

Crafting Greatness: Developing a Culture in a
Secondary education setting, which works best for
boys.

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I am grateful to those who made this sabbatical possible for me, and for the school. I have learned much from the opportunity, and the school has benefitted from what I have gained from the experience.

Crafting Greatness: Creating a Culture that Works Best for Boys.

*It's easier to build a boy,
Than to repair a man.*

What is it that matters most to boys, through the years which they spend as part of a boys' school?

Why is the crafting of character, and the promotion of values, so important in ensuring that each young man is best prepared, as a graduate of a boys' school?

Our role as leaders of boys' schools, is to craft a culture which works for boys, through a focus on the values which are most critical, through understanding what a 'great teacher' is, in the context of a boys' world, and by being aspirational in what we want to achieve in our graduates.,

Understanding the significance of the Greek definitions of "Four Loves", in the way in which good boys are made into great men.

Wellbeing in a boys' school depends entirely upon crafting a culture of care.

As they cross the stage at their graduation, the question we must ask ourselves is "have we made a difference in the life of every boy? To the life of the Head Boy? To the life of the quietest young man after his five years with us, as part of our world?"

And to the ones who have not stayed, we must ask the same thing.

What each staff member must understand, so completely is that we must ALL

- Treat the rest like the best
- Always be the grown up in the room
- Remember that you can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up.
- Recognise the truth of the rhetorical question 'If not you, then who?'

What is a culture of care and support? What care and support do boys need? What do they want? What is crucial to their success?

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The Four Loves.

What does the word “love” mean in a boys’ school?

The word love is often overused and has become devalued. We ‘love’ food, cars, movies. The word is used to ever an ever-increasing range of emotions, and it important to define what, in reality, we mean when we use it.

How do boys need to be loved, how must it be demonstrated to ensure that boys can leave school as the confident, secure, happy and successful graduates that we hope to craft?

And what do boys need to learn, of the love they can, and must, show and feel, as young men, and throughout their lives?

Everything we work to develop and craft in our world, links to these key questions. When we speak of values, of care, of the importance of engagement, of our drive for excellence and for both academic and sporting success, we are speaking of the necessity for us, and our students, to love, both each other, and the world we share. And we are speaking of our responsibility to lead, both through example, and through instruction, a world in which each young man can feel loved, and can learn to love, in the widest sense of the word.

The word love, carries many meanings, and in considering what schools must do to create a world in which it is central, we must consider what it must mean for us, and what it needs to mean for our boys.

One way of examining these key questions, is to begin by considering the definition of ‘love’.

The English language has only one word for love; it has many nuances, and shades of meaning.

The Greeks had four different words for love: eros, storge, philia, and agape. Within a description of each of these, lies the answer to my first question – “what does the word love mean in a boys’ school?”

Because schools need to develop the capacity for love, in all four aspects.

There are real differences between the main four categories - affection, the most basic and expressive, Eros, the passionate love, charity, the most unselfish, and friendship, the rarest and at times most profound.

Affection is the love a mother feels for her baby; friendship the camaraderie of those bound together by their mutual interest and goals, eros is the desire of lovers, and agape the love with no thought of reward or love returned.

There must be a balance of all four loves in a life.

If one is invested in too far, the person will suffer, and so will those in his world. A man who loves his job, and neglects the love he should share with his family, lacks balance.

Giving unconditional love also requires intentionality. As well as giving unconditional love, we must be crafted to also understand how important it is to receive love unconditionally. The idea of loving unconditionally is spoken of often, but the truth of the importance of receiving love is frequently omitted. Unconditional love is something we need, although it is not always something we want, as it forces us to admit our helplessness.

We want to be loved for our strengths, but we must also recognise the significance of agape in our lives as recipient as well as giver.

One must give love unconditionally, but must also be prepared to receive it in the same way.

Inevitable, we require the charity of others at times in our lives.

Eros.

Romantic love is not transitory, as passion can be. It is linked to the quality of selflessness; it occurs when personal happiness is subsumed in the drive for happiness in another.

Eros is demonstrated in the example of unconditional love shown by Christ, in the Christian tradition.

The significance of Eros in a school links to our responsibility to develop young men who are ready to experience love with a partner. To love successfully, takes an awareness of the relationship between lovers, beyond the physical. Even in the most common terms, students must learn that a genuine relationship requires 'common sense', and an understanding that true Eros will not survive without "humility, charity and grace".

In ancient Greece, Eros was a God, more commonly known to us by his Roman name, Cupid.

He is often depicted as a baby, with a bow and arrow, symbolising the vulnerability of such love, the involuntary, unexpected nature of it, something which takes us beyond ourselves.

