



# Relevant Role-Models: The Power of Storytelling in Values Education for Year 9 Boys

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## Further Information

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

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## Introduction

At the beginning of 2018, Lindisfarne College established six new core school values. These values are: integrity, courage, kindness, humility, service, and respect. Prior to this new approach to values education, the school had used our "Good Man" window—a stained-glass window featuring four significant men from New Zealand's history—to highlight the key values we wished students to emulate.

This action research project investigated whether students identified with the school's six values and how a role model-based instructional approach, designed to explicitly teach these six core values, can have a lasting impact on students' ability to relate to, and generate a deeper understanding of, our school's core values.

## The Research Question

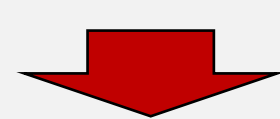
**How can a critique of role model's narratives help strengthen Year 9 boys' understanding of our school's core values?**

## Research Context and Participants

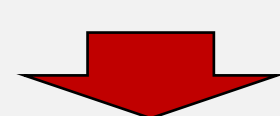
The participants were a Social Studies class of 20, 13-14-year-old boys in Year 9. Lindisfarne College is a fee-paying integrated boys' school located in Hastings, New Zealand. The school is roughly split between boarding and day-boy students and has a roll of approximately 500 students. The action research took place in the Social Studies classes that I taught over a 10-week instructional period.

## The Research Action

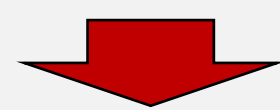
The action changed the delivery of values instruction in the school by specifically teaching students using the role-models which appear in our school's "Good Man" stained glass window and how they embody our school's core values.



Our school's six core values were defined and explained in class, with specific emphasis placed on how students could embody these values in their daily lives.

