

SHARING STUDENT LEADERSHIP MODELS

Workshop Presentation: Mr Norman Hunter: The Hillbrook School
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HILLBROOK ANGLICAN SCHOOL

1. The Context

We now live in what has been called the post-modern world: a world characterised by uncertainty, rapid and apparently discontinuous change, ambiguity and ambivalence.

We need to consider the kind of leadership that this implies, and how schools can best prepare young people for it.

2. Some Fundamental Assumptions

At Hillbrook we take the view that the very great majority of people want to do well with their lives, and will welcome responsibility for their work and for the care of themselves and others.

We also believe that talent and creativity - in all their forms - are widely distributed, rather than narrowly distributed, in the population.

We believe too that communities need to be essentially inclusive rather than exclusive, and that this needs to be modelled in our schools.

3. A Leadership Model

Based on these assumptions we are drawn to a 'multiple leadership' model which assumes that everyone can lead – though not everyone may wish to – and that the post-modern world needs people who see initiative, responsibilities and care for others as natural elements in their personal and working lives.

This points to a new and different conceptualising of leadership, through an 'abundance' mentality - you can give leadership to others without losing any yourself – rather than a 'zero sum' mentality – as there is only a certain amount, and if you give any away you now have less: it can be the norm rather than the exception, and there's plenty of it to go around.

We define leadership, then, in these terms, and see it in its simplest form as **taking the responsibility for making a positive difference in our own and other people's lives**; and our fundamental assumption is that everyone can and should do it, accepting that some will lead in varying degrees of effectiveness from others.

4. Leadership and School Culture

Many attempts to address issues seem to be first and foremost **structural**, the assumption being that if we put in place a structure or system, then the results will naturally flow.

In contrast to this approach, we see the key element as the **school culture**: the values, beliefs and norms that are espoused, modelled and acted out. Organisational structures then follow the culture and are dictated by it. The structures may be messy, or even not clearly visible, but the culture will be clearly visible, and consistently articulated and acted out all the time: in class, outside of class, in co-curricular activities and in the ceremonies, rituals, structures and reward systems of the school. It



will be especially evident in the relationships between staff and students, staff with each other, staff and parents, students with each other, and it will be modelled by the school's formal leaders, especially the Principal. And an essential dimension of that culture will be leadership.

5. So what does this kind of leadership look like?

It has several layers and lots of elements, but it's essentially inclusive and widespread.

Some examples from Hillbrook:

- Two important ceremonies - presided over by the Chaplain - in the year:
 - i] The Year 12 Leadership Ceremony in February at which every Year 12 student formally accepts a role in the leadership of the school, and is presented with a badge by a younger member of the Student Representative Council. Beginning in Term 4 of Year 11, each of these students has negotiated a leadership role for their Year 12 year.
 - ii] The Student Representative Council Executive Handover ceremony in June, where the outgoing executive passes the stewardship to the newly elected Executive.
- A Student Representative Council which consists of two students from each class in the school, elected each year by their classmates, and an Executive of 8 students elected by Years 10, 11 and 12 students, and staff. They are elected in June of their Year 11 year, for 12 months, June to June.
- There are no Prefects or School Captains.
- A Sports Council of Year 12 students who take responsibility for organising and running the swimming, cross-country, and athletics carnivals. This includes presenting of the awards at the end of the day.
- Year 8 students welcome the next year's Year 8s in November, and accept responsibility for their orientation and induction for the next year.
- Every Year 11 student undertakes an activity as part of the Community Action Program involving 20 hours of community service in the student's own time, which is linked with leadership in the culture of the school.
- Mentoring of younger students by older students where needs are identified by teachers.
- A multiple leadership profile modelled by the adults in the school, where many staff are seen taking leadership roles in school rituals such as assemblies and special ceremonies.
- As well as the SRC, other student groups such as Green Justice take the lead on particular activities, and this is built into the rituals of the school year.
- During any given year, natural leaders appear in particular ways in particular situations outside the school's formal structures. We try to build their roles into the life of the school in visible and natural ways also, celebrating their efforts and achievements in the context of leadership.
- It's important to acknowledge that much of this behaviour occurs in all our schools: the key issue is how it is recognised. Perhaps where Hillbrook may be different is in conceptualising and celebrating it as leadership, rather than modelling the more traditional ideas of leadership that may now be obsolete in the world of the 21st Century.

