

MY STORY, YOUR STORY, OUR STORY: USING AN INTENTIONAL STORY SHARING  
PROGRAMME TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONAL SKILLS IN GRADE 6 BOYS

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**Abstract**

In October 2018, a group of 20 Grade 6 boys aged between 11 and 12 years-old participated in a seven-week “My Story, Your Story, Our Story” programme with a Grade 2 buddy aged between 7 and 8 years-old. The Grade 6 boys shared their “My Story” with their Grade 2 buddy. They then listened to their buddy’s “Your Story.” After participating in story sharing activities with their Grade 2 buddy, the Grade 6 boys then produced a combined “Our Story” video.

Through story-related activities and based on pedagogy underpinned by a framework for best practice in boys’ education (Keddie, 2005), this action research project sought to establish whether an intentional story sharing programme would strengthen relational skills in Grade 6 boys. Activities that involved physical interaction as well as those with a digital element were chosen as they are well-suited to boys’ education. Improved acknowledgment, trust, and connection between a Grade 6 boy and their Grade 2 buddy indicated that a partnership had been strengthened. This improvement was evidenced through Grade 6 boys’ comments and by observing body language and facial expressions of both partners.

Through discussion and reflection on their experiences, the boys identified various skills needed to develop strong relationships. Using stories as the basis for all the activities, the boys were asked continually to reflect on how they felt these skills were progressing. Throughout the programme, careful observations were made and notes were taken on the interactions of the Grade 6 boys with their Grade 2 buddy. During the final interviews, the Grade 6 boys expressed that they had not only learnt that intentional effort was needed in order to build a relationship but had also developed the skills to do this. The results of this action research project showed that an intentional story sharing programme was successful in strengthening relational skills in Grade 6 boys. The findings are significant as it made us aware that we cannot merely partner Grade 6 boys with a Grade 2 buddy without teaching them how to form a relationship. This programme will

now be implemented every year. It has made a huge impact not only on the school's buddy programme but also on the Grade 6 boys' relational skills.

## Glossary

**Buddy Partnership:** In the third term, each Grade 6 boy is partnered with a Grade 2 boy (buddy) in his house, to assist with the transition from the Junior Prep to the Middle School.

**Houses:** St Peter's Boys Prep has five houses. In Grade 2, each boy is placed in one of the five houses. The houses are run by housemasters who look after the boys' well-being from a pastoral aspect. The houses also compete against each other in various sporting and cultural events.

**Relational Skills:** The way in which two or more people are connected. An emotional association where the connection can be understood in terms of interactions between individuals.

**Story Sharing Programme:** A programme carried out over seven weeks, where Grade 6 boys meet with their Grade 2 buddy to share stories through organised activities.

## Introduction

### Background

At St Peter's Boys Prep, there is a transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3, both physically and emotionally. The boys have to "cross the road" from the Junior Prep (Grade 0 - Grade 2) to the Middle School (Grade 3 & Grade 4), which forms part of the Senior Prep (Grade 3 - Grade 7). For a number of years, there has been a buddy partnership led by Grade 6 boys to assist with the transition of the Grade 2 boys into the Senior Prep. The management of the programme has changed over the years and the general feedback from staff and housemasters was that it was not as effective as it could be, and its purpose needed to be re-defined.

Through a story sharing programme this action research project aimed to foster a stronger connection between the Grade 2 and Grade 6 boys that could develop into a more meaningful relationship as they moved into Grade 3 and Grade 7 respectively. Previously, the Grade 6 boys only met their Grade 2 buddy once in November for half an hour. They then met their buddy and his parents again a week later, to give them a tour of the Senior Prep. This action research project involved various intentional story sharing activities to nurture relationships by strengthening relational skills in Grade 6 boys and incorporating the buddy partnership into the academic programme.

