- The digital age sometimes makes things too easy for boys. Boys need a physical challenge. They need to develop persistence. Boys need to use dictionaries. They are used to instant feedback via computer games. Boys need to create things and build things like some boys do with dad in the shed, Boys have a need to greet each other with some form of physical contact like nudges and play punches.
- A lot of teacher thought goes into topic and reading book selection. All children are encouraged to access high interest topics on the intranet / internet.
- Marry together reading and writing. Teachers need to share good writing models, prose and text. Have free writing sessions. At times teachers are too tied up with genre. Use both - imagination as well as genre. Use iPads and laptops.

**Reflections upon and points to follow up from this interview.**

- The concept of a 'boys only class' is a sound one. However I see its feasibility linked to the school size. Frimley School is able to offer its students and parents choice in co-educational, boys and girls classes. They also have a choice in male staff to teach the class. We do not have the roll numbers at Napier Central to offer students the choice of a co-ed, a boys' class and a girl's class. Significantly, we do not have male teachers to choose from.
- The lack of Dads, and therefore positive male role models, in many households was a significant point. I need to follow up on the percentage of 'split' households at Napier Central School and ascertain how many boys are not living with a father full time. At Napier Central School, if parents are separated/ divorced we will provide a report for each parent if asked. In December 2012, I signed off an additional 50 reports which where children don't have a 'full time' father.
- Chris' statements re; the physicality of boys and their need for movement and a variety of desk/table/ counter/floor surfaces to work at are valuable points. Many boys like to collaborate with others and learn in small group situations.
- 'Our present school system seems to be more tailored to girls - sitting down, concentrating and focusing, language based. Teachers need to be flexible in their approach to boys. Don't expect the same of them as you do girls.
- Don't let PE drop off the timetable. Teachers need to keep boys active, and let them run off some steam'.
- Have activity differentiation to have a choice of activities for boys is essential. Boys need to express themselves in the way that they do best.
- Having successful boys in each class and boys who have 'mana' is important. Boys like to learn from other boys in a 'master' and 'apprentice' situation. Both boys learn valuable skills and the number of 'teachers' in the class increases. The 'apprentice' learns from a peer and the 'master' has to learn metacognition and think about their thinking in a way the apprentice will understand.

**What authors say about the 'differentness' of boys and girls and the implications for the classroom.**

- Whether it's a result of nature (genes) or nurture, or both, boys are different to girls. Teachers need to recognize and appreciate this and celebrate it. "The 'differentness' of boys is not inherently bad, but it does present a challenge to teachers, to the school culture, and to boys themselves." (p31, Kindlon and Thompson, 1999.)
- "Although gender differences naturally fall across a continuum and no single description fits all boys or all girls, there are nonetheless a number of characteristics that differentiate the two genders *generally speaking*." (Day, Lori, 2011.)
- Maggie Dent agrees when she writes "Boys and girls ... are not stereotypes: they fall along a wide spectrum of learning preferences and styles ... there is a great deal of overlap...As a group however, boys are much more likely than girls to be graphic thinkers and kinaesthetic learners and to thrive under competitive learning structures." (Dent, Maggie, 2011)
- "Tactile or kinaesthetic learners are the main candidates for failure in traditional school classrooms. Tactile - kinaesthetic learners often drop out of school because they cannot focus well when forced to sit down, hour after hour." (Dent, Maggie, 2011) No intentional disrespect is intended by fidgety boys.
- "I have noticed that the boys who cope best in school have strong auditory processing abilities. Auditory learners make up around 15% of the population... Only a third of students remember even 75% of what they hear in a normal class period" (Maggie Dent, 2011.)
- "It seems that a boy's natural impulsiveness could also be rooted in his biology. Boys tend to have lower levels of serotonin, the calming neurotransmitter, and thus it is more difficult for them to manage impulses." (Dent, Maggie, 2011) Michael Gurian argues that a boy's behaviour is often driven more by his neurology than intentional non-compliance.

## **B: Napier Intermediate School.**

I visited Napier Intermediate School as it is our local Intermediate School and the main Intermediate School that we contribute to and it also has a boys' only class. Although Napier Intermediate caters for Year 7 and 8 boys, the points made by teacher Grant Trollope are meaningful for Napier Central School. In fact, Napier Central School is a contributing school for Napier Intermediate and the attitudes, skills and values we teach set up our students well for what they will experience at Napier Intermediate.

### **Main points by classroom teacher Grant Trollope.**

- There are innate differences between the teaching styles of male and female teachers. Women teachers interact and relate with boys differently to male teachers. Some things come naturally to a male teacher and other things come naturally to female teachers. There is a natural way of behaving, a male and female style. At times boys need to be told – “Just do it!” JDI! Male teachers tend to talk to boys more directly than female teachers do.
- Role models are brought into Napier Intermediate School to work with students. For example, Norm Hewitt was brought into school to teach dance the year after he won “Dancing with the stars” and was very well received. NBHS students also come into work with NIS pupils. The boys listen to and look up to the older NBHS boys.
- Behaviour modification occurs when boys interact with boys. They show tender loving care with others who need help. They can be supportive of their peers. They understand where they are in the "pecking order". They learn from other boys.
- Some Maori and Pacific Island children react to teachers in a cultural way. At school they have to learn different ways of communicating with peers and adults compared to how they behave at home.
- Boys are more self-conscious with girls around, about what they do and say. They feel that they have to be 'staunch' in front of girls. They need to 'save face'. Boys often feel more relaxed with their male peers. Boys can laugh with each other. If a girl laughs at them, that's a different story. Boys know the difference between 'laughing with' and 'laughing at'. Boys don't think that other boys laugh at them.
- Foster the school values of Respect, Responsibility and Relationships and also foster self-respect (Treat others as you would like to be treated), Trust, Self-discipline, Perseverance and Persistence.
- Boys need to learn that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Encourage them to make an attempt, accept that they will make mistakes. Learn from them.
- Boys are encouraged to sit down and sort out problems between themselves. They are challenged about their behavioural choices – “What else could you have done in that situation?”
- Boys need preparation for the roles they will be expected to play in life. For example Grant gets his boys to role play the way to act in public situations. eg: receiving a certificate at assembly. They are encouraged to “Be proud’.
- Have regular ‘micro-breaks’ during the day especially between subjects that need a lot of concentration and sitting still. Boys like regular routines that they can keep to. They enjoy the security of a predictable timetable. Micro-breaks can include hand clenches, quick games, buddy work, standing up and sitting down.
- The class teacher reads a lot to boys. Short stories are popular. Last year's theme on the Middle Ages was popular with the boys with some of the activities involving

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making shields and 3D artwork.

