

ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL

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Thank you for the opportunity to make submission to your Committee. Like many other educators the issue of boys education is one that preoccupies many of our discussions.

I am currently the Principal of St Joseph's School in Stanthorpe Queensland. It is a small, Catholic co-educational school that caters for students from all faith denominations. It offers a unique character with a strong sense of community for students from Pre-school to Year 12. Because it is a small school, we are able to offer small classes yet a wide range of subjects and plenty of co-curricula activities.

St Joseph's was founded in 1875 by the Sisters of Mercy but the school's last religious staff member retired in 1987. St Joseph's School celebrates its 125th Anniversary this year. The Primary campus has approximately 250 students in 10 classes and the Secondary campus has a total population of 135 and has a ratio of approximately 13 students to 1 teacher.

We believe St Joseph's is able to offer students - at any level - relevant, practical and personal guidance that will help to develop his / her potential academically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

The School is very conscious of issues relevant to boys education and is attempting to be proactive in addressing these issues in the context of a small rural community.

Fundamental to the Education of boys is that schools not only about curriculum delivery. As educators we are also carers and developers of children and adolescents. We need to view ourselves in partnership with parents in the task of nurturing next generation of citizens.

It is my belief that students will come to school, learn and enjoy the experience because of positive things schools can offer;

- * positive relationships
- * positive curriculum.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Fundament to addressing these issues is our belief that boys will only learn from people they like. We attempt to foster a close relationship between their teachers. The size of our School makes this relationship building so much easier to achieve. Our catch phrase is that "boys learn teachers not subjects".

It is often suggested that boys need more positive role models. The call for 'more male role models' in schools is too simplistic an answer and in my experience some of the best teachers of boys in were women. Positive staff modelling is however an essential starting point and I would recommend that any discussion of Boys Education should also address the question of what staff qualities do we want to model as a group

To complement this approach, St Joseph's School has changed its approach to discipline and behaviour management based on the Responsible Thinking Process. The principles of the Responsible Thinking Process (RTP) provide the foundation for our Behaviour Management Plan. RTP was started in January 1994 by Edward E. Ford and is based on Perceptual Control Theory, which maintains that, as human beings, we are designed to be self-controlling, rather than externally controlled. As such, Ford's program is designed to teach children how to control what happens to themselves, in ways that don't interface with other people's ability to do the same thing.

Ford maintains that when we tell children to do things, we are doing the thinking. On the other hand, when we ask children about what they are doing, they are doing the thinking. RTP therefore focuses on the way children think, rather than on the way they behave. Ford believes that if you want children to behave responsibly, you must first teach them to think responsibly.

We believe that all students are responsible for their own actions and must be taught to respect the rights of others. Teachers have a right to teach and students have a right to learn in safety. No student has a right to disrupt at school, regardless of where they are, especially if preventing other students from learning or threatening the safety and rights of others.

In the Schoolyard initiatives of 'school calming' have had some success. Organised activities at lunchtime and open student access to staff at lunch times tends have reduced the tensions that tend to escalate in the playground. Where possible opportunities to rip up the concrete and bitumen and replace with grass and shade trees also encourages less rougher and violent behaviour Integrated curriculum currently being developed for the primary curriculum is an important building block for middle schooling. The Primary staff is currently working in multi-disciplinary teaching teams and thematic units.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it is my belief that boys need two main things. Firstly, they need **structure**. They like to know where things go and how things fit to get. They want to know

- who's in charge?
- What are the rules?
- Are the rules justly applied?

Secondly they want **respect** They do not want to be treated as 'lessee beings. This is difficult to achieve, as we have to work against a culture where there hasn't been respect for males.

Yours faithfully,

John Mula
Principal
St Joseph's School