## **Research Question**

*How does an intentional story sharing programme strengthen relational skills in Grade 6 boys?*

## **Action Research**

Action research was an appropriate methodology for the project as it “allows teachers to study their own classrooms ... in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness” (Mertler, 2017, p.4). A buddy partnership was in place at St Peter’s, but by using an action research methodology, this programme was improved and has become more meaningful. The cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflecting on the findings and deciding on a course of action (Ferrance 2000) allowed for continual fine-tuning of the project. Since action research tends to make use of qualitative data collection methods that are narrative or language-based, this approach enabled better monitoring and measurement of the changes that occurred during this project.

## **Literature Review**

Twenty-first century boys need the soft skills of communication and empathy (Pink as cited in Caldwell, 2012). Storytelling is one way in which these skills can be developed. Caldwell (2012) explains that if children are going to have conversations or tell stories that are close to their hearts, it is imperative that very specific ground rules for respect are laid down. The methodology the teachers used in Caldwell’s research, therefore, ensured the boys felt safe while exploring and listening to each other’s experiences.

The notion that story sharing is a positive and effective way to improve and strengthen relational skills is well supported in the research." Drawing on the work of both Fisher and Guber, Aidman and Long (2017) note that, “stories have the potential to help people connect, develop genuine understanding, and unite around common purposes” (p.107). They note further, that when we tell a story, we share part of ourselves and this sharing enables others to realise the ways in which we are similar to them. Stories, therefore, can create a community and encourage a deeper understanding of each individual within that community (Aidman & Long, 2017).

To strengthen relational skills, the sharing of stories should take on many different formats, not only the traditional storytelling approach: “Because we are narrative beings, the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and all communication is a form of storytelling” (Aidman & Long, 2017, p.112). According to Norfleet (2009), boys enjoy working in groups, as they are very peer

orientated and “what one does, his mates will do.” Boys should be encouraged to work shoulder-to-shoulder as opposed to talking face-to-face as research shows this leads to more words being used as it is non-confrontational (National Center for the Development of Boys, 2017).

If a boy’s brain is not well engaged in learning or activity, it is naturally set to enter a “rest state” or “boredom state” (National Center for the Development of Boys, 2017, p.15). YouTube video clips with catchy music keep boys engaged and gifs and images can be used to entice boys.

Neuroscience supports this technique. Pictorial Superiority Effect (PSE) is well established in persuasion research. It simply means that pictures and videos are more likely to be remembered than text alone (Gallo, 2017).

According to Haven (2007), human beings are “*homo narratus*” (story animals) and we learn from, and through, stories. Stories “mimic the internal processing of human minds” (Haven, p.124) and hold a unique effectiveness and power due to this relationship with the thought process of the mind. Meaning, context, relevance, and empathy are needed for effective learning of any kind. These are created by stories. Often children need a bridge from the abstract external world into the human internal world. The structure of a story allows information such as data, concepts, and values to form the bridge needed (Haven, 2007).

The English Oxford Living Dictionary online (2018) defines relational as “concerning the way in which two or more people or things are connected.” “Education is primarily about human beings who need to meet together, as a group of people, if learning is to take place” (Lang, 2004).

According to Durden (2011), “the key to building positive relationships with young children starts with establishing a pattern of positive interactions with the child” (p.3). Durden believes when interacting with a child, one should use a warm, engaging and comforting voice, follow the child’s lead, be responsive, and say the child’s name (p.2). Patrick (2018) maintains, “positive social connection is facilitated through intentionally and correctly using a person’s name.” Names can represent history, values, and culture. Taking the time to learn how to pronounce a person’s name, including what it means or where it comes from, can enhance rapport, facilitate communication, and build confidence. When someone invests the time and effort to research and practise your name in order to say it correctly, it indicates respect, interest, and attention (Patrick, 2018).

Boys give nicknames as a way of being affectionate without compromising masculinity (Kenny, 2014). Lynch (cited in Kenny, 2014) believes that one way to connect with someone is to create a

nickname for him or her; a name that says, “I know this person.” She goes on to explain that nicknames are often used to signify belonging and that a person is part of the group.