- Plans and templates for writing can help boys plan their writing in advance. They need guidance. For recounting stories, Grant often gets boys to consider ‘who, what, why and when’. At times Grant gets his class to consider their senses when writing creatively. Repetition of strategies to use when planning a story is essential.
- Team work is encouraged. Boys are encouraged to help others who are not good at a subject.

### **Reflections upon and points to follow up from this visit.**

- Differing male and female teaching approaches.
- Male Role models. At NCS we have male role models in the school for a range of activities including soccer, basketball, tennis, rippa rugby, chess, drums and guitar tuition.
- However, although we having ‘visiting troupes’ of performers ( eg: Kapa Haka groups) from Napier Intermediate School and Napier Boys High School entertain us from time to time, we could invite more ex pupils as role models to work with the boys.
- Micro breaks between periods of concentration.
- Models, plans and templates for writing- what Dr Andrew Martin at the IBSC Conference termed “booster behaviours.”
- Preparing boys for the roles they will be expected to play in life.
- Boys learning from older boys.
- Building a core set of values.

### **What authors say about the physicality of boys.**

- “The average boy’s gifts are wrapped in high activity, impulsivity, and physicality- boy power- and the value of these gifts depends on the teacher, the boy and the moment. These qualities serve boys beautifully in the playground, where there is room and respect for bold strokes of action and impulse. In the classroom however, alongside girls- who are typically more organized, co-operative, and accomplished school learners- those ‘boy qualities’ quickly turn from assets to liabilities.” (p32, Kindlon and Thompson, 1999.)
- Researchers have found that boys’ and girls’ brains have different ‘rest states.’ “When a male’s brain gets bored, some of his functioning shuts down and interferes with his ability to listen and learn. When a female brain gets bored, however, more of her brain stays active.” (Gurian. 2011.)
- “Considering ... the massive surges in testosterone boys that experience, we can see that boys are more wired to like risky behaviour.” (Dent, Maggie, 2011) “Boys fizz with energy. Sometimes it’s dangerous, but often it’s delightful, expressing itself in good natured larrikin humour ... I like their physical humour, their sense of fairness and the breath – squeezing hugs they surprise you with. I like it that men are decisive and straightforward: seeing life as a series of problems to be solved, mostly in practical ways. ” (Larson, Virginia, 2011.)

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## **C: Hereworth School:**

Hereworth is an Anglican School in Hastings administered by the local Anglican Diocese. It was once mainly a boarding school but its 2012 roll of 215 is now predominantly day boys with around 40 boarders still attending.

I chose to visit Hereworth School because, in addition to Intermediate education, it specialises in primary age education for boys and is one of a very few independent boys' schools for that age group still remaining. Over recent years, some students from Napier Central School have gone to Hereworth for their Intermediate Years.

**Ross Scrymgeour, Principal of Hereworth School, is an experienced principal of many years both in Auckland and Hawkes Bay. Ross showed me around the school including recent renovations including the Founders' Room and the new music and technology block.**

**Ross shared with me his knowledge and his research into boys' education.**

- Academics is the number one priority... ( but) with boys, other components are important as well. The new developments mean we are able to have academics in traditional type class situations, then the boys would have a period where they'd go and do something hands on. It might be woodwork or something to do with material, then they'd come back and do some more academic work – then go outside and do something physical. The day would be broken up to keep the boys focused.
- Technology and music were part of a wider vision for boys' education. We made a commitment to being a school especially designed to turn boys on to their learning. The ( new) facilities had to be appropriate to that kinaesthetic, visual, hands -on style.
- The keys to teaching boys are the 4 'f's' - being firm (clear boundaries and consequences), fair (boys have a clear view of justice and being treated the same as others), friendly (good relationships) and having fun.
- Boys are more active than girls. Their brains appear to be wired to move, to make things move and watch things move. Periods of concentration and focus during the day need to be broken up by some form of movement.
- Have consistent behaviour management expectations within a class and across the school. Boys like to know the rules, the boundaries and the consequences of their actions. They feel secure in a stable, consistent, structured environment.
- Focus on the task at hand. Use short instructions. Break instructions into manageable 'chunks'. Have them written on the whiteboard for boys to refer to. Don't nag - keep the instructions 'short and sweet'.
- Consider shorter 'bite size' tasks. Scaffolding is important. Lay the foundations of learning well and build on them.
- Boys are often visual learners and like visual representations of directions. They also like summaries of what they have learned. They often remember things longer if they can see it and refer back to rather than remember from having heard it.

## How do boys learn best?

- Use plenty of visual stimuli to catch their attention and stimulate them - charts, posters, film, video, photos, computer games. Change visual stimuli often. Get boys to present work in a variety of visual forms - charts, photos, animation, video, slides.
- Use a non- confrontation approach. Do not humiliate! Make sure that boys are not made to 'lose face' in front of their peers. They want to blend in. It is better to work with them than against them. Ross used the analogy of a rip on a beach - do not fight against the rip - let the rip take you out further and swim from a position of lesser resistance. In other words, bide your time. Let things calm down then revisit the problem/ issue. Work with their natures and their spirits. They are easy to squash but hard to get back. They often ask themselves "How weak is this going to make me look to my mates?"
- Positive relationships with others including teachers are important. They don't show it as much as girls but the need for positive relationships is there. They are very loyal.
- Make learning and activities 'authentic' and relevant to real life. Boys have to see the purpose of a task and how it is relevant in their lives.
- Develop a focus on 'learning how to learn' and 'learning how to think'.
- Teach them how to work 'smart'. Teach them sound time management and study skills. Get them into the habit of sound time management and study skills. Insist upon quality work. Model what you want. Show examples to boys.
- Insist upon quality presentations. Model. Show examples. Give boys specific feedback. Praise them for their actions and what they do.