Conclusion

A nice example of the kind of natural leadership we're striving for was described in LIFE magazine [September 1998] in an anecdote by an American teacher, Wally Lamb:

"Before I was a college teacher, I taught high school. Four or five years into my career, a student reinforced for me a powerful lesson in personal courage. In the outdoor 'smoking section' at our school, an ugly Lord of the Flies-like game had begun during the six minutes of passing time between classes. Students circled a retarded boy, pitching their spare change at him. Unaware that he was the object of his peers' scorn and ridicule, the boy happily picked up and pocketed the coins as they ricocheted against him and landed at his



feet. By the time I happened onto the scene, the circle was five or six students deep and coins were being fired at hurtful, hateful velocities. The crowd cheered each stinging contact made. As I attempted to break through and stop this sickening spectacle, a fifteen-year-old girl beat me to it. Entering the circle, she threw her arm around the game's victim and led him out of the firing line, ignoring as best she could the immediate transference of hostility, the coins, taunts and four-letter words now being hurled at her. I witnessed this incident perhaps twenty years ago, but it lingers as a vividly imprinted lesson in the necessity of immediate moral response to human cruelty. Cathy James, wherever you are, whoever you've become, you remain one of my heroes."

Lamb described Cathy as 'one of my heroes': indeed, leaders and heroes are often spoken about in the same breath. It's our hope that the kind of values and beliefs that Cathy acted out will be the norm - rather than the exception - when our young people move beyond their school years, and that such behaviour will be seen not just as kind and courageous, but as leadership.

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THE GLENNIE SCHOOL

Synopsis

1. A brief outline of the **philosophy** behind the changes made in 1998 to the Year 12 leadership structure at The Glennie School. These changes were made in response to the perceived need for the involvement of more senior girls as leaders and for the prefect role to become more relevant; as well, there was some dissatisfaction with the old process.
2. **Process** resulting in the new Student Leadership Model. This involved a special committee, which made several recommendations about possible ways of change. A draft was submitted to a full staff meeting and feedback was invited. After consideration of staff comment, the final document was written and approved by the School Council.
3. **Explanation of the model**, including job descriptions, the senior committee structure and the staff mentor roles.
4. **Implementation of the model**, including the application and selection process, staff and peer voting and the criteria for final selection.
5. **Issues** that have arisen subsequent to the new model being implemented - positives, negatives, and revisions in response to these issues.

Philosophy

In 1998 it was decided to make changes to the system of senior student leadership at Glennie. The impetus for change came from several perceptions about the then current system, which, it was felt, needed adjustment. They had been expressed in an ad hoc way by several people, but never really addressed seriously.

The Headmaster established a special committee to investigate and make recommendations about various aspects of pastoral care. Senior student leadership was seen as one of the most urgent areas. The most common and clearest issues were:

- There was the perception in some quarters that being a prefect was more a reward for doing well than a commitment to serve the school; some people thought that the selection process was not as fair and transparent as it needed to be.
- It was felt that our whole process of selection did not reflect the way the real world operated and that students weren't given any opportunity to take initiative or think very deeply about what it meant to be a prefect. Inherent in that was a lack of definition of the prefect roles.
- It was thought that the system of senior student leadership should be broadened to include more girls and to encourage a greater ethos of service. Essentially, leadership was confined to prefects and yet there were many other girls who felt they had something to offer in their senior year.

The process

The Girls Welfare Committee was formed to respond to the key issues of pastoral care. With regard to student leadership, it recommended that changes be made to the existing system. The key changes were that:

1. **All senior students** should be expected to serve in some specific leadership role. Later, it was recognised that not all girls wanted this, and while at first they felt a pressure to assume some role, this abated and the School's expectation was amended.

