

AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE

ON

LUTHERAN EDUCATION

Adelaide, 27th September – 29th September, 2004

Elective:

LISTENING TO OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS



Presented By:
JUDY WINTOUR
Head of Middle School
Redeemer Lutheran College
Rochedale, Brisbane Qld



Focus of this paper =

Four Student perceptions expressed through:

- (a) Conversation at enrolment interview
- (b) Responses to anonymous student survey questionnaire

1. “We want proper subjects – units are boring and babyish.”
2. “What we admire and value in our peers is
3. “What we dislike/disrespect in our peers is
4. “What we think of teachers is



1. “We want proper subjects units are boring and babyish.”

(Note: these comments refer to the students’ experience in primary school and are made at enrolment interviews prior to entry into Redeemer. Redeemer has approximately 40 feeder schools.)

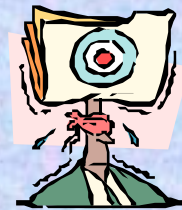
- Students commonly refer to “proper subjects”.
- They use this term to distinguish discrete subjects or KLAs from integrated units of study.
- These students make disparaging remarks about “units” or “themes”, calling them “babyish”.
- Students complain of boredom with integrating devices that link KLAs.



Response to these messages –
Neither over-reaction nor automatic dismissal

Beware of potential pitfalls surrounding Integrated Curriculum

1. The boredom factor
2. The integrity factor
3. The curriculum – is – the – end – of – the – story factor
4. The integration – equals – relevance factor



2. “What we admire and value in our peers is

BOYS



GIRLS

1. Academic success/striving
2. Friendliness
3. Kindness, helpfulness, caring
4. Sporting success/striving
5. Sense of humour/ fun
6. Participation/maximum effort
7. Niceness
8. Obedience of rules, teachers
9. Modesty about achievements
10. Appearance

1. Kindness, helpfulness, caring
2. Academic success/striving
3. Friendliness
4. Participation/maximum effort
5. Sense of humour/ fun
6. Niceness
7. Obedience of rules, teachers
8. Sporting striving/success
9. Appearance
10. Respect for other people

Significance of this opinion -

- ✓ Provides some surprises
- ✓ Shows support of school ethos
- ✓ Leaves “cools” in the cold
- ✓ Validates & affirms the majority of students
- ✓ Provides strategic information for staff to use in student management



3. “What we dislike / disrespect in our peers is

BOYS

1. Arrogance/showing off
2. Harassment
3. Disruption/rule breaking
4. Annoying behaviour
5. Meanness
6. Disrespect
7. Swearing
8. Lack of effort/participation
9. Bossiness
10. Negativity
11. Lack of care and consideration



GIRLS

1. Harassment
2. Arrogance/showing off
3. Disruption/rule breaking
4. Lack of effort/participation
5. Teasing
6. Meanness
7. Annoying behaviour
8. Disrespect
9. Bossiness
10. Loudness/rudeness
11. Snobbery
12. “Coolness”
13. Lack of consideration
14. Hypocrisy



Significance of this Opinion



- Is consistent with the statements made about what students do like and admire.
- Provides strategic information for staff to use in student management.
- Provides a pastoral-care avenue to approach disciplinary problems.
- Supports college ethos.
- Contributes to sense of students and staff working together to achieve a commonly-desired learning environment.

4. “What we think of Teachers....”

- ☺ 93% of cohort (N=134) perceived teachers in a positive valence as “friends” or “people to help you”.
- ☺ Good student – teacher relationships are vital.
- ☺ Personally affirming -
- ☺ Professionally encouraging –
- ☺ Teachers can focus on nurturing and developing relationships.
- ☺ Staff and students can work together, not in opposition.