## Reflections upon and points to follow up from this visit.

- timetabling the school day so that intense periods of prolonged concentration are broken up by other curriculum areas such as music, art and PE. I believe most classes do that at NCS but I will be following up on that. Hereworth also has 'micro breaks' between periods of concentration.
- the importance of a balance in male/female teachers when teaching boys.
- boys responding to classes that are 'friendly, fun, firm and fair'. I first heard that phrase/ mantra from Steve Biddulph at the IBSC Conference at Lindisfarne College in 2007 and have espoused it at NCS ever since.
- breaking instructions and activities into smaller chunks.
- boys predominantly being 'visual' learners.
- the importance of the boy – teacher relationship.
- the importance of 'learning how to learn' and 'learning how to think'.
- the importance of building a core set of values.
- the importance of history and tradition. When I toured the school with Ross, he showed me the 'Founders' Room' where a lot of the visual memories of the school are kept and displayed – such as cups, sporting trophies, honours boards and archival photographs, in a style and lighting similar to a small art gallery.

## **D: Lindisfarne College:**

**Lindisfarne College** was established in [Hastings, New Zealand](#) in 1953 and in 2011 has over 500 students currently attending the college. The school caters for Form 1 (Year 7) to Form 7 (Year 13). Lindisfarne College's [rector](#) is Ken MacLeod.

**Key points made by Matt Allen, Assistant Rector- Middle School re: teaching boys. Matt is a passionate experienced teacher and has since moved on to the Deputy Principal- ship of Scots College in Auckland.**

- A teacher of boys needs to be like a referee in a rugby game. Teachers are there to enforce the rules and “be fair”. They need to be consistent in enforcing school rules and be role models by "talking the talk" and “walking the talk”.
- Everyone makes mistakes. Boys need to be comfortable with this. If boys make mistakes, encourage them to learn from them and allow them to have a fresh start afterwards. Don't hold past mistakes against them.
- Encourage boys to be decision makers. They need to make good choices and learn by the consequences of their actions. Have consequences that change behaviour rather than consequences which merely punish.
- Encourage boys to use the “habits of mind” such as persistence, empathy, flexible thinking, applying past knowledge to new situations, taking responsible risks and managing impulsivity.
- Encourage random acts of kindness” and the concept of service – giving back to the community. Lindisfarne had father and son ‘working bees’ on oaths around the school followed by a BBQ as well as ‘Quiz and chip’ evenings.
- Put pressure on teachers to be good teachers of boys – recognise how they are different and how they learn best. Encourage observations of other teachers who are good teachers of boys. Provide PD for teachers in boys’ education.
- Encourage the observance of values – manners, respect and empathy.

### **Key points made by Barry Musson – Head of Year 7 & 8.**

- Decide your priorities for boys. What's important to teach boys – taking responsibility, being productive, treating others decently.
- Build relationships – get to know boys both inside and outside the school. Focus on their strengths and weaknesses both inside and outside the school. See weaknesses as new goals. Have consequences – organised in advance that change behaviour rather than punish.
- Stream new entrants. Have a normal stream and a developmental stream.
- Specialised teaching – use teacher strengths especially in areas such as Science, PE, Music and Art.
- Focus on the 'habits of mind'. These are exactly the habits that boys need to get.
- Focus on the key competencies. These are exactly the skills that boys need.
  - T- THINKING
  - R- RELATING TO OTHERS
  - U- USING LANGUAGE SYMBOLS AND TEXTS
  - M- MANAGING SELF
  - P- PARTICIPATING AND CONTRIBUTING.

**Fraser Harrison, English Teacher at Lindisfarne College and George Rogers, Specialist Classroom teacher** led a workshop at the International Boys' School Coalition Conference in Melbourne entitled " Education beyond the picket fence". Fraser and George argue that too often education occurs in 'silos' where teachers are unable to collaborate due to demands on their time. They developed a model that encourages a cross curricular approach to boys' learning where key life skills are developed and then put to the test in a real life experience.

**Main points made by Fraser Harrison and George Rogers -**

- encourage boys to problem solve.
- develop resilience in boys. Don't let them give up easily.
- develop 'well roundedness'. An ability to engage in academic, sporting and cultural activities.
- encourage boys to be team players.
- develop in boys the mind-set that we all make mistakes but we can learn from them. Be comfortable with failure.
- develop in boys- values, ethics and empathy.
- make learning relevant and 'authentic' - with a genuine purpose in the real world.
- share good teaching practice amongst teachers. Have clear focuses shared by all.
- deliberately structure class programmes to develop the key competencies.

**Reflections upon and points to follow up from this visit:**

- Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the differing behaviour of boys and girls.
- Teachers need to be knowledgeable about differences in preferred learning styles.
- Teachers need to be knowledgeable about strategies to cater for these differences.
- Where boys are not achieving as well as they could that, this information could be used to review policies and programmes so that the strengths of boys are channelled appropriately.
- Developing the key competencies in boys.
- Developing a core set of values in boys.
- Developing 'emotional intelligence' in boys.
- Developing the 'habits of mind' in boys.
- Giving back/ service to the community.
- Having 'father-son' working bees and bonding sessions.

## **E: NAPIER BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL.**

**Napier Boys High School is a state Boys' High School with a 2012 roll of around 1240 Year 9 to 12 students and approximately 70 teaching staff.**

### **Key points emphasised by Ross G. Brown, Principal of Napier Boys High School:**

- The importance of sound teacher - student relationships. Teachers have to be genuine and approachable. Boys can sense this.
- It is often thought that the teaching of boys should be interactive. This is not always true but engaging them, getting their attention is essential.
- A teacher's reputation is passed down. Sometimes respect is automatically given to a teacher through their reputation ie: what other boys say about them.
- It is often thought that boys are predominantly visual / kinesthetic learners. Some boys will say that's not them. We cannot always put boys' learning styles into boxes. A mix of teaching approaches by the teacher is necessary.
- Each individual is an individual. The second maturation of boys' brains (between 14-23 years) together with bursts of testosterone has an effect on boys' risk taking and learning.
- Routines are important to boys.
- Boys need boundaries and consequences and will test these.
- Treat boys firmly, fairly and consistently, the same as girls.
- Ross referred me to a NBHS research booklet entitled 'Teachers in Room 203: What the students say.'  
'Room 203' is a euphemism for the room in every school where there is calm, learning is taking place, students are on task and even the most demanding students seem to understand that the teacher has control of the situation. On either side in 202 and 204, things are less calm and learning has given way to survival. The term was coined in the US and refers to room 3 on the second story of a school building in the inner city. Room '203' was the room where the 'Freedom Writers' began their journey.
- In 2006, Napier Boys High School described the situation at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California to a random sample of approximately 150 NBHS boys who were then asked to recollect the very best attributes of the best teachers that they had encountered prior, and during, their time at NBHS. They were also asked to provide advice to new teachers. Their comments and their advice - 'their student voice' - made up 20 pages of the NBHS booklet 'Teachers in Room 203: What the students say.' 'Room 203'

### **Reflections of my interview with Ross G Brown.**

- Teachers have to be seen by students to be approachable.
- A teacher's reputation goes before him/her by word of mouth – both with the students and with parents.
- Not all boys are the same regarding having a visual/ kinaesthetic learning style but teachers have to find strategies to engage boys.
- Ross's reference to "Room 203. What the students say" was valuable. Collecting 'student voice' on what students see as quality teaching/ teachers is informative. .