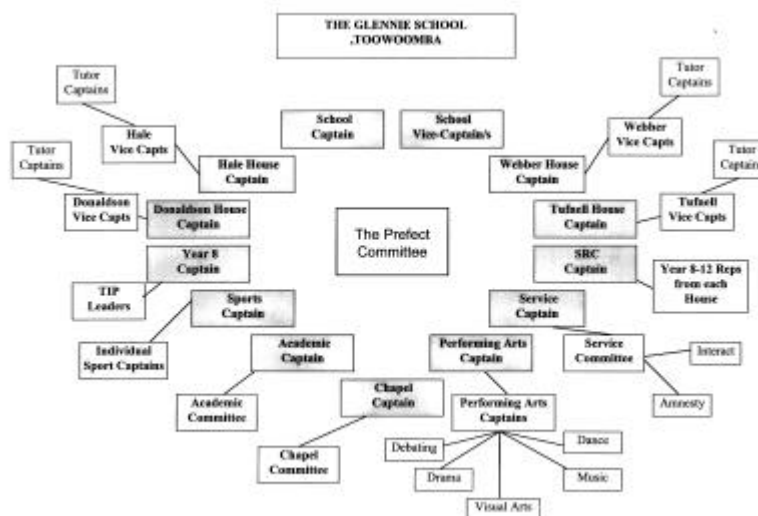


2. **Prefects needed a specific area of responsibility.** Committees should be established in key areas eg., Academic Committee. These were to be chaired by a designated prefect and, depending on the area, committee members were selected, elected or they volunteered.
3. **Students should have only one leadership role.** It was subsequently recognised that in some instances, it would be highly desirable for a student to play a dual role, therefore it is now acceptable for this to occur.

The present Leadership Model resulted from the work of The Girls Welfare Subcommittee as well as discussion with, and feedback by staff.

Explanation of the Model

- The central student leadership body is the Prefect Committee, which is made up of the School Captain, School Vice-Captain/s, House Captains, Sports Captain, Performing Arts Captain, Academic Captain, Chapel Captain, Year 8 Captain, SRC Captain and Service Captain.
- The School Captain and School Vice-Captain/s make up the executive of the Prefect Committee and are responsible for its leadership and management.
- Each member of the Prefect Committee has a role as a prefect, and as a prefect their student leadership will be focussed at a broader school level. The prefect motto is *“Non sibi sed scholae - Not self but school”*. Members of the Prefect Committee will have significant leadership roles in the School, which involve them working with teams/committees of students in their specific areas of responsibility.
- All senior students will be encouraged to participate fully and serve on a student committee. Senior students will also be expected to carry out some specific Senior Duties.
- Each committee will have a member of staff as a guide and mentor. These committees cover significant aspects of the school.
- A Sports Committee and a Performing Arts Committee will be selected for their abilities and leadership qualities in those areas. The Sports Captain and the Performing Arts Captain may also take on the duties of a specific area. [eg., soccer and music respectively].
- House Committees will include House Vice Captains and Tutor Group Captains.
- A Year 8 Committee will be formed from TIP leaders.
- SRC members will be elected in House groups, with one representative coming from each year level. These 20 students and the SRC Captain will make up the SRC Committee.
- Academic, Service and Chapel Committees will be formed from students expressing an interest in these areas.



Implementation of the model

Year 11 Leadership Conference

- Outline of leadership model, roles and duties.
- Discussion of roles.
- Explanation of selection procedure.
- Opportunity to talk with current prefects and mentors.

Student Application

Students

- Complete application form and indicate position of interest.
- Prepare a one-page statement addressing the criteria set out in the application form and Student Leadership booklet.
- Submit application by a given date, including an indication of preferred jobs, and whether they wish to be considered for the position of school captain or vice captain.

Voting

- Staff and Student Voting by compulsory secret ballot one lunchtime.
- Year 8,9,10,12 girls choose up to five senior leaders. Year 11 students and staff choose up to 10.

Preliminary Interviewing

- Preliminary interviewing for all applicants on a Saturday morning.
- Discussion and selection of students for the final round by the panel of interviewing staff.
- Short list presented to the Headmaster.

Final Round Interviews

- In simultaneous meetings, Heads of House inform all candidates in their House who are on the short list.
- Headmaster conducts final round interviews.

Announcement of Prefects

- At a special meeting of the short-listed candidates, Prefects are announced.
- Headmaster meets the successful students individually to offer specific positions.
- Prefects are announced at an Assembly of Year 11 students.
- All Prefect Positions to be formally announced at Speech Day.

