



in Alliance

THE ALLIANCE OF GIRLS' SCHOOLS (AUSTRALASIA) LTD
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Leadership

FROM THE EDITOR...



It was with great interest that I attended the final of our House Public Speaking Competition last year. With the topic of "If I were Prime Minister I would" it promised to be an insight into which political issues and priorities would capture our leading young women. Imagine my dismay as, one by one, each contestant denounced any such ambitions. Their speeches were well constructed arguments and perceptive comments on why they would choose to avoid aspiring to the position of Prime Minister! I was seriously challenged as an educator. How do we encourage girls to engage in politics? How do we convey the message that politics does not need to be characterised by hypocrisy, self-promotion, cynicism and power plays?

It was with interest, then, that I read the article in this edition on the Whitehouse Project (Pipeline to the Future). Research in the United States has identified that young women need to be educated

to be interested in politics, to choose to seek public office and to have a liking for this aspect of their democratic community. The Whitehouse Project is a strategy that has been employed to address these needs. In the light of my above experience, such a project would seem to be just as relevant in Australia as the United States if we are to encourage our potential female leaders to seek public office.

The theme of leadership is evident in the range of articles in this edition. This exploration of the many aspects of leadership continues through to the Alliance's 2004 Conference, *Leading Women: Leading Girls*, to be held at SCEGGS, Sydney 18-20 June. We hope to see you there, but in the interim, enjoy this edition of *In Alliance*.

Beth Blackwood
Presbyterian Ladies' College, Perth

AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS 2004 BARBARA STONE AM



While Barbara Stone is the first to acknowledge the achievements of others, both past and present, to celebrate their victories and to admire their hard work and talent, to encourage them to step forward and be proud of recognition, she is a little more reticent when it comes to having her own achievements highlighted.

So we are delighted and feel justly proud to acknowledge the Alliance's President for her inclusion in the 2003 Australia Day Honours List as a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

Barbara's recognition was firstly as the Principal of MLC School, for her innovation in girls' education, taking MLC forward as a leading school in teaching and learning practice through strategic implementation of programs such as the lap-top program and Transforming Learning.

The award also recognises Barbara's contribution to peak educational organisations throughout Australia. Barbara is a Board member, member of the Industrial Committee and member of the Vocational Education Committee of the Association of Independent Schools NSW; a member of the National Standing Committee and member of the NSW Academic Committee of AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia); Chair of the NSW Minister for Education and Training and Australian College of Educators Quality Teaching Awards Steering Committee, as well as the President of the Alliance of Girls' Schools, Australasia (since 2002).

In a very humble acknowledgment of the lengthy applause afforded her by the staff of