## How do boys learn best?

- I found the feedback from ex NCS students as very valuable and in many cases re-affirming. At the end of the 2013 school year, I will introduce Year 6 student 'exit interviews.'

### **Student Voice.**

As a result of my interview with Ross, I met and interviewed a group of ex - NCS pupils and asked them "What makes a good teacher of boys?" This also developed into a conversation about what they liked about Napier Central School.

#### **The following are some of their comments:**

- Keep boys interested and involved.
- Have fun instead of copying notes all day. Be Interactive. The teacher should move around the class and discuss the work with individuals.
- The lesson needs to have a structure. Teachers need to know what they are doing. Boys like visual things such as watching U tube videos. This breaks up the lesson. Some people learn mainly by seeing.
- The teacher should not have favourites.
- I had my first male teacher after I left NCS.
- In certain subjects, being a male is an advantage. Male teachers have the same ability to react to each other, a male to a male. They can tease like boys do.
- Teachers should be good role models.
- I like it when teachers join in games at lunchtime.
- Teachers should know that boys are different to girls in the way they learn.

#### **When asked about their memories of NCS, the boys replied that they enjoyed**

- marbles days ( held as 'treats' twice a year).
- 'wheels' days (where they could bring along skateboards,scooters, bikes, etc and use them in the playground, under supervision).
- dressing up as book characters (for 'Book Week").
- the annual camp such as Stoney Creek and Camp David.
- the biennial school production at the Tabard Theatre.
- making milk bottle cars with sails.
- making hot air balloons.
- testing parachutes by dropping them from the Room 6 balcony.
- swimming sports. Swimming in the morning - it was freezing!
- practical stuff.
- the annual athletic competitions.
- the annual BP Technology Challenge.
- tabloid sports in the Junior School.
- buddies - for reading and ICT.
- balloons rising with air from hot air dryers.
- ICT. In Year 10 Computer Science, we are doing the same stuff that we did at Napier Central ' when we used Microsoft word and slideshows.
- Year Six speeches to the assembly were a good thing at Napier Central. We got to use Powerpoint. We had to have the confidence to speak in

How do boys learn best?

public. This was helpful for the years ahead.

- the annual Cross Country.
- making ginger beer with Mrs McLaren in Year One. The explosion when the ginger beer blew its top!
- growing plants in a cup- in the dark or the sunlight.

#### **Reflections on my interview with ex-pupils:**

- The boys showed a real joy and enthusiasm when reminiscing about their former primary school.
- Some recognised that boys and girls are different in the way they learn.
- They were all positive about the range of opportunities- academic, sporting and cultural – that NCS gave them. I expected them to remember the sports on offer but they also commended on the Interschool Athletics and Technology Competitions, the Orchestra and the dramatic / musical biennial production at the Tabard Theatre.
- They all showed enthusiasm when discussing science, technology and hands- on learning. The lessons they remembered were the ones where they constructed and did things.
- They said they appreciated how NCS had ‘set them up’ for Intermediate and High School. In particular they remarked on what they had learned in ICT with John Phelps and Teresa Cuthbert and how some of the things they learned at NCS, they were only encountered again now in Year 10. Having to stand up and talk about themselves and their interests in assemblies (and with the assistance of power point presentations) gave them a lot of confidence.
- Some of the boys thought that male and female teachers had different teaching styles and thought that male teachers were more ‘on the same wavelength’.
- I gulped when one boy said he had his first male teacher after he left NCS. That is not an ideal situation and will be remedied in the future. Boys need a range of positive male and female role models at school. Male teachers in the Primary School Service are in short supply. Nancy Caine at St. Augustine’s Boys’ High School said she would appoint a male teacher over a female teacher (only) when all other things (qualifications and experience) were equal. Since the days these boys were at NCS, we have had more male role models into the school in terms of sports, guitar, drums and chess.

#### **NAPIER BOYS’ HIGH SCHOOL.**

**Robin Fabish is an experienced teacher with the best interests of boys at the core of all he does. He has a strong Science background and at NBHS is HOD Te Reo Maori and the lead facilitator of the Kotahitanga programme in the school. At NBHS, he has promoted conversations about achievement that are evidence and is very clear about what quality engagement and pedagogy should look like. In Term 4 of 2012, he left NBHS to take up the position of Deputy Principal at Te Aute College.**

**Robin argued that boys learn best when-**

#### **Relationships :**

- they know that you care about them.

## How do boys learn best?

- they can identify with you because you're interested in the things they are into.
- their teacher has a good sense of humour.
- their teacher doesn't give up on them, they believe in their students.
- their teacher pulls them up when they're out of line (usually quietly).

### **Pedagogy:**

- the teacher has high expectations academically and behaviourally.
- they believe that their teacher knows what they're talking about. They know their subjects.
- the teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies and approaches.
- their teacher can explain things in ways that they understand.
- their teacher knows how to break things down into manageable chunks.
- their teacher helps them with a plan for what's being learned.
- the teacher gives on- going feedback and feed- forward (formative assessment).
- the student can see their progress.
- the teacher is helpful.
- the teacher co-constructs goals and approaches with the students so that learning becomes a partnership.
- there are opportunities to work in groups to facilitate learning discussions

### **Reflections on this interview:**

- One of the keys to engaging boys is the quality of the relationship you have with them.
- The use of formative (ongoing) assessment is essential including giving appropriate feedback and feed forward and the co-construction of learning goals.
- Being in a partnership with boys and helping them formulate a plan for learning.

