

Submission to the House of Representatives Employment, Education and Workplace
Relations Committee Inquiry into The Education of Boys.

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Summary

At Trinity Grammar School we have developed a number of successful strategies to develop boys' socialisation skills and to improve their learning and behaviour.

- Effective Leadership programs from Prep to Year 12
- A wide co-curricular program which supports the Arts.
- A Year 8 Journey which aims to foster positive attitudes towards school and life long education.
- A Unit system in Years 9 and 10 which enables boys to pursue a curriculum which supports future study needs and allows them opportunities for self-development and success.

Trinity Grammar School is an independent boys only school in Kew, Victoria. The experience of schooling, as distinct from its outcome, is one of life's important adventures. Trinity Grammar School is a place where boys are happy and want to learn. Recent research¹ on boys' attitudes to school has indicated the following:

- Boys have positive attitudes to school until around age 10.
- Boys can become disinterested in school around ages 10 to 13.
- Disruptive and aggressive behaviours peak around age 14.
- After 15 years of age, two distinct groups can appear among boys - those with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes to schooling.
- Boys' peers can strongly influence their attitudes to learning.

It is our view that the boys at Trinity Grammar School do not match these research outcomes. We do not disagree with the research, but we believe that the strategies and programs we have in place at Trinity support boys to make the most of their talents, give them opportunities for success and build on the positive aspects of peer pressure.

Leadership

Leadership is valued at Trinity Grammar School and the school believes that our leadership program is one of the important features of its educational offering. Leadership embodies eight qualities and capabilities: confidence, courage, commitment, consideration, courtesy, compassion, compromise and communication.

Trinity provides an enormous range of leadership opportunities for boys via the House Program, the Leppitt Outdoor Program, Buddies, Peer Support, Cross Age Tutoring, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, as well as the formal roles for Year 12 boys in the Senior School and Year 6 boys in the Junior School.

Boys have a crucial role in House Music, organising other students, teaching and motivating them. Older boys in Year 9 work with Junior School boys in reading and Mathematics and sometimes in technology. Year 10 boys assist the Year 7 boys settle into the Senior School via the Peer Support Program.

For almost 20 years, Year 10 and 11 boys have attended Year 7 and 8 camps at the Leppitt Outdoor Centre as instructors. They have assisted their younger colleagues with skills of

¹ Ludowycke, J (1997) Improving the school performance of boys.

sailing, canoeing, bush craft and navigation, and have provided the Director of the Centre with organisational support.

Leadership of sporting teams, orchestras, drama activities is also very important and can be inspirational and crucial to team success.

Leadership at Trinity does not happen by accident. Trinity has developed a number of programs to train its leaders. Year 9 boys attend an optional Peer Support course, whilst almost half of all Year 10 boys attend the voluntary Leppitt Leadership course for 4 days. This course is outstanding and unique to Trinity. All Year 11 boys attend a "Resilience Day Program" in Term 1 in which they develop confidence and a range of leadership skills.

In the latter part of each year a number of boys are appointed to the positions of School Captain and Vice-Captain and Co-curricular Leadership. The work of these boys in organising, directing and inspiring other students is a vital ingredient in the smooth operation of our school.

In the Junior school for several years now there have been opportunities for boys to take leadership positions such as Captain or Vice-Captains of the School or Captains and Vice-Captains of House. Over the last year we have added a Captain of Junior School Music and a Chairman of the Student Representative Council. These boys assist greatly in the smooth running of events that take place during the year and are often great ambassadors for the School. House officials ensure that our House Sport program runs well and select teams and encourage all boys in the House.

All the boys in Year 6 have a buddy in Prep or Year 1 and essentially this relationship is a stepping stone for the Year 6 boys who are learning that it is important to help others younger than themselves.

Recently we extended our buddies program so that Year 5 boys work with Year 2 classes and the Year 3 boys will work with the children in the Early Learning Centre. In Year 2 there is also a buddies program with girls from Strathcona; this interaction with a girls' school has been very successful.

Situations are being set up where boys will have to work with other boys who may be a little older or a little younger than themselves. We hope that the activities undertaken demonstrate to the boys that we are all interdependent and that our community benefits greatly when we work together understanding that at various times we all rely on other people to achieve goals.

It is important to emphasise the binding element which our leadership programs provide within our school community. The efforts and endeavours of all our leaders, no matter how young, are vital for our school community to function as a cohesive, co-operative unit.

The Arts

Boys are encouraged to participate in music and drama; opportunities for each individual boy to experience success and develop interests are increased. Trinity's co-curriculum is designed to nurture many different talents and to encourage boys to be well-rounded and confident.

