

# Who's in Charge? The Use of Meaningful Student Involvement in Humanities and Social Sciences to Encourage Deeper Understanding in Year 5 Boys.

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**Further Information**  
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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## Introduction

The research project sought to measure the need for boys to consider their own learning pathways in the hope of taking ownership of their learning. Throughout the process, the emphasis was on the students to take control of their learning, thereby developing their 21st century skills including questioning, collaboration, and communication. Findings from this project indicated that by guiding the lessons with collaboration with students, deeper learning occurred.

Meaningful student involvement was kept in the forefront of minds throughout the project and opportunities to exercise this were abundant. After evaluation of the students' presentations and analytical reflection, it was clear that the transference of power to the students was not only empowering, but also led to a significantly deeper understanding of the content. As their teachers, it was satisfying to witness the students meeting achievement standards and showing interest and accountability for the outcome.

## The Research Question

*How does the use of meaningful student involvement in Humanities and Social Sciences encourage a deeper understanding of content for Year 5 boys?*

## Research Context and Participants

The Southport School was established in 1901. It is an independent Anglican, day and boarding school for boys in Queensland, Australia. It is a non-selective school for all boys from Pre-school to Year 12. The school's mission is to "challenge each boy to achieve excellence" through the balance of academics, pastoral care, and co-curricular opportunities.

The Southport Preparatory School has approximately 600 students ranging from Pre-prep to Year 6. The participants in our study were 25 Year 5 students following the National Australian Curriculum. They studied Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) once a week for a one-and-a-half-hour lessons.

## The Action



### Where were they at?

Our first step was to deliver an online survey, which gave us some information about the students and their attitudes towards learning and the Key Learning Area of Humanities and Social Sciences.

We discussed meaningful student involvement, how it would impact on what they needed to learn, and how they were going.

### Where were they going?

Students and teachers followed their learning plans, conferencing weekly, to check on progression, facilitate learning and goal setting.

Students checked in with video or email. Reflection was vital as they booked time with their teachers each week by face-to-face, acting as information facilitators, as primary and secondary sources of information, presentation experts, and mentors for their learning journey.

### Where they are now?

This stage was essentially the presentation of their work, the medium for the majority of the data collection. We viewed the boys' presentations, considered their work during moderation, and marked against a rubric.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through:

- A questionnaire to give baseline data
- Anecdotal observations
- Video interviews
- Reflections
- Group discussions
- Reflection opportunities at conclusion of the project.

Before, during, and after the project, data were collated, transcribed and categorised into subgroups and positive, negative and notable observations were identified.

## Key Findings and Discussion

- Meaningful student involvement prompted a shift in mindset, building confidence in students to believe that their personal knowledge was valuable
- Noticeable improvement in drafting higher-order thinking.
- Students' ability to control mode and method of presentation heightened engagement.
- Growth in overall understanding of topics and confidence in own ability.
- Dynamics of group work lead to a vested interest to learn from other participating groups ... students teaching students.

"We felt like the teachers."

"I liked the self control and not being ordered to do things."

"I felt smarter."

"I haven't finished, can I come back at lunchtime?"

"The classroom is noisy but we are still getting heaps done."

"My friends and I were able to understand so much more when we changed our question."

"We learned to build on basic ideas."

"We wouldn't remember it as much if the teacher just told us"

## Conclusion

Embracing the concept of complete release of responsibility through a gradual process for students so young offered extremely pleasing results. The change of mindset of both students and teachers created an atmosphere of equality, substantially improving the delivery and acquisition of knowledge.

Adopting meaningful student involvement to enhance deeper understanding helped students to understand the value of investing in their own learning. The more invested they became the better the results were. Helping the students realise that they needed to be more than just passengers in the classroom during this project had a flow on affect with other subjects.



Flexibility to allow the students to step into roles previously fulfilled by teachers boosted both maturity and confidence. The outcome ultimately fostering intrinsic motivation, by far the most valuable characteristic to possess.

### Key Readings:

Dweck, C.S. (2017). *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfill your potential*. New York: Robinson

Harris, J., Spina, N., Ehrlich, L., & Smeed, J.(2013). Literature Review: Student-centered schools make the difference. *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership*.

Soundout.org. Meaningful Student Involvement. Retrieved November 15, 2017.