Touch is also of utmost importance for boys; they need to interact physically to learn (Norfleet, 2007). Boys learn through all of their senses, suggesting we need to create multi-sensory experiences for them. When the boys perform handshakes and their hands touch, chemicals are released in the brain, including the bonding chemical oxytocin helping to promote harmony and friendship (Navarro, 2017). A personalized handshake engages the whole brain and puts boys in a peak mental state to learn. The handshake represents movement, and movement creates energy and happiness (Gallo, 2017). The more learning is kinaesthetic, the more boys' bodies will be engaged in learning (Gurian, 2010).

When children form close and dependable relationships that provide love, nurturance, security, and responsive interactions, they grow and thrive (Joseph & Strain, 2004). The concept of “Emotional Banks” described by Durden (2011) can be used to help boys understand how to build a relationship. This concept involves people making deposits by doing things that build a relationship and making withdrawals by doing things that break down a relationship.

The reciprocal exchange of stories is vital (Joseph & Strain, 2004). Learning takes place through interacting with one another and not in isolation (Noam as cited in Caldwell, 2012). Graham and Harris (as cited in Yearta, Helf & Harris, 2018) believe that students are more likely to put additional effort into their work if it is shared with an authentic audience. “It is about discovering that being a part of collective conversation means sharing, listening, and learning about ourselves and one another” (Yearta et al., 2018). Durden (2011) suggests the making and sharing of “All About Me” books. The making of these books provides an opportunity for children to gain a thorough understanding of each other’s preferences, interests, background, and culture and helps build a meaningful and positive relationship (Joseph & Strain, 2004).

Girls have been shown to have more interest than boys do in writing and storytelling, while boys show greater interest than girls do in using computer technology (Skaar, 2007). For this reason, digital tools are useful to record boys’ stories. Technology can be used as a bridge to writing.

## **Research Context**

The participants in this action research project were 20 Grade 6 boys, aged 11 to 12 years-old, from St Peter's Boys Prep. St Peter's Boys Prep is an Anglican private preparatory boys school in Johannesburg, South Africa. The majority of the boys come from a high socioeconomic background. The school aims at providing a caring, superior, holistic education that is responsive to the needs of the individual and the community while embracing diversity, upholding Christian values, and building on tradition, St Peter's is attuned to educational trends nationally and globally.

A Parental Consent Google Form was sent to all Grade 2 and Grade 6 parents outlining the nature of the project and the roles and responsibilities of each participant. Parents were asked to give permission for their child to be filmed, photographed, and quoted. Grade 2 and Grade 6 boys were sent a similar Participant Assent Google Form written in language understandable to them. Consent Google Forms were also sent to the five housemasters as well as to the Grade 2 and Grade 6 class teachers.

All 74 boys in Grade 6 and 82 boys in Grade 2 participated in the story sharing programme, but data were collected from only 20 of the Grade 6 boys. Four Grade 6 participants were randomly chosen from each of the five houses. No boys were disadvantaged either by participating or not participating in our research. All activities were completed during the school day. The rights of all the boys involved in our research were protected. When reporting on our findings, we referred to the boys as Boy A, Boy B, etc. All data collected were stored in a Google Drive folder with restricted access.

## **Action**

In September 2018, each Grade 6 class met with the researchers for a half-hour lesson every Tuesday during their scheduled Life Orientation period to research, discuss, and plan each of the story sharing activities. From October, time was scheduled for the Grade 6 and Grade 2 boys to meet every Tuesday to participate in the story sharing activities. Special time slots were scheduled for three of the activities. The housemasters, class teachers, and researchers were all present for the activities.

The action was based on a “My Story, Your Story, Our Story” concept. The Grade 6 boys shared their “My Story” with their Grade 2 buddy. They then listened to their buddy’s “Your Story”. After participating in a variety of story sharing activities with their Grade 2 buddy, the Grade 6 boys then produced a combined “Our Story” video, as the final story sharing activity.