## **A female teacher's perspective of teaching boys.**

**Anne Milward – Brown is an experienced teacher at NBHS and is the year 12 Dean. She is a female teacher in an all boys' school which at times means a different approach to the one used with girls / in a co-educational school. Her experience, knowledge of boys and passion for teaching boys was obvious in our discussions.**

### **Anne considers that boys learn best when-**

- teachers maintain strong relationships with boys. This helps to keep them focused and motivated. Being interested in their lives outside the classroom is vital.
- teachers are less fussy with the 'pretty stuff' that girls do and focus more on the content and the desire to succeed. Select topics that interest boys and allow for active learning. Be prepared to make changes if things are not working and break the learning into parts.
- teachers understand their humour and are able to laugh with them.
- teachers need to be firm, consistent and fair with their expectations.

## How do boys learn best?

- classroom teachers get involved in their extra - curricular activities. This strengthens the connection with the classroom. Teachers and leaders need to be visible in their lives outside the classroom.
- there is a structured, routined, working environment that allows for co-operative activities.
- teachers make the boys accountable for their own actions.
- teachers deal with disciplining themselves rather than passing it onto senior management.
- Intermediate and Secondary Schools work in closer than they do now and share and exchange teachers and students knowledge and experience.

### **Julia Dobbin is a young female teacher with under 10 years experience in an all boys' school- 'The City of London School', London, England. She says -**

- Teaching in an all boys school is sometimes challenging and requires a different approach to that needed with girls. Boys respond well to authority – they have to know 'who's the boss'. They like and need clear rules and boundaries which are consistent.
- Boys respond well to a teacher who has a sense of humour and who can appreciate their particular brand of humour.
- Developing good relationships with boys is all important. A teacher has to know them well, their strengths and weaknesses, their interests, sports and hobbies both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Boys like to know a little about their teachers. They appreciate it when teachers give a little of themselves. Sharing a little of your own life lets them see that you are human.
- Treat them with respect. Keep instructions and communication precise and to the point. Less words are more effective when dealing with boys. Don't talk at or over them. Never humiliate them in front of their peers. Saving face is important!
- Know your teaching topics well. Boys are engaged and learn best when they are interested in the topic through natural leanings or teacher enthusiasm and teacher mastery of the subject. They like to engage with the material through discussion and practical work.

#### **Reflections upon and points to follow up from these two discussions.**

- Relationships! Trust. Respect. The need for teachers to maintain strong relationships with boys. Being interested in their lives outside the classroom and their extra - curricular activities is vital. Teachers and leaders need to be visible in their lives outside the classroom.
- Boys and girls are different in their needs and learning styles. The recognition that girls are perhaps more fastidious than boys in the presentation of their work. Teachers of boys need to be less concerned with the 'pretty stuff' that girls do and focus more on the content and the desire by boys to succeed.
- Boys have a distinctive sense of humour which teachers need to tune into.
- Boys appreciate structure, discipline, rules, boundaries and consistency.

How do boys learn best?

## **What can teachers do to engage boys?**

Nigel Latta cites a 2008 study of 413 separate classes for 11 year olds in England ( 113 taught by males and 300 taught by females) where there was 'no discernable impact' on the learning outcomes of boys and girls made by the gender of the teacher. Similarly a Dutch study of 251 teachers and 5,181 pupils found that the teacher's gender had 'no effect whatsoever on the achievement, attitudes and behaviour of pupils'. Latta writes "having a male teacher didn't, in and of itself, make any difference to the outcomes of students." ( p 92, Nigel Latta, 2009 ).

## **What makes a difference when teaching boys really applies to both male and female teachers -**

- Being passionate and enthusiastic as a teacher
- Having fun whilst learning
- Motivating and inspiring children
- Relating what is being taught to the 'real' world – have authentic, relevant contexts
- Catering for individual differences
- Catering for differing learning styles. Everyone learns a different way.
- Being caring
- Having empathy
- Building good relationships with all children, taking an interest in them, sharing a bit of yourselves
- Letting them know that you like them, see value in them, encourage what they are good at – build up their self esteem
- Being firm but fair
- Having clear boundaries
- Having clear consequences for actions
- Building responsibility
- Building independent study habits
- Building "managing self" skills

**F: St John's College.  
Neal Swindells  
Principal.**

I visited St John's College in Hastings. The College was founded by the Marist Fathers in 1941 and is an integrated Catholic secondary school for boys. The College has a roll of about 450 students, with 35 fulltime teaching staff and has very good facilities and extensive grounds. St John's College has a clear philosophy that is based on their Catholic Special Character and Marist traditions.

I talked with Principal Neal Swindells and he gave the following advice for teaching boys. Although a secondary school for Year 9 to 13 students, many of the points that Neil makes about motivating and engaging boys are relevant to male students in primary schools.

- There are a wide range of sporting and activities at St John's such as athletics, badminton, cricket, cross country, tennis, football, futsal, clay target shooting, hockey, rugby, squash, swimming and canoe polo.
- There are also a wide range of cultural activities at St John's such as debating, the performing arts, the jazz band, the orchestra and the school production.
- Boys need plenty of activities to engage them. St John's ensures there are plenty of physical activities for boys to be engaged in such as (supervised) tackle rugby and bull-rush. There are opportunities for big ball games on the courts in the winter when the fields are out of action.
- Boys love 'Hands - on learning' such as Science and technology.
- Boys love competition.
- Teachers at St John's encourage boys to set goals. High standards are encouraged. Teachers encourage boys to 'lift their game' and be aware of when boys are just cruising and 'ticking over'.
- St John's celebrates success and rewards excellence at assemblies.
- Spirituality is an important part of St John's and is a point of difference with other boys' schools. In the inside cover of the St John's Yearbook "The Eagle" (2011) there is a quote from St Paul's letter to the Galatians 5:22 - 25 " What the spirit brings is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. Let us be directed by the spirit.
- The Motto of St John's College is "In word and deed". St John's emphasises doing rather than just talking about values. Service to the wider community is important such as the annual support for the "Fred Hollows Foundation" and St Vincent de Paul, a world -wide society. St John's has annual retreats for students which are periods of spiritual reflection.
- 'Authentic' learning with connections and relevance to the world outside school are encouraged.
- Restorative practice is an integral part of St John's philosophy. Ten staff have been trained in running restorative conferences.
- Key Competencies such as "Managing self" are practised at St John's and were commented upon in the 2012 ERO visit. .