Love in a romantic sense can be linked too closely to passion; but the absence of passion does not mean that true love has died, and that is what boys must

be taught to understand. Eros moves beyond the limitation of the self, it removes the sense of personal happiness being everything, as the interests of another become central.

We must help young men to understand that eros is more than the superficial perspective of our culture, and that it is as unconditional and giving as all of the loves we experience.

Storge (Affection)

Storge links to the love of affection, relying on the expected and the familiar. It is the part of love which sits alongside other loves, a familiarity with the people with whom you are thrown together, in the normal, everyday experience of life.

Storge is a humble love.

Storge is the main type of love which is experienced in life, so important to happiness.

It is 'love' without the label.

Storge is an integral part of the life of a boys' school.

It is an inclusive love, and one where we do not choose on whom we bestow it with any calculation. The affection students feel for their teacher, or for those in their class, is not selective. It falls to them, or emerges from them, when the conditions are right, when it is encouraged. Affection does not occur separately from other loves; friendship requires affection, and it is a natural part of life, necessary for happiness, to both give and receive it.

Although we do not talk about it, or set goals based on it, we need to develop affection by enabling students to connect to the school, by providing opportunities for each boy to "see himself in the mirror" of the world of the school he attends.

Boys' schools must provide the chance for every boy to play in a sports team, join a club, participate in Cultural events – whatever enables him to belong, and to share an experience with others, apart from the day to day existence in the classroom.

We can develop storge by connecting students to our world. The relationships between staff member and student, junior and senior, and student with the school, all require a sense of storge to be successful.

We must provide opportunity for mentoring, coaching, interactions between staff and student on a caring level – all to support students to connect.

Storge is the love of the community of which we are a part. It is often linked to duty, and at times it can be unfeeling, but it remains very strong.

Storge is the love one feels for one's country, or one's regiment, or one's school.

Storge is a quiet, abiding feeling within man, for something close to him, that he feels good about. It arises from our natural desire for kinship with others, less intense than eros, and broader in scope.

Storge is both gift love and need love; it is a modest, inclusive love. It does not rely on selection as to whom we feel this type of love - we develop friendship with those who walk the journey beside us, those who have a common interest. Storge works in all our loves, quietly working through our existence. It is often not referred to or considered, but it is so important in the life of a school. We develop it through connecting - for both staff and students.

Agape (Charity)

Agape is linked to charity; all of the other aspects of love, Eros, philia and storge, are background training for true agape. Affection, friendship and romantic love are all training grounds for charity to grow.

Charity can be defined as providing for those in need without expecting any repayment.

Agape is the love which lifts all of the other loves, without which a person cannot fully understand or experience love. We cannot complete our part of the

preparation of young men for adult life, without crafting an understanding of agape.

It is often seen in the true meaning of the word charity, as it is used in the King James translation of 1 Corinthians, Ch 13.

Agape places the one who is loved first, and demonstrates a sacrifice of pride, self-interest, and possession, for the sake of the one who is loved.

It is the love we must feel, to be fully developed as a person, as a mature adult. It is a love we must craft, and actively provide opportunities to develop, in the young men in our care.

It is far beyond the modern use of the word - a helping hand, often motivated by pity. Charity in the true sense is agape, a deep, unconditional gift-love for others.

Agape is the glue that holds all of the other loves fast; it is the one which gives wisdom, and patience. If it is our goal to be forgiving and merciful, and if we believe in doing good to all men, and do it, then we strengthen all of the other three loves.

Life is made richer in every respect from the practice and understanding of agape.

Agape is the love of the homeless, it is self-giving, and it is chosen. it is the love of our enemies, while philia is the love we feel for our friends.

Philia.(Friendship)

Philia links to friendship.

It is the happiest of loves, in that it is linked to virtue.

It is the kinship developed through having something in common, something shared. Philia is the love which meets the human longing for camaraderie which makes having friends so important, because friends are fellow travellers, on the same journey.

In ancient times, as C S Lewis states, "friendship seemed the happiest and most human of all loves"

The link to boys' schools is clear:

The bonds of friendship developed by boys.

The shared experiences of team mates.

Philia is brotherly love. C S Lewis speaks of Philia being the love where friends walk 'side by side, looking forward together, while Eros is love 'face to face', looking into the eyes of each other.

Friendship love is of great importance in our lives.

Philia is the love of the soul, associated with close friendship. It is the word used in the New Testament by Christ you have loved (philia) me...

In his final discussion with Simon Peter, before his ascension, Christ uses agape. It is the love Jesus urges us to show our neighbour, the love which never fails.

Grace.

Grace is a word not well understood in the 21st century, but it is so important in boys' education. Grace is needed in all aspects of love, and it is grace, in and of itself, that enables the individual to be loved at all. We are able to both extend and receive grace, only because we understand the grace that is shown to us.