Based on the literature, the format for the story sharing activities (Table 1) was boy-orientated and encompassed the concept of best practice in boys’ education (Keddie, 2005). We chose activities that involved physical interaction as well as those with a digital element. The activities were undertaken in houses as boys enjoy working in groups (Norfleet, 2009). We also encouraged the boys to work shoulder-to-shoulder (National Center for the Development of Boys, 2017, p.27). It was important to structure the Grade 6 lessons in such a way that they were relevant to boys’ lives. YouTube video clips of sports stars with catchy music kept the boys engaged, while gifs and images were used to entice the boys (Gallo, 2017).

The Grade 6 boys first met their Grade 2 buddy during the *First Story Sharing Activity - The Historical Story*. During this initial meeting, each of the Grade 6 boys presented their buddy with their house shirt, as well as a handwritten card welcoming him to their house. The Grade 6 boys were responsible for sharing the historical story of their house with the Grade 2 boys. This activity culminated in the Grade 6s teaching their buddy a house war cry, which they then all sang to their Grade 2 buddy’s parents. The Grade 6 boys reflected on their initial meeting with their Grade 2 buddy later that morning during their Life Orientation lesson. They made use of the Flipgrid App<sup>1</sup> to record a video of their feelings and thoughts on their meeting.

In preparation for the *Second Story Sharing Activity - The Autobiographical Story*, the Grade 6 and Grade 2 boys used Book Creator<sup>2</sup> to produce a printed “All About Me” book. They then met on a Tuesday morning and the Grade 6 boys shared their “My Story” book and listened to their buddy’s “Your Story” book. The making of these books provided an opportunity for the Grade 6 boys and their buddy to gain a thorough understanding of each other’s preferences, interests, background and culture, and helped build a meaningful and positive relationship (Joseph & Strain, 2004).

Once again, after the activity, the Grade 6 boys had the opportunity to use Flipgrid to record their

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<sup>1</sup> Flipgrid is a social learning platform that allows teachers to create grids to facilitate discussions. Each grid is like a message board where teachers can pose questions or tasks called topics, and boys can post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display.

<sup>2</sup> Book Creator is a digital tool to create eBooks that can also be printed.

reflection on their story sharing experience and commented on how their relationship was progressing.

The Grade 6 boys fetched their buddy from his classroom and took him to a retaining wall next to one of the cricket fields for the *Third Story Sharing Activity - Growing Our Story*. Working together, the buddy partnerships planted succulents in the spaces between the pavers. This physical interaction (Gurian, 2010) between the Grade 6 boys and their buddy resulted in many stories being shared as well as new stories being created. The Grade 6 boys used Durden's (2011) suggestions in their interactions with their Grade 2 buddy by using a warm, engaging and comforting voice, following their buddy's lead, being responsive, and saying their buddy's name (p.2).

Now that the boys were beginning to grow their story, they were able to complete the *Fourth Story Sharing Activity - The Story of Our Nicknames*. This activity stemmed from Patrick's (2018) research on using a person's name correctly. The Grade 6s and their buddy gave each other a nickname and had to record a Flipgrid video explaining how they came up with each other's nicknames.

For inspiration, the boys watched the GoNoodle<sup>3</sup> Secret Handshake videos before choreographing their own during the *Fifth Story Sharing Activity - Secret Handshakes*. This activity was based on Norfleet's (2007) research on the importance of touch for boys and the fact that they need to interact physically to learn. The boys recorded a video of their handshake on Flipgrid.

The Grade 6 boys met their buddy at the dining room for the *Sixth Story Sharing Activity - Hot Lunch Experience*. They taught their buddy the procedure involved during hot lunch. They chatted and shared a meal.