- Values are important at St John's and the concept of what it means to be "a good man" is emphasised. As a Marist School, St John's believes in the philosophy of working humbly and quietly behind the scenes.
- Neal says the job of the staff is to encourage the kids and make them look good. The vocational side of teaching is important. Neal Swindells argues that there is a 'softness' about St Johns. It is not 'ultra' strict or draconian. There are sound teaching standards and teachers work hard on getting to know the kids. Relationships are key.
- I asked Neal about the school principal as role model. Neal says simply 'Be yourself'. He is open and approachable. He coaches cricket and rugby. He believes in being 'out and about' every lunchtime and interval mixing with the boys. He is out and about in the afternoons when boys are leaving and parents are collecting them. He spend a lot of time - picking up litter, going to Mass, going to watch games. He is strategic about getting get out and about eg: being part of this year's Waitangi Day celebrations. St John's has a father -son breakfast each year. 120 people attended this year's breakfast. There is always a guest speaker and the aim of the breakfast is to be humorous and have fun.

#### **Reflections on my visit to St John's and my interview with Neil Swindells.**

- Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools are all concerned with the same thing – the education of boys and their development into 'good young men' who can contribute to and give back to society. At each educational level, we are at different places on the continuum towards developing 'good men.' The process is started at primary school and continues at Intermediate and Secondary Schools albeit with increased nuance and subtleties.
- Getting boys to set their own goals.
- Getting boys to manage themselves and their own learning and be accountable for their own learning and actions. Actions have consequences.
- Giving back to the local community and to society. The notion of 'service'.
- Developing in boys the key competencies.
- Developing in boys a core set of values.
- A common theme with many of the people I interviewed was the quality of the relationship between teacher and students. St John's Principal Neal Swindells referred me to the following advice by Martin Chamberlain, Principal of Francis Douglas Memorial College in New Plymouth.

#### **A teacher establishes effective individual student relationships by-**

- Greeting and exchanging words with each student each day.
- Learning, acknowledging, remarking on students' out-of-class interests, achievements and talents.
- Being available and initiating individual help and counsel.
- Noting and addressing student behaviour changes from day to day.
- Noting how individual lessons are being received from day to day.
- Modifying lessons and methods in response to student performance and appraisals.
- Monitoring and responding to students' incremental progress day to day, week to week.

How do boys learn best?

- Sharing with students, personal experiences relating to one's own learning and growth.
- Communicating to students how one came to know and love his/her scholastic subject.
- Acknowledging one's own inspiring teachers and other significant figures in one's scholastic life.

## **G: St Augustine High School, San Diego, California.**

**St Augustine's High School is a Catholic College preparatory High School in San Diego. It caters for approximately 730 students from ninth to twelfth grades. Edwin Herne the President of the College and Nancy Caine, the Director of College Counselling and the 12 th Grade Counsellor were at the IBSC Conference in Melbourne and I was invited to visit.**

**Edwin Herne, the President of St Augustine's High School, first shared his views on teaching boys .**

- Boys need to be actively involved in their learning. Teachers who stand in front of class and lecture are doing boys a huge disservice. The retention from a lecture is about 3 to 5%.
- Boys need projects to work on, they need to apply theory to practice.
- If it is appropriate, get boys to teach part of a class. Make them the expert. Their retention when they teach or are taught by other boys is off the chart.
- Boys like and need to work on projects together at times. A combination of lecture, group work in pairs, 3's and 4's is effective in helping boys process information. Having a group leader present back to the class and defend their response can also simulate healthy debates and discussion.
- Allowing time for reflection can also help settle boys down and deepen their learning.
- St Augustine's tries to get as many boys as possible into leadership positions. Appealing to their sense of honour, integrity and treating them like men - all are beneficial. The more teachers know about each of their students the better. To know a person helps establish a positive relationship between the teacher and learner.
- Teachers need to demonstrate that they too are learning as well as teaching. Boys need to see their leader as being in the same boat as they are.
- St Augustine's has established an 'Intersession Program for Saints'. It takes place in January of each year. The freshmen take speech, the sophomores, juniors and senior can take classes like, cooking, auto mechanics, surfing, sailing, canoeing, rugby, hand- ball, participate in an Internship Program etc. This program has transformed our school and the boys love it. We have done some research which suggests that second semester grades and Advancement Testing are on par with second semester prior to the advent of Intersession.
- We also teach leadership in our homeroom program. It is a formal program that touches each student. This program takes place for 45 minutes once a week.

**When I spoke to Nancy Caine, Gregory Hecht the Assistant Principal of Academics ( religion) and Brendon Johnston, the Director of the Shepherd Programme and the Head Soccer Coach joined us.**

- Nancy said that teaching in a boys' school requires a different approach than teaching boys and girls in a co-educational situation. Boys and girls each have different natures and characteristics.
- Given two equally qualified staff, Nancy would choose a man. One of the assets of St. Augustine's High School is that it has many high calibre male teachers. Male teachers understand the male psyche just as female teachers understand the female mind.
- Male teachers have different ways of interacting with boys, they often approach instruction like a coach does to a player. Coaches continually analyse what the players do and adjust both training and game plan as a result of what they see. They provide precise feedback with individualized training. In other words, personalised teaching.
- Tone of voice is important to consider. Teachers need to be sensitive. Boys like it when teachers share a little about themselves. They like teachers to be professional as well as injecting fun and laughter into their teaching.
- Nancy recently did a survey of new boys to see how they were settling in. Several said they felt more relaxed at an all boys' school because they said they could 'be themselves' and had less chance of getting into trouble for wriggling and moving around.
- Boys do best when they are confronted with deadlines. They need pressure and deadlines.
- Micro-breaks are used regularly in all classes. Teachers use fun activities and games to break up the process every hour. The games often involve listening carefully so that the boys have to focus.
- Don't excuse inappropriate behaviour but also know when boys are just being boys.
- Boys are competitive and love competition and games.
- Boys like to move around and talk to each other. They like to hear personal stories from their teachers, examples, experiences, anecdotes. They often remember them.
- Teachers need to get boys to articulate what's in their heads and give them time to respond and talk. Wait them out when there's silence. Don't fill in the gaps. Make them / give them time to come out with an answer.
- Encourage a sense of personal responsibility and solving problems for themselves. In some cases boys are asked "Is this your problem or your parents' problem? What can you do to reach a resolution?"
- Be direct and honest but in a compassionate way. At St Augustine's, not everyone gets a certificate or trophy. Certificates are for effort and talent not about self – esteem, making a boy feel good. Boys respect honesty about their abilities. Don't try to fool them.
- At Augustines has a core set of values and principles for boys to follow. They follow Augustinian values of Truth, Love and Unity. They believe in Celia Lashlie's concept of developing "Good Men." They believe in service to the community and giving back to society eg: serving lunch at St Mark's hall.
- Boys are often used as role models to their peers. Younger boys look after younger

boys. Younger boys look up to older boys.