The Music School is located in the Centre for the Arts. There are outstanding facilities for small or large group rehearsals, music classrooms, a technology centre and a recording

studio. A large number of boys learn a musical instrument at Trinity. Specialist teaching staff conduct these lessons. There is a wide range of musical groups within the school including, McIntyre Orchestra, String Groups, Stage Band, Guitar Groups, Jazz ensembles, and choirs.

It is seen as important that our boys enjoy and appreciate music. For those boys who wish to learn an instrument, the School encourages them to reach a level appropriate to their ability.

Classroom music is taught to all boys up to Year Eight. All boys in Year Two learn the violin for twelve months and string lessons continue into Year Three. Boys in Year Four learn a wind instrument. All boys in Years Seven and Eight explore various aspects of music through studies in music theory, musical appreciation, projects, annual music competitions and their instrumental tuition sessions in keyboard, guitar and handbells. In Years Nine to Twelve, Music is an elective subject.

Drama, which is taught formally within the curriculum, is also extended through the production of three major school performances each year. Often these are held in conjunction with a neighbouring girls' school. In the junior school all classes perform a play each year.

Places in the interschool teams in chess, debating and public speaking are keenly contested. One of the School's most popular classes at Year Nine and Ten is cooking. These classes are taught in the commercial kitchen in the Centre for the Arts.

The Year 8 Learning Journey

This program is one of self discovery and it is held over eight days on a school owned site away from the main campus. The program themes are:

Who am I?

This theme encourages students to look introspectively to find motivation for what they are doing at school. Studies suggest that when students can relate what they are doing to who they are, they are more likely to be successful in that area.

Having fun

Activity opens people to learning. By encouraging students in a range of fun activities we are hoping they will buy into the associated learning which will take place around them.

Where are you going?

Once students have a sense of who they are, it is important to provide direction for them. 'Where are you going' lessons are designed to encourage students to look to the future and set themselves goals and guidelines to reach their destination.

How do we get there?

Once students have a goal, they need to concentrate on the processes of achieving that goal. 'How do we get there' lessons revolve around structure and process. In mathematics for example, you might look at three different ways to solve the same problem and choose the best one.

Where do we come from?

These lessons are designed to encourage students to look to their past in order to find solutions for their future. History teachers might like to look at family trees or ways we can learn from the aboriginals. Geographer's might look at 'where we come from' from an environmental perspective.

Who are we?

These final lessons represent a shift from thinking about who am I to thinking who are we. Hopefully students are now able to see how they fit into the greater scheme of things and how if as a year group we can work together to create synergy, we can become greater than

the sum of our parts. The 'who are we lessons' are all about creating synergy and presenting information. In the end of program presentation for example, students present material from the past eight days.

The final product of the eight days is the formation of a year 8 constitution which outlines who we are, and gives guidelines to how we should act.

Year 9 & 10 Academic Curriculum

Trinity Grammar School aims to nurture the attitudes, values and skills that enable each boy to take his place in society as a responsible adult. We do this by exposing each boy to a program that balances his individual interests and potential against the need for breadth and for the integration of his experiences.

Specifically, each boy should:

- Develop a clear recognition of his own worth and a well founded belief in his capacity to control his own life;
- Be equipped, through the study of religion and the exchange of ideas, to develop his own life philosophy;
- Have a clear understanding of the development and complexities of his society;
- Be empowered, through his understanding of social systems, to make responsible choices;
- Have a respect for the cultures, beliefs and rights of others;
- Have an understanding of his place in space and time;
- Be equipped to choose career options that give him personal satisfaction;
- Have an appreciation of the beauty present in his surroundings;
- Be able to develop his creative talents and enjoy the exercise of his physical skills and find lifelong outlets for these.

At Trinity Grammar School in Years 9 and 10 a boy can choose from 131 semester units to provide his academic curriculum. Since most Trinity boys want to attend a Tertiary Institution, the units are designed so that both the academic content and the skills that are needed for VCE studies are built in. The wide variety of units allows boys to select units that will both challenge them and offer them a range of opportunities to succeed.

There are core units (such as those in English and Mathematics) that boys must complete in both Year 9 and 10. In most units, however, there is no restriction on entry and classes contain boys from each year level. Some units are designated as key studies for a WE unit in that they contain content that is essential preparation for that WE subject. Other units have no WE focus and may be studied for their general interest or practical skill development.

The list of units that must be completed to satisfy the academic requirements of Year 9 and 10 are listed in Table 1.

At Trinity Grammar School we believe that allowing students a wide variety of choice in the Years 9 and 10 enables them to maintain interest in their studies and have a positive attitude towards their own education.

Table 1 Minimum requirements to be completed by the end of Year 10

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