Using iMovie<sup>4</sup>, the Grade 6 boys produced their online video of "Our Story" based on the story sharing activities with their buddy. They presented the video to their Grade 2 buddy and his parents before giving them a tour of the Senior Prep.

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<sup>3</sup> GoNoodle is a collection of short videos primarily used by teachers during breaks to promote focus through physical activity.

<sup>4</sup> iMovie is a video editing software application.

Table 1: Research activities

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Action</b>
Historical Story	House shirt Welcome card Presentation on history of house War cry Flipgrid reflection
Autobiographical Story	Grade 6 My Story Book Grade 2 Your Story Book Flipgrid reflection
Growing Our Story	Planted succulents
Story of Our Nicknames	Nicknames Flipgrid explanation
Secret Handshakes	GoNoodle Secret Handshakes Videos inspiration Choreographed own secret handshakes Flipgrid video
Hot Lunch Experience	Shared a meal
Our Story	iMovie

## Data Collection

We collected qualitative data for our project. To ensure that our research was credible, authentic, and trustworthy we followed a process of triangulation and made use of a wide variety of instruments, methods, and sources to collect data. The five housemasters facilitated the story sharing activities in each house and one Grade 2 or Grade 6 class teacher assisted each housemaster. This allowed us, the researchers, the freedom to observe, take photographs, record videos, interview, and write field notes during the story sharing activities.

We created a Google Classroom<sup>5</sup> for each of the five houses. The story sharing activities, as well as useful website links, were posted to the Classrooms. The boys were able to access Flipgrid from their Classroom as well as upload their “My Story” Book Creator books and “Our Story” iMovies. Our data gathering process began with a pre-project survey. Each time the boys posted their Flipgrid responses, we compiled a Flipgrid Mixtape of our 20 participants’ videos. Finally, we conducted interviews with the 20 Grade 6 boys involved in the research.

## Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The Grade 6 boys completed a pre-project survey using three of the Thinking Hats, namely Yellow Hat (positive experiences), Black Hat (negative experiences) and Green Hat (suggestions). We used this survey to gain an understanding of the boys’ experiences of the buddy programme when they were in Grade 2. We then categorised and coded the information. Four distinct themes were identified by the boys as missing from their experience: knowing and using their names, being friendly, spending time, and making a connection. These results were shared with the boys to increase credibility through member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Using the “Think Pair Share” routine, we asked the boys to discuss what they believed to be the most important aspects in strengthening relational skills. We noted common threads between the results of the pre-project survey and this activity. The boys agreed that **acknowledgement** (knowing each other’s name, being friendly, smiling and positive deposits), **trust** (spending time, being caring and supportive) and **connection** (finding interests and conversation) were the main skills needed to strengthen relational skills.

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<sup>5</sup> Google Classroom is a management system aimed at facilitating paperless communication between teachers and boys and streamlining educational workflow.

## **Acknowledgement**

Acknowledgement is defined as “the action of showing that one has noticed someone or something” (English Oxford Living Dictionary online, 2019). The Grade 6 boys’ Black Hat responses from the pre-project survey indicated that lack of acknowledgement, particularly not knowing or using names, was by far their most negative memory of their Grade 2 Buddy Programme experience. Thirteen of the 20 boys felt that using each other’s names, smiling, and recognising each other’s strengths and achievements was a critical skill needed to initiate a relationship.

All the story sharing activities had acknowledgment as the primary focus. Grade 6 boys were asked continually to reflect on how they felt this aspect was progressing. After the *Autobiographical Story* activity, three Grade 6 boys highlighted the fact that their buddy was still not yet using their names. However, after the *Growing Our Story* activity, the housemasters noted that all the boys knew, and were using, each other’s names. This provided a platform for the boys to come up with *Nicknames* for each other in the next activity. The skill of acknowledgement was cemented by the fifth activity, namely the *Secret Handshakes*.

Boy L described their handshakes as a “silent greeting.” Boy E saw their handshake “as a way of welcoming each other.” Boy K felt that their handshake showed others that they were special friends.