To understand love is to understand life and its meaning for us, and for the boys in our care. It reminds us, when we consider it, to love more intentionally, as reflecting on types of love we are provided with different categories of both receiving and practising love, and this links to happiness and a greater sense of well-being and self-esteem.

There must be a balance in the types of love we show, and craft in our young men. No one type of love is ultimate. Any type of singular investment in only one type can blind you to other opportunities to love, and thus to be better and stronger as a person. For example, if your passion is in a sport, to the exclusion of family and friends, any type of obsessive love becomes a negative. Giving and receiving all types of love, and achieving the balance, requires intentionality.

Band of brothers.

It is vitally important to learn to give unconditional love, but also critical to learn to receive it.

Unconditional love is something we need, but it is not always something we welcome, as it requires us to admit our helplessness. We must give and receive the love of agape (charity).

Within the four types of love, there are two types of experience – need love and gift love. And boys need to experience both. Gift love is the giving of love, or affection, without condition. It is the feeling of students for the school, for their fellow students and for the staff. It is the affection staff feels for them, and for their job. Need love is the acceptance of care and support.

School Visits

During my time away from school, I was able to visit many schools, and a selection of these is reports on briefly below. In terms of the topic of reflection, every school visit reinforced the essential place of love in the spectrum of essential aspects of crafting a positive world for boys, and the need to provide a framework for boys to develop an understanding what love means to them in their lives.

Otago Boys' High School.

Otago Boys High School is a decile of approximately 800 boys; it is decile 9, and is situated in beautiful buildings high on the hill in Dunedin. The school is traditional in expectation, but innovative in its approach to using data, to ensure a sense of well-being in every student

Over the past four years, Otago Boys' have initiated a programme of analysis, in which the senior management team create a GPA for each student, based on 18-30 variables from KAMAR. These variables cover academic, attendance, pastoral, both good and bad behaviour, and well-being. Each student then receives a risk rating of 1-4.

This indicative is in response to what is identified as 'the slide' in Year 13, when students become satisfied with their achievement, and essentially, stop trying, contact with gaining Level 3 at the minimum level.

The benefit of using this analysis tool, it that it captures those at risk very early, so that the intervention can be very proactive, rather than reactive. They do not have to raise their heads over the parapets before they are noticed, and in reality, there will always be the most extreme outliers who will already been identified, who will be helped and supported in different ways.

The statement made, the goal, is that
" No boy falls through the cracks at Otago Boys' High School"

To evaluate well-being, the school uses the AWE programme, and questionnaire. Awe (Assessing Wellbeing in Education) is used as an alternative to the NZCER questionnaire on wellbeing. It was initially

developed by AUT and is now a programme run from Australia. Students and staff are assessed 3 times a year, and seasonal differences are evaluated.

The school commits \$5,000 a year to the well-being questionnaire, and staffing time is given for the analysis of findings, and the development of initiatives based on the results.

Other ways in which wellbeing is addressed for students is through the “Mental Fitness” option which is offered in Year 10, for 2 hours a week for a semester.

AWE data shows an immediate difference in students who have completed the course. The data on happiness takes an immediate hit, as students become more reflective, and the resilience level improves immediately. The happiness data also improves over time.

The programme covers topics like engagement, mindfulness, relationship building. Meaning and purpose and the way in which the brain works. There is a strong element of psychology in the course.

Through the use of the AWE questionnaire, and data from the analysis of every student’s GPA rating, the school is able to use detailed information to ensure that each student is given the support that he needs and deserves.

The initiative goes much further than just looking for those outliers who will be identified by other means; the goal is to prevent failure, by

King’s High School

King’s High School is a school of approximately 1,000 boys, situated in South Dunedin. It is decile 7.

The King’s Men Society.

A feature of what is offered at King’s High School is the programme established to ‘build men for life’, a programme designed to educate young men about what it means to be a good man, and for the school, a good ‘king’s man’.

The programme runs from Year 9 to Year 13, and each year has a different focus.

Year 9:

A Good man
An Educated man
A Giving man
A Strong man
A Healthy man

Year 10:

A Sophisticated man
A Domestic man
A Gentleman
A Worldly man
A Safe Man

Year 11:

A Working man
A Community man
A Healthy man
A Strong man

Year 12 and 13:

An Articulate man
A Sophisticated man
An Independent man

A clear reason for the programme's success is the fact that it is sustained through the school. It has a teacher in charge of the overall programme, but many of the staff are involved in different ways. In 2018, the school is completing a review of the current structure, in order to assure themselves that it is working at an optimal level.