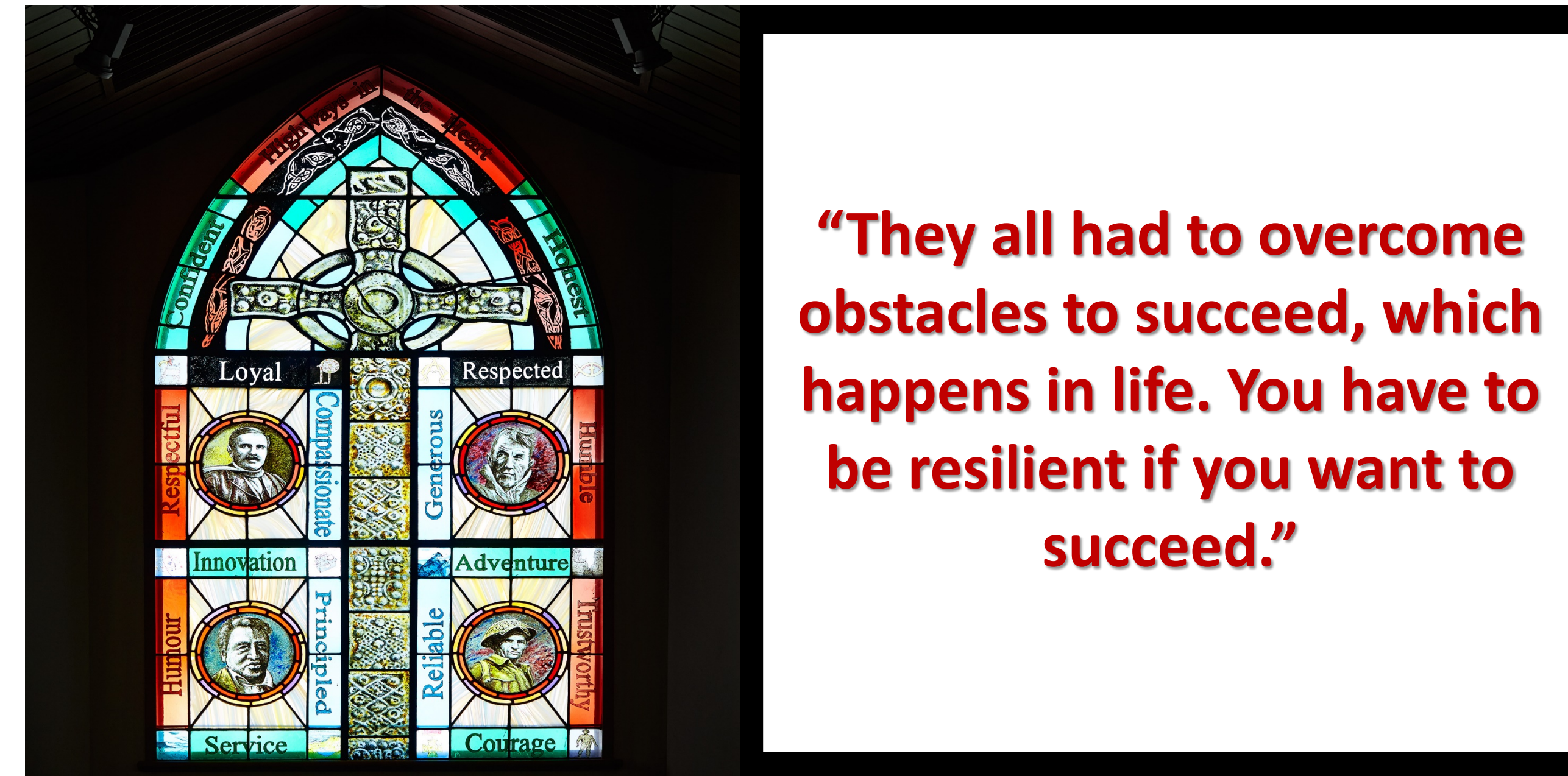


Over the course of several classes, the four school role models' stories were discussed in such a way as to examine each role model's personal history, including their successes and achievements, errors they made, and obstacles they overcame.



In the form of an independent research task, students used this scaffolded approach to narrative biographical history to apply it to a personal role model of their choice. The objective of the task was to encourage the students to engage with values education via role model emulation in a more critically aware fashion.

***"Another reason why I chose [Einstein] is because he is someone whose success I can see myself mimicking in 10 or 20 years' time. I don't see myself becoming a war hero or climbing Mount Everest, but rather testing the boundaries of science."***



***"They all had to overcome obstacles to succeed, which happens in life. You have to be resilient if you want to succeed."***



## Data Collection and Analysis

A variety of data collection techniques were used:

- interviews with participants
- questionnaires (pre- and post-teaching)
- participant work samples
- student journals
- existing records and reports
- photos and videos

## Key Findings and Discussion

1. **School values are well defined but not well applied.**  
*"All of them [the school values] basically mean holding the door open for someone."*
2. **The keys to an effective role-model, in terms of highlighting values, are relatability and accessibility.**  
*"They all did things that are great, but I'm not interested in some of the stuff they did and I can't relate to it."*
3. **Independent learning fostered increased engagement with the school values.**  
*"It makes it that little bit more relatable and possible that you can do the same."*
4. **The power of storytelling in values education lies in making sense of abstract concepts, like values, for students.**  
*"You can see the values being put into perspective rather than just hearing people talk about them."*
5. **An absence of examples of kindness in many role-models' stories.**

## Conclusions

- He boys struggled with explaining what the school values would look like if put into action in their lives.
- Simply having role-models available to teach values is not enough. Who the role-models are and how well students relate to them is critical.
- The boys much preferred the freedom to choose and learn about people they considered to be personal role-models. This increased their engagement with values education and encouraged a deeper understanding of the schools six core values.
- The power of storytelling was not just limited to freedom of choice; it also came from developing a more thorough understanding of a role-models personal history. The students learnt more about values by examining their role-model's failures and the obstacles that they overcame than they did simply by researching their successes.
- Students struggled to find examples of kindness in their role-models' actions, or at least these acts were not explicitly discussed anywhere where the students went looking for information about their role-models.

## Key Readings

- Bowers, J. R., Rosch, D. M. and Collier, D.A. (2016), Examining the relationship between role models and leadership growth during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 31(1), 96–118.
- Kristjánsson, K. (2006), Emulation and the use of role models in moral education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 35 (1), 37-49.
- Lockwood, P. and Kunda, Z. (1997), Superstars and Me: Predicting the impact of role models on the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73 (1), 91-103.