## **Trust**

Previously, the buddy programme consisted of two activities; an initial pairing up of buddies followed by the Grade 6s giving their Grade 2 buddy and his parents a tour of the school. It was interesting to note that 17 boys in the pre-project survey stated in the Green Hat section (suggestions) that buddies needed to spend more time together in order for the buddy programme to improve and relationships to be strengthened. Boy F suggested, “We need to spend a lot of time with our buddies and really get to know their story.” The results of the pre-project survey were a clear indication that we needed to allow more time for the boys to develop relational skills.

From the boys’ initial Flipgrid reflections, it was clear that the element of trust was taking time to develop. Boy G said, “My buddy was very nervous and then started to open up. But it was still

awkward at times.” Boy H said, “He seemed very nervous, I think it is because I am new to him... It was kinda awkward. I think the more time we spend together, things will settle down.”

In their final interviews, all Grade 6 boys felt that the activities they participated in had enabled them to form a caring and supportive relationship with their Grade 2 buddy. This was evident in the following statement from Boy G, “When we did the tour, the last activity, he didn’t stutter and he listened to me. He trusted me.”

### **Connection**

Seven of the ten boys who completed the Flipgrid reflection after the *Historical Story* activity commented that their buddy was shy, not very talkative, and nervous. Boy P even went so far as to say, “My buddy is not so nice. The first reason was that he didn’t talk to me much. It took a long time for him to warm up; I think he was really shy. The second reason is that he talked to his friends more than me.” Many of the boys thought that they would form an instant relationship with their buddy. Those boys were initially disappointed and felt frustrated.

Ten out of the 12 boys who reflected on their *Autobiographical Story* sharing experience felt that they had begun to make a connection by finding common interests. Boy F commented, “Me and my buddy really kicked off. I actually found lots in common and we are interested in the same things.”

At the end of the story sharing programme, we interviewed the 20 Grade 6 boys. We asked them to describe their feelings at the beginning, middle, and end of the experience. All but one boy remarked that in the beginning, they were nervous and it was often awkward, even scary. This indicated that they had not yet formed a connection.

All the boys, except two, felt that by the middle of the programme they were connecting with their buddies and strengthening their relationships. They said that they now knew each other’s interests and were more comfortable talking to each other. Boy O pointed out, “We started to bond, got to know each other and form a good friendship. No awkward moments.” When describing their feelings at the end of the programme, all the boys stated emphatically that they had formed a strong connection and a real friendship. It was important to note that when we asked them to describe the highlight of the programme, there was a strong correlation between the boys’ highlights and when they felt most connected to their buddy. The highlights for each of the Grade 6 boys varied, and there was not one definite favourite. The data revealed that the type

of story sharing experience was not as important as the time and effort spent sharing ideas and forming connections. The story sharing activities were a vehicle to strengthening relational skills.

### **Conclusion**

From the onset of our action research project, we believed that this intentional story sharing programme would have an impact on the Grade 6 boys. However, we did not anticipate the extent to which it would strengthen relational skills amongst the boys. We found that the explicit teaching of how to strengthen relational skills, as well as continuous reflection, were key in making this programme a success. Flipgrid was an effective tool for best practice in boys' education (Keddie, 2005), as it allowed the Grade 6 boys to use video to record their reflections rather than having to write them down.

The sharing of stories was key in providing a platform for the boys to strengthen relational skills and form strong connections. The various story sharing activities provided a safe environment for boys to form connections and develop trust. This was supported in feedback from the Grade 6 boys' housemasters. Housemaster C explained, "The different story sharing activities each week enabled the Grade 6 boys to relate to their buddies and connect on their level, due to the fact they got to know their interests and characters better." One of the Grade 6 class teachers, when asked to comment on the impact of the story sharing programme, said that she was amazed to see how the classroom dynamics had changed. She elaborated, "The boys are now very aware of how to work on friendships and there is a noticeable positive difference in how they are treating each other. I think it is thanks to this story sharing programme they have been involved in."

