



The Gender Summit: What are adolescent boys and girls thinking?

Lessons learned from the Churchie Gender Summit(s) 2008 -2012

David Bell - Deputy Head Middle School

School House



Churchie.

Churchie

- Anglican Church Grammar School – Brisbane, Australia, 50ha campus 5km from CBD
- 100 years old – Independent GPS school.
- 3 sub Schools – Prep – Middle – Senior comprising 300 staff and 1795 boys.
- Fees \$18Kpa day boy, \$36Kpa boarder.
- 160 boarders – mostly from western Queensland

Churchie.

Environmental Scan

- There are many websites dealing with adolescent gender differences but virtually all exist to analyse the different ways fe/males approach: substance and sexual abuse, depression, anxiety, workplace inequality, educational approaches and the like.
- I have sourced the research after beginning the presentations as opposed to the other way around.

Churchie.

Aerial Image of Churchie



Churchie.

Some Research

- **Bednall, J.**, *Teaching Boys to become Gender Bi Lingual: A Challenge to Single Sex Schools*, University School Press, Ohio, 1995.
- **Betcher, R.W., and Pollack, S.W.**, *In a Time of Fallen Heroes: The Re Creation of Masculinity* Guildford press, New York, 1993.
- **Tannen, D.**, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, Morrow and Co., USA, 1990.

Churchie.

What is a Gender Summit?

- An opportunity for adolescent boys and girls to take an authentic and age appropriate leadership role within their communities.
- A chance to exchange the 'secrets' of what the other side thinks in a supportive environment to promote better understanding, tolerance and relationships for the benefit of all, including peers, parents, siblings and teachers.

Churchie.

Philosophy of the Exercise

- Both sexes are quite shy and self conscious at this age and therefore nothing can be achieved until the 'ice has been broken.'
- The relative maturity of the girls assists them to work through the initial awkwardness of the experience, and the relative comfort felt by the boys in familiar surroundings assists them to participate. *This would not work as well if hosted at a Girls school.*
- For the best traction, change the messenger, not the message.

Churchie.

Assumptions re: All Participants

- Mid – High socio- economic backgrounds
- Parents – professional roles/tertiary education
- High levels of attendance, engagement and association with their school
- Above average academic achievers

Churchie.

Why a Gender Summit?

This concept was born from a question posed by our School Council to the Head of Middle School in late 2008 –

'What does the Middle School do to teach boys about girls and how to behave around them?'

Churchie.

To sum up the day...

- Betcher and Pollack (1993)
- Empathy in inter -gender relationships
'...is a capacity to be attuned to the thoughts and feelings of others, to be able to put oneself in another person's shoes yet still be in one's own shoes as well...'

Churchie.

'What Women Want'

© 2000 Directed N. Meyers



Churchie.

Gender Summit – How?

- 16 x Churchie Middle School Leaders
- 4 x Year 9 girls from each of St Margaret's, St Aidan's, Somerville House and Moreton Bay College
(local independent girls' schools)
- 32 x 14 year old students in total for 6 hours at ACGS.

Churchie.

Icebreaker 1 - Trivia

2012 Gender Summit: 35 Trivia Questions

- Q: In the movies who plays the role of Harry Potter?
- Q: Name 3 James Bond films that have a one-word title.
- Q: What colour does acid turn Litmus paper?
- Q: What's the largest Scandinavian country?
- Q: What was Mickey Mouse's original name?
- Q: Which animal produces the biggest baby?
- Q: Who was Leonardo di Caprio's co-star in Titanic?
- Q: Which chemical element has the shortest name - 3 letters?
- Q: How many holes are there in a ten pin bowling ball?
- Q: In Basketball it's called a Tip Off, in Football a Kick off what is it called in Ice Hockey?

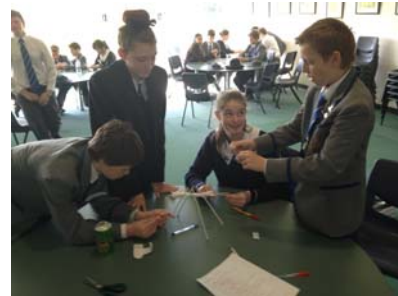
Churchie.

Inside the Chapel - pre movement



Churchie.

Icebreaker 2 - Bridge Build



Churchie.

An Outline of the Day

- Meet and Greet – orange juice and fruit
- Chapel service then escorted walk to Brenan Pavilion on Main Oval – 5 minutes walk
- Icebreaker 1 – Trivia
- Icebreaker 2 – Bridge Building
- Icebreaker 3 – Fashion Parade
- Stimulus activity and discussion
- Forum activity (Mystery Box)
- Close

Churchie.

Icebreaker 3 - Fashion Parade

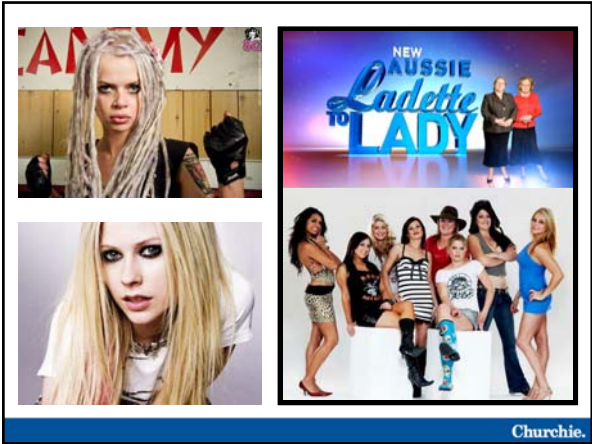


Churchie.