### Reflections from this visit.

- St Augustine's High School has an excellent reputation and I felt privileged to visit. The teachers I spoke to were professional and their knowledge, experience and passion were obvious.
- Although the school was a private secondary school, many of the teaching strategies and anecdotes that the teachers shared with me were relevant and transferable to a primary school setting.
- Nancy Caine made the point (also made by Anne Milward-Brown at Napier Boys High School and Julia Dobbin of the City of London School) that for women teachers, teaching in a boys' school is different to teaching in a co-educational school and that teachers need to realise that boys and girls have different characteristics and needs and respond to differing teaching strategies.
- Gregory Hecht Boys asserted that boys respond well to a coach – player relationship. This 'player-coach' concept needs to be explored further at Napier Central School.
- Having good male teachers in an all boys' school is essential. Male teachers understand the male psyche. St Augustine's is a secondary school and more males train to be secondary teachers than primary teachers. Having male teachers in a primary school such as Napier Central is desirable but as Nancy suggested 'given two equally qualified candidates she would choose a male'. 'Equally qualified' are the key words here. I am definitely not in favour of appointing a mediocre male teacher over a better qualified and experienced female teacher. Until the right teacher comes along I will endeavour to have male role models in the school in a variety of academic, cultural and sporting roles.
- Teachers at St. Augustine's were familiar with Celia Lashlie's work of 'growing good men'. In fact Celia had run staff meetings there within the last eighteen months. Celia Lashlie's work of 'growing good men' was also mentioned by Ross Brown at NBHS and Neil Swindells at St John's and was a common theme throughout my sabbatical study where-ever the school was. It made me again reflect that whatever the level of schooling we are involved in 'growing good men'.
- The following comments were also pertinent –
- Don't excuse inappropriate behaviour but also know when boys are just being boys.
- Boys enjoy stories from their teachers, examples, experiences, anecdotes.
- Boys need to find the words to express themselves - wait them out when there's a silence. Don't fill in the gaps. Give them time to come out with an answer.
- Certificates are for effort and talent not about self-esteem!
- I thought that President Edwin Herne's following comments were very apt: boys teaching boys/boys as experts/ the Intersession program for Saints where boys take various subjects (Chris Birch's "Master and Apprentice"); allowing boys time to reflect (Chris Birch – allowing boys time to process the lesson) and boys seeing teachers also as learners.

How do boys learn best?

## **H: The Carlsbad Army and Navy Academy.**

The Army and Navy Academy was founded in 1910 and has been on its current 16 acre site in Carlsbad, California since 1936. It is a college preparatory military boarding and day school for boys, grades 7-12. Currently it has 312 cadets from grades 7 to 12 with 277 of them being boarders and 75 of them being international cadets.

The Academy was being used for summer sports' courses when I visited but what the Academy to develop in young men was seen very clearly in many forms around the campus.

On one pillar flanking the entranceway to the offices and classrooms was the Academy's Mission Statement "Educating and Developing Young Men of Good Character."

On the other pillar were the values and qualities the Academy was endeavouring to develop in their students - what the Academy stood for-

Leadership, Excellence, Honour, Responsibility, Loyalty and Compassion

Inside the office area were displayed cups, trophies and certificate that individuals and teams at the Academy had won over many years. Tradition and achievement were prized and celebrated. In the gymnasium leading off the office area were pendants proudly boasting achievements in a wide variety of sports such as Athletics, Wrestling, Waterpolo, Track and field, Cross Country, Basketball, Baseball, Swimming and Soccer.

Around the walls of the gymnasium were large action photos of young men doing sports with quotes such as

- "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond to it." Lou Holt.
- "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land amongst the stars." Brian Littrell.
- "Much can be accomplished by teamwork when no one is concerned about who gets credit." John Wooden.
- "You can't put a limit on anything. The more you dream, the farther you get." John Phelps.

In the Spring Edition of the Academy's publication 'Army and Navy' are the following quotes from Year 12 students -

- "In my four years here I have learned a lot, but the most important lesson is that hard work brings success." Robert McKenna.
- "The greatest life lesson that I learned at the Academy has been learning to be self-reliant." Ryan Thomas.
- "The greatest life lesson that I learned at the Academy is to have the confidence to face any obstacles." Ting-Yu Shih.
- "The greatest life lessons that I learned at the Academy are respect, responsible behaviour, duty, personal appearance, and how to be a better person." O. Camacho.
- "The greatest life lesson that I learned is to be motivated and "locked on..." Jacob Larcabal.
- "My greatest life lesson was not to give up. I learned most of my lessons during athletics." Enoch Jun.

How do boys learn best?

**Reflections from this visit.**

- The principles and values espoused by the Army and Navy Academy - Leadership, Excellence, Honour, Responsibility, Loyalty and Compassion- are qualities that we would want to encourage in boys worldwide and at all levels of schooling. Boys at Primary School are on a continuum of learning and development.
- Students' comments such as "Hard work brings success, to be self-reliant, to have the confidence to face any obstacles, not to give up" are again universal.
- The school was proud of its achievements and showed this via cups, trophies and pennants.
- The Academy's Gymnasium was inspirational – bedecked with flags showing past achievements and with large photographs of athletes and inspirational quotes.