As educators of boys, one of our challenges is to find and hone their strengths. We need to empower them and teach them to manage and take pride in their responsibilities to self, family, community, and world (National Center for the Development of Boys, 2017). Housemaster A noted:

There has been a marked shift in the boys' confidence when called upon to tackle new challenges or meet new people. I received an email noting how two boys introduced themselves to new parents who they saw were lost – and took them around on a tour. While this may seem to be a case of happenstance, I strongly feel that the skills learnt from being placed in new environments and having to deal with growing relationships, gave them the confidence to make themselves helpful.

Housemaster B highlighted the importance of time:

In chatting with the Grade 6 boys, they enjoyed the fact that there were a number of sessions when they met with their buddy. This obviously made a huge difference to the quality of the intervention and the impact thereof, and that will set the tone for all future programmes. There is no substitute for time and prioritising it and that made all the difference. I picked up that the Grade 2 boys also valued their contact with the senior lad and I'm very sure that he will feel much more comfortable about 'crossing the road' at the beginning of the year.

Boys require the right mentors and peers to act as positive influences (National Center for the Development of Boys, 2017). Another facet of this project was the impact of the Grade 6 boys on their Grade 2 buddy as a positive influence. A Grade 2 teacher reflected, "For me it was endearing to see some Grade 2 boys that may have been judged differently in the usual scheme of things, being totally accepted by their Grade 6 and therefore grow in confidence." Many of the parents of the Grade 2 buddies asked us how we managed to pair the Grade 2 and Grade 6 boys so well. They thought that we must have spent hours finding suitable partners as the relationships they have formed are so strong and positive. This reiterates the fact that once boys know each other's stories, a connection can be formed.

Based on the interviews with the boys and the analysis of the results, this story sharing programme provided a positive experience for the boys, which enabled them to grow as individuals, reflect on their development in strengthening relationships, and be good role models to the Grade 2 boys. The Grade 6 boys learnt that one can always make a connection with someone if you spend time getting to know them and their story.

This project has also influenced other areas of the school. Due to the success of the programme, our transformation and diversity committees will be using our programme as a framework for an initiative to improve and strengthen staff relationships.

## Reflection

Reflecting on our journey, we cannot believe how our question, which was decided on last year on the Gold Coast of Australia, has grown and taken us down a road of collaboration, academic inquiry and research, and ultimately a change in action at our school, leading to the growth and development of the Grade 6 boys.

We both jumped at the opportunity to be involved in academic research again and the action research process provided the ideal setting for this. In the beginning, we were overwhelmed and anxious. The pre-training at the 2018 IBSC Annual Conference gave us a very good overview of what was expected, but we came back to school with this mountain looming ahead of us. We immediately set about planning our action. We scrambled for time and looked at every opportunity to gather information and data. Our team leader, Trish, helped to keep us focused and on track. Her advice about keeping it simple was invaluable and we slowly started to see the wood from the trees. We realised that not every comment and action needed to be recorded!

Interviewing the boys at the end of our programme was such a positive experience. We felt that our programme had an immense impact on the boys and we realised that the story sharing activities provided a platform for these boys to grow and develop their relational skills. We were impressed with their thoughtful reflections of the process and their insight into their thinking and actions.

Working in a team has its challenges. However, without a doubt, we can say that we felt we benefited from being in a team. Our strengths complement one another. Being organised and keeping to deadlines, which at times, were extremely pressurised, assisted us in keeping on top of things. We both feel we have learnt so much from this process and are extremely grateful to St Peter's Boys Prep, particularly our headmaster, Rob Macaulay, for giving us this opportunity. Our team leader, Trish Cislak, has been our rock and sounding board. We are not sure how she continually managed to give us feedback, encourage us and always question our thinking to ensure we were on the right path. Thank you!

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