The school's focus on well-being, through a sustained educational programme, allows the school to be proactive in crafting resilience, by growing the awareness of each student in a developmental way. In this way, no student can slip through the system, as the structure of the programme does not allow it. The modules are delivered in different ways, and as the student reaches the senior school, some of the opportunities become optional.

The school has a clear focus on high expectations of behaviour and courtesy, the grounds are very tidy, and the classrooms reflect a warm, inclusive atmosphere. Students are friendly, warm, and caring, both to staff and each other. There is a real sense of everyone working together, and this programme reflects the emphasis the school places on the development and success of the whole man.

Whangarei Boys' High School

This is a decile 5 school, with 1250 boys.
There are 40% Maori and 4% Pasifika.

The school is currently in a rebuild situation, where \$50m is being spent, renewing the buildings, and creating a world which the boys can be very proud of, a physical world which works as a teaching and learning environment in the modern world, while still valuing the traditions of a boys' school.

The school has made a commitment to increase staffing in Guidance and the pastoral care area of the school.

The current structure is:

- 1 Guidance counsellor
- 1 Guidance counsellor
- 1 Social Worker
- 1 Nurse/ACC registered
- 1 Admin (part time)
- 1 GP (externally funded) 2 hours a week

The current structure comes with a cost to the school for staffing of \$250,000.

In the pastoral care system are two deans at each year level, and the Deans stay with the cohort of students through the school.

There are also currently one DP and 3 APs, as well as the Principal.

The school has a restorative practice model in place, although relational practice is a more appropriate and more effective title and focus.

What are you most proud of:

The improved connection with the Maori community, seen through significantly improved survey results, and improved engagement.

This has been achieved through a focus on a cultural narrative of the area, time devoted to the needs of the boys and families, and a changed focus in pedagogy.

The school has two supported learning classes, with home room teachers, there is a literacy focus in the school, and there is a renewed emphasis on valuing tradition, while encouraging innovation. A continued focus, identified by the school, needs to be on the quiet boy, the lonely boy, the one who does not fit in to the natural world of the school.

The commitment which the school has made in increasing staffing levels, demonstrates the focus on meeting the needs of every boy. Having more designated staff time allows the staff to be far more aware of at risk students, and to have a practical vehicle for meeting the needs of the at risk students, as well as the wider family, through the social worker.

The improved relationship with the Maori community, and the sense of talking with, and listening to, rather than talking about, and speaking to, is supported by the commitment being made by the BOT, to funding the positions.

Kings Prep School, Auckland.

As a prep school, King caters for boys from Year 1 to Year 8. It also has an attached preschool section.

The school has a strong focus on well-being. Pastoral systems are strong, and the environment is positive, structured and very affirming.

At formal assemblies, students are recognised not only for their academic, sporting and cultural success, but for being “caught in the act”, for acts of kindness and service which could otherwise go unnoticed. Each assembly recognises these students by allowing them to carry the flags into assembly, and by being recognised by the Headmaster, who explains the reason for their selection to the school.

This affirmation carries through the school, where staff’s actions are also recognised through the regular award of the staff giraffe, a symbol of a staff member striving to do good for others.

At each year level, students learn about differing aspects of developing as a good person. In the senior school, the focus is on service, both to the community and to others within the school.

At the Assembly I attended, the Head congratulated the Head Boy on his speech, made the previous week to a group of Headmasters, and on the

way in which he was able to speak without preparation, about the need to serve others, in his role.

When walking around the school, it is notable that every student addresses the Headmaster with a “Good morning”, as do the staff. The courtesies are clearly very important, and well respected. The tone is one of exceptional pride, and love for the school and those who are a part of it.

The staff is clearly well balanced, in terms of age and gender, and every staff member dresses professionally. Students wear their uniform with genuine pride, and the traditions of the school have a clear impact on both staff and the boys, in terms of their approach to the school. At the same time, the buildings blend the beauty of the traditional, original structures, with very modern, light classrooms, designed for 21st century learning.

Visiting a school of primary aged students provides a wonderful opportunity for reflection on the truth that there is much that we can learn and adopt, in terms of the way in which students and staff relate to each other, and the traditions which students enjoy as part of their primary years, and their continuing relevance to them as secondary school students.

The Southport School.

The Southport School is an independent, Anglican day and boarding school on the Gold Coast, established in 1907, set in beautiful grounds and with a strong sense of history and tradition.

The School is a “Round Square” school. The principle of being a Round Square school revolves around six pillars, or IDEALS:

- Internationalism
- Democracy
- Environmentalism
- Adventure
- Leadership
- Service

There are over 150 Round Square schools, and 17 of them are in Australia. They are based on Kurt Hahn’s philosophy, which embraces the truth of learning experiences which develop the whole person, and of self-discovery coming through challenging oneself.

There is a strong belief that what happens to you at school becomes the foundation for the future.