## **I: The City of London School.**

**My main focus at ‘The City of London School’, an independent boys’ day school catering for around 900 students aged 10 to 18 years, was talking to Senior Librarian David Rose about motivating and engaging boys in reading. David’s advice included:**

- Having a wide range of fiction and non-fiction on a wide range of topics and by a wide range of authors for boys to read.
- “Selling” and promoting reading to boys by a variety of methods including teacher enthusiasm, author presentations, buddy reading, colourful, interesting and informative displays.
- Having a wide variety of graphic novels available for boys to read.
- Showing video trailers about popular books to get boys to read a book.
- Using E readers and having available a variety of MP3 Audio books.
- Engaging in ‘Whole School Book Reads’ of a specific author or genre.
- Getting Dads into schools to read to classes as good role models.
- Pairing up older readers with younger readers. “The Master and the Apprentice”.
- Setting up a Book Group where pupils can discuss particular books / authors /genres that they enjoy reading.
- Getting groups of students to create a Book Group Blog.
- Talks by authors and illustrators motivate and engage boys. The author visits are promoted by displays, posters and assembly and newsletter notices. Visits by authors contributed to the “book culture” in the school. In student surveys, some boys indicated that as a result of an author’s visit and motivation, they started reading the book promoted or others of that author’s books. . Some students liked the whole book or extracts before the author arrived. Others did not.
- David has regular ( highly visual) promotions of popular authors ( eg: Anthony Horowitz, J.K.Rowling and Robert Muchamore) and series of books by the same author eg: the Changeling series by Steve Feasey. Teachers try to hook boys on a series of books by one author or offering books in a similar genre. Jacket design and marketing did influence boys’ choices as did the recommendations of their peers.

How do boys learn best?

### **Summary of the Sabbatical:**

The sabbatical was a very informative and enlightening experience.

I was able to –

- interview and observe my staff regarding the strategies they used for engaging boys. Collectively they mentioned many points that arose in my investigation. The key now is to get consensus across the staff and consistency in teaching approaches across the school.
- review the programmes on offer at Napier Central School to see whether we offer a range of academic, sporting and cultural activities for boys. I am satisfied with the wide range of programmes on offer and the general approach by teachers at Napier Central School which is to be consistently innovative in what we offer.
- undertake professional reading regarding what is regarded as 'best practice' in motivating and engaging boys.
- attend the IBSC Conference at Scotch's College in Melbourne, hear many knowledgeable and motivating 'experts' in their fields.
- visit a range of schools in Napier and Hastings- Primary, Intermediate and Secondary, state and private schools, co-educational and boys' only.
- visit well regarded High Schools in San Diego and London to get a US and UK perspective.
- review our current strategies, identify areas for development and improvement and make recommendations for implementation to the Senior Management Team, staff and Board of Trustees .

## **Recommendations to the staff and Board of Trustees of Napier Central School.**

### **All teachers at Napier Central School should –**

1. have good relationships with boys. Teachers should know students' strengths, weaknesses and interests, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers should be able to share a little of themselves.
2. share a sense of humour and recognise and appreciate boys' sense of humour.
3. recognise that boys and girls have differing characteristics, strengths and weaknesses.
4. be able to recognise students' individual learning styles and cater for these. Not all students have the same learning styles but many boys tend to have a visual- kinaesthetic style of learning and many girls have a better linguistic style of learning than boys.
5. be developing in boys skills that will be life- long. As teachers we are developing the future man.
6. be developing in boys the five 'Key Competencies which includes in boys the skills to 'manage self'.
7. be encouraging boys to adopt a core set of values. In the case of Napier Central School, the school values are respect, integrity, perseverance and empathy.
8. be encouraging boys to develop 'emotional intelligence ' in areas such as determination, perseverance, resilience and 'buoyancy'.
9. be encouraging boys to set goals for themselves – academic, physical and social/emotional..
10. be getting boys to beat their own 'personal bests'.
11. be having PE three times a week.be using a 'buddy' system getting older boys to 'teach'/coach younger boys. Use students as teachers - the 'Master and Apprentice'.
12. recognise that boys may have a shorter attention span than girls and be more inclined to move around during lessons. As long as they are not disrupting their own or other's learning, be more tolerant of restlessness and fidgeting.
13. provide a range of working services to work at – desks, tables and floor space.
14. provide a range of topics that would interest boys and a choice of a range of differentiated activities for them that would interest boys.
15. organise the timetable so that periods of concentration – eg: writing and reading - are broken up by periods of movement and activity- PE, music and art.
16. have 'micro-breaks' and movement/game breaks in the class between periods of concentration.
17. recognise and cater for the fact that boys like ' hands- on' activities some of which can be found in subject areas such as Science and Technology.
18. be breaking instructions and activities into 'chunks'.
19. recognise that boys do not always respond to verbal instructions and directions. They need to be combined with movement eg: clapping- and the visual eg: directions on the whiteboard.
20. be getting boys to think of others and do random acts of kindness.

### **Areas to follow up.**

- (i) Explore the concept of a good coach- player relationship.
- (ii) Have supervised acts/bouts of 'rough and tumble' like 'bull rush'.
- (iii) Get boys to engage in 'random acts of kindness' and acts of service where they can give back to the community.
- (iv) Seek more 'student voice'. What do boys like / want/need? Introduce an exit interview of Year 6 students.

## How do boys learn best?

- (v) Explore the concept of having more school cups to recognise success and achievement. Buy a trophy cabinet. Display past certificates, achievements of former pupils.
- (vi) Build up a list of past pupils/ alumni who have been successful in their respective fields. Invite them back to the school for special occasions. Invite them to speak at assemblies.
- (vii) We have a Barbara Twyford library named after a past teacher. We could name other features of the school after prominent ex pupils.
- (viii) Look at the participation of boys in sport and cultural activities across the school. Could we increase involvement?
- (ix) Do we bring back (i) electives / clubs where Mums and Dads came along to offer tuition.  
(ii) more marble days and (iii) more wheels days.
- (x) Father –son breakfasts with a guest speaker.
- (xi) Father –son working bees.

How do boys learn best?

A theme that came out of all the experts I listened to, out of all the schools I visited and the range of texts I read, was that whatever the level of schooling- primary, intermediate and secondary – we are all involved in motivating and engaging boys to develop into ‘good men’.

**Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If” says a lot about what it means to be a good man –**

***If you can keep your head when all about you  
are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,  
Or being hated don’t give way to hating  
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:***

***If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same:  
If you can bear to hear the truth you’re spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you give your life to,  
Broken,  
And Stoop and build ‘em up with worn out tools:***

***If you can make one heap of all your winnings;  
And risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,  
And lose, and start at your beginnings  
And never breath a word about your loss:  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them:  
‘Hold on!’***

***If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,  
And – which is more- you’ll be a Man, my son!***

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