Issues Arising

1. The problem of students who feel that they have been overlooked and undervalued is an ever-present one and will no doubt continue to be so.
2. So far, there has been an overwhelming response to comparatively few Prefect jobs. This can mean great disappointment for those students and they [and their parents] need great understanding. Perhaps there could be a longer interval between the Leadership Conference and the deadline for applications, as immediately after the Conference enthusiasm is very high.
3. The actual role of School Prefect is deemed to be more important than the specific job. It is felt that students should apply for particular positions according to their interest and therefore list approximately four preferences. Some positions have proved to be more popular than some others. Perhaps students could be directed towards another role or must only those girls who initially apply for a job be considered for it?



4. An important change was that, in the new process, there was no longer open staff discussion. Some staff members felt that they lacked the opportunity to present their views. Now, staff who strongly favour a candidate, are encouraged to support their view with a written comment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the outcomes of the new process are identified as follows:

- The process is seen to be transparent.
- It involves more students in leadership roles.
- More opportunities exist for students to display initiative.
- It provides practical life experiences with the letter of application and interview procedures.
- Prefect positions are no longer seen as a reward for students [or parents].
- As with all processes, this system is open to review and revision where the need arises.

The Reverend Kate Powell is the Chaplain at The Glennie School, Toowoomba. She has recently been involved in an investigation of student leadership structures at the school, and the implementation of the resulting new system.

Mrs Barbara Jesser teaches English at The Glennie School, Toowoomba. In 1998 she was appointed a Head of House and as such, is responsible for the co-ordination and oversight of the new leadership model. The Glennie School is a girls only, Prep to Year 12 day and boarding school.



ANGLICAN CHURCH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1. Setting the Scene – Personal Philosophy Behind Actions

There are two levels of the “philosophy in action” which comes from my personal belief of “*To know and not to do is not yet to know*”. At the broadest level – the Strategic level – there is the need to see structures, processes and relationships as a dynamic inter relationship which needs constant work and review. When we move to the specific – the Operational level – there is a need to deal with the implementation of key values of the school.

I see the first task [*to know and not to do is not yet to know*] to be one of getting the right sort of people, ie., quality role models who have a real understanding and empathy with boys, into the key roles as pastoral carers. At Churchie this meant identifying staff who were well regarded by the boys as well as other staff and then convincing them to take up the challenge. It was about selecting staff on their actions and not on what they said they could do. It was also about ensuring the program was led by someone with a strong knowledge background as well as being a good practitioner – in this appointment I was very fortunate in our present Dean of Students!

In looking to the strategy, I was aware that too often we worry about structure without giving enough attention to getting the processes for communication and interaction right, or to working on and dealing with the personal relationship concerns. A good deal of energy was expended in these latter two areas, in part due to the history of the established processes, but also because there was to be a major emphasis change from a disciplinary orientated approach to one which is more knowledge based [see Gilbert and Gilbert pp.225-250, “*Masculinity Goes to School*”].

2. Setting the Scene – School Profile

ACGS is an all boys’ school with a total student population of a little under 1,600 students. Since the beginning of 1998 the school has undergone considerable change in response to a detailed Strategic Planning exercise by the School Council and representatives of the P & F, Staff and Old Boys Association.

Prior to and including 1998, the school provided preparatory schooling for Years 5-7, and secondary schooling for Years 8-12 with boarding provision starting at the Year 8 level. In 1999 the first class of Year 4 was enrolled and in 2001 enrolment for Years 1, 2 and 3 begins.

During 2000 and 2001 the organization of the school will shift, so that there is a Preparatory School for day boys in years 1–6, a Middle School for day boys and boarders in Years 7-9 [except there is no boarding provision for Year 7 at this stage] and a Senior School for day boys and boarders in Years 10-12.

The student leadership structure is a traditional form which includes Prefects, House Captains, plus activity based House leaders, a Student Representative Council as well as Captains/Vice-Captains for a wide range of sporting, cultural and service programs. Historically there has been a separate set of structures for the Preparatory School and for the Senior [secondary] School. Given the considerable change being made to the school it was decided not to make any significant structural change to the student leadership structure but rather to work on enhancing the quality for processes and relationships associated with the various roles.

3. Overview of Structure: Secondary School Leadership Opportunities

3.1 Prefects:

Students are elected via a vote of peers [Year 11 students] and staff during Term 4 of the year prior to taking up the role. The appointment is made by the Headmaster.



