

In this issue...

Early Learning Centre

- [From the Middle School Leader](#)

Primary School

- [From the Middle School Leader](#)

Middle School

- [From the Middle School Leader](#)

Senior School

- [From the Middle School Leader](#)

From the Middle School Leader

The afternoon chill of autumn is settling in across the mallee scrub at Swan Reach. There is tension, nervousness and an eerie silence in the air. The Year 9 students are packed into the bench seats of the purpose built truck like anxious sardines awaiting the unknown of their Solo Experience on The Adventure camp. They have their pre-prepared materials on their laps and look expectantly to the staff for some final words of wisdom before they reach their site. One by one they are dropped, swag and tarp in hand and farewelled by the group with raptures of clapping, whooping and best wishes for the night ahead. Possibly the first night they have spent on their own in a long time, potentially the first time ever.

When I think back to that experience from Term 2, I reflect on the learning that was happening for our young people in real time. I visibly saw it on their faces, their body language and the way they talked to each other. This one experience perfectly embodied our LearningWell pillars of students being Connected, Empowered and Challenged. In this instance the element of intentional challenge built deeper connection among the group as they faced the unknown together. The next morning you could tell they felt empowered as they survived and maybe even enjoyed the experience. LearningWell at Concordia doesn't just occur through Pastoral Care programs or year level camps, it occurs every day in each lesson activity, each break time conversation, each Chapel service, each music lesson, each sports practice and each passing in the quadrangle.

Ben Crowe in his recent book 'Where the Light Gets In' speaks about the perspective shift from 'fitting in' to 'belonging' in our search for connection. Connection is a human need that is arguably at its most emphasised in the teenage years where 'fitting in' and finding your group can seem to be all that matters. These formative years require intentionality in creating opportunities for connection, that often form around challenge and lead to young people

feeling empowered. Steve Biddulph outlines in his 'Raising Boys' / 'Raising Girls' books that our young people are hardwired to seek out connection through challenge as they establish who they are and what they are capable of. This often happens as they are on the bridge of adolescence, the space between childhood and adulthood. A space that needs clear rites of passage to help our young people navigate growing up. If we as schools and parents are not intentional in that space of growing up, our young people often find their own rites of passage to test themselves and this can be unhealthy risk-taking behaviour, causing more harm than good.

I wonder what ways you as a family already foster healthy opportunities for your children to be Connected, Empowered and Challenged at home? I also wonder what other ways we could continue to develop those characteristics here at Concordia as we find opportunities to foster belonging through LearningWell.

Ben Crook

Acting Middle School Leader

[Back to top](#)