Group response to Stimuli

- Groups are provoked to have an opinion with a variety of images or articles.
- Each group receives a small bundle of images and questions and must respond to the rest.
- Time is provided to unpack any issues which present, or to develop debate if there is scope to. Some issues are added to the forum activity which follows.
- Requires a good facilitator.

Churchie.



Churchie.



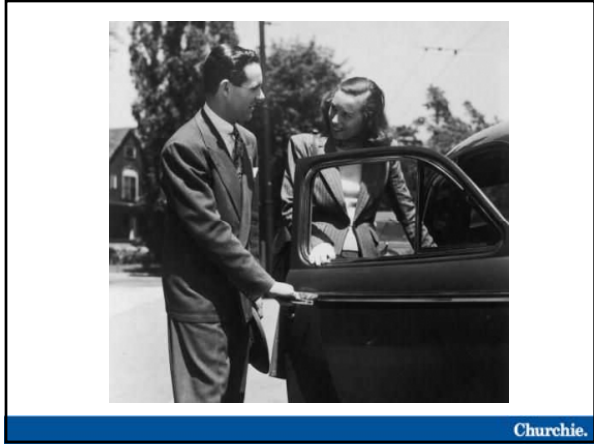
DEFINITION...

SEXTING

Sending of sexually explicit photos or text through one's mobile phone to friends or potential suitors,



Churchie.





Mystery Box Discussion

- Culmination of the day.
- All day all delegates have been asked to put questions about their queries and concerns about the other gender (or their own) into a covered box.
- These are augmented by questions from previous summits.
- These questions are directed to a semi circular forum and then facilitated toward a 'solution.'
- Most useful part of the day.



Post Summit Follow Up

The messages passed by both sexes are collated and sent on to the opposite gender schools for dissemination to the masses. Churchie does this via the MS Leaders reporting to the Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 Cohort Assemblies. In this case the demographic of the messenger is crucial to the traction of the message with the audience.

Brief Group Activity – 5-10 mins

Form a group with those around you – groups of 3 - 4? Male and female – *Please!!*

Using the handouts as a stimulus, suggest a top 5 list of adolescent issues your group sees as relevant within your current school experience.

There are no right or wrong answers – it is more so a way to hear from colleagues and possibly see that some things are universal.

Short Activity 2 (5-10 mins)

Re-form as a group.

Consider the advice by boys for girls and vice versa given as a handout.

Discuss this in your group:

- What stood out as endearing?
- What stood out as profound?
- Did anything surprise you?

Advice to Boys 1

- Girls prefer it for boys to just be confident in who they are and not try to show off when you are trying to get their attention. They would prefer you just came up and introduced yourself without having your mates pushing, kicking, hitting and swearing next to you or in the background.
- Girls like boys to have manners and use them – open doors, pull chairs out, speak pleasantly, do the small things.
- Boys need to make an effort to understand and respect the pressure girls are under regarding diets and weight loss/gain from the popular media as well as their friends and family. Girls have this a lot harder than boys.
- Girls prefer to be asked out face to face or over the phone, not via text.
- Girls expect the following hygiene basics from boys – have a shower daily, clean your teeth, brush your hair, wear clean clothes.
- Swearing is poor form.
- Girls will gravitate towards a social 'player' to use them as much as the boy is 'using' the girl.

Churchie.

Advice to Girls 2

- Boys will push and shove and act foolishly in social settings because they are nervous and lacking in confidence and want to appear cool when really they are anxious about your opinion of them.
- Boys do not like girls playing 'hard to get.' Be honest and up front and literal with boys and they will get the message a lot quicker rather than having to interpret it.
- Boys like girls to be interested in the things they are interested in, or at least show an attitude which lets them try things before they dismiss them – eg football, fishing, camping etc.
- Boys would prefer that they were asked out or invited places face to face or on the phone rather than by text.
- Underarm hair was seen as a definite no-no for girls (!)
- Boys are happy for girls to attend GPS events as long as their intentions are to support them. Boys are not happy to see girls attend just to walk around showing off.

Churchie.

Advice to Boys 2

- Girls are actually keen to have a conversation with boys. The feeling in the room was that a boy who can converse on a range of topics other than just what interests him will be a popular fellow.
- Girls are not keen on metrosexual boys who are more fashion conscious or image driven than they are.
- Public displays of affection are all about being discreet. Keep your displays basic.
- Gamers are sad – try to get a life. If you have to game, keep it in balance.
- The hardest thing about being a teen girl at the moment is finding a balance between school work/school sports and activities and having a meaningful social life.
- Girls are not impressed by boys fighting over them or 'for' them. They think fighting is dumb.
- Girls fear rejection and loss of face with their peers as much as boys do.

Churchie.

Perception

- It is human nature to perceive and judge according to our prior experiences.
- Gender Summits encourage students to open their minds and to remember that being judgemental can cause problems.

I hope I have achieved that today with you.

Churchie.

Advice to Girls 1

- Boys agree that swearing is poor form but also admit they will sometimes make a choice to do it because they think it makes them cool.
- Boys think public displays of affection should be kept discreet.
- Heavy make up is a universal turn off and if you wear it you risk being seen by boys as too high maintenance.
- Girls admitted that makeup is sometimes as much or more so for other girls than for boys anyway, in the sense that they felt pressure to conform to social expectations about presentation. Boys actually prefer the natural look.
- Boys say the hardest thing about being a teenage boy is finding the balance between schoolwork/school sports and activities and a meaningful social life.

Churchie.

Thank you for your attendance

David Bell
Deputy Head - Middle School, Churchie
David.Bell@churchie.com.au

Churchie.