Growing Good Men Through Literature and Storytelling

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Thanks for getting up early!

Berwick Grammar School
Growing Good Men
Readers are Leaders

What is the ethos and guiding principle(s) of your school?

Why is Character Education Important?
• So we send good men out into the world
• To supplement family value messages
• To develop skills to improve their learning such as Mindset and Academic Resilience
• To prepare them with 21st century skills for success

Important Elements of Character Education
• Mindfulness/Self-Regulation
• Character Strengths
• Leadership and Service
• Resilience
• Empathy and ethics
• Communication/Conflict Resolution
• Emotional literacy

How do you teach character in your school?
Where do we learn how to be good men?

The answer was in front of me all along!

STORIES

IBSC Action Research 2018-19

- Proposed to look at stories as a way to explore positive masculine traits
- Suggested that stories can act as an inoculation against toxic masculinity and negative feelings about how men are being portrayed

Taking a Positive Approach

- Positive Psychology (Grit, Character Strengths, PERMA etc)
- Positive Education (Mindset, Academic Resilience, Health)
- Positive Masculinity

Professor Martin Seligman likens this to change in our approach from “parking an ambulance at the bottom of a cliff to help those who fall” to “preventing the fall in the first place” (p.280).

My Project

Year 10 boys pick two great male role models – one from a fictional text, and one from their real life – and construct stories to tell to their Year 7 Peer Mentees. Thus, they shift the discussion to what great men do, rather than warning younger boys what not to do.

Sample Storytelling – Both Stories

My Conclusions

- Storytelling was a great way to teach character – and I wanted to do more.
- Boys were initially challenged but ultimately enjoyed the project
- They felt a sense of importance and gravity about the work.
“I felt like personally, I was a better man after the program... and it felt cool that I could actually share it with someone, someone who would listen and understand”

Mitchell:

“It’s sort of our responsibility to show the next generation what good men are, and what we can achieve”

Zamir

I wanted more!

Using Stories

Telling/Creating Stories

Using Literature and Stories

Disclaimer

My head has been full of ideas this year – but these ideas are in various states of completion. Some of these programs are more embedded than others.

Trial – Good Men, Good Books

- Worked with 5 Year 8 boys in an extension reading project
- I choose a range of books with good male role models
- They had to choose a “challenge” book from this and engage in conversations about what they learned about masculinity from the book.
Their Voice…

Peer Mentor Reading

We have older peers read regularly with young boys. The read aloud, they ask each other questions and they recommend reading material. They talk about boys in the texts. It’s not always the older boy leading the way!

Stories at Assemblies

We use our assemblies as a forum to share good news stories about men and to focus on Growing Good Men.

• Every speaker has the book they are reading on display
• We centre messages around books – fictional and non-fictional
• We celebrate the examples of Growing Good Men in the school.

Using a Book to Spark a Conversation…

Real and Historical Stories - Celebrating the Achievements
And not just assemblies...

- Student leadership Selection and Training
- Peer Mentoring Training Sessions
- Wellbeing Sessions
- Teaching the VIA Character Strengths – choosing ambassadors
- Student management

Focus on Masculinity in the Study of Text

- Focus on choosing English Texts with positive male roles models
- Teaching masculinity as a theme in text work

Creating Literature and Stories

What are the stories – both formal and informal that best represent the ethos of your school?

Stories of Berwick Grammar Men
Repository of moments that best represent the Growing Good Men of Berwick Grammar School.

A Sample...
Collecting Moments

Oral history or podcast – asking people which moments define them as men and taught them how to be a good man. This is kind of thing I mean….

Sample Storytelling – My Dad

Creating Stories that Promote Good Men

The Idea...
Ask boys in a Peer Mentor Group to write a children’s story for boys in the Junior School that showed a young man facing a common challenge, and confronting it with character and confidence.

Discussion Time!
What ideas can you take/adapt/add on to these, to implement in your school?

Additionally, what questions are you left with?

The result… Good Men in the World
THANK YOU!

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