Their role as a Prefect is to set an example of behaviour, manners and dress for the student body and to assist staff in maintaining the standards of the school [i.e., in behaviour, dress, general rules of attendance and tidiness]. Prefects are also expected to be involved in representing the school in a range of public activities.

The major changes to the role of Prefect were instituted via a leadership program run with all Year 11 students during Term 4. The focus of the program was to develop a better knowledge, as well as skills, for the boys on being ‘a leader within’ the student body rather than ‘of’ the students. This program was co-ordinated by the Dean of Students and Head of Senior School. Fundamental to this strategy is a shift to a student management [knowledge based] philosophy from a discipline approach.

At the end of the leadership program all Year 11’s vote for students who have been nominated by their House group, as do the teaching staff. The weighting of the vote is 50% student and 50% staff. A notional figure of 10% of the student year group are selected as Prefects.

3.2 House Leaders

There are 16 Houses with approximately 80-90 boys in each – 4 Boarding and 12 Day Houses. Each House has a slightly different structure of leadership and pastoral relationship although all will have a House Captain plus other Year 12 leaders who take specific responsibility for Chapel, Service, Sport and Cultural activities. These boys are elected at House level.

As the House is a key pastoral structure in the secondary area of the school, the leadership provided by Year 12 boys is regarded as critical to the quality of school culture. It is for this reason that the Leadership Program is focused on the whole of the Year 11 cohort. The role of Year 11’s in Term 4 and then Year 12’s in the following Term 1 also includes assisting with orientation and peer support for Year 8 [and other new students] and is an important aspect of student leadership at Churchie.

With the recent change in pastoral structure in the Middle School, the key pastoral care role has shifted to class teachers [versus House], and there is a rethink of how to maintain this quality connection between the Seniors and younger boys. Because the quality of relationship is seen as a strong and positive influence we are now reworking the processes and structures at Year 8 and 9 level to maintain this aspect of the school culture as the Middle School is progressively introduced.

3.3 SRC – Student Representative Council

Two representatives from Year 11 and 12 from each House, elected by the whole House, make up the SRC. Should a member of the SRC be elected as a Prefect, he is required to resign as a member of the SRC. The School Captain [or his representative] attends the SRC but has no voting rights.

Up to four staff may attend the SRC but are not voting members of the Committee - the role is to report back to staff on the business issues raised. The SRC has a President, Secretary and Treasurer elected from the Year 12 members.

The aims of the SRC are to:

- represent the student body;
- provide a means for the student body to express their opinions;
- co-ordinate student activities within the School;
- encourage support of extra curricular activities and the use of the school to its full potential.

The overall major inter-House competition, is the SRC Shield.



The recommendations of the SRC are presented to the Dean of Students/Headmaster for consideration.

With the creation of the Middle School it is intended that there will be a Year 9 representative of each House to be added to the elected members.

3.4 Activity Leadership

There are a large number of sports, cultural clubs, three cadet units and a range of other activities all with a variation of student leaders. In the case of the cadet units there are different promotional requirements based on the focus of the service. The major sporting groups have identified overall leaders as well as team captains and year group leaders.

4. What Makes It Work

As already intimated, I believe our student leadership is effective due to four key issues:

- The quality of people who fill the key positions as role models [teachers and students].
- The range of opportunities within the school provide a broad variation of what it means to be a leader. The roles also have hands-on tasks and real outcomes.
- The quality of the leadership program provided for the Year 11 boys has created a ‘drip feed’ of quality leadership models in the critical culture building element of the school and the House.
- The focus has been on building quality relationships and creating appropriate processes to support the boys through the ‘learning to lead’ sequence.

Underlying the whole structure, process and relationships development of student leadership is the question,

‘Does the educational experience encountered by students make a positive difference to them?’

At Churchie I believe it does because we are taking a Knowledge based versus Discipline based approach with a focus on relationships and quality role models.

Mr David Scott is the Headmaster of Anglican Church Grammar School, Brisbane. He holds post graduate qualifications in Education and Business, and is interested in drawing together theories of organisational development and student outcomes. Anglican Church Grammar School is a boys only, Year 1 – 12 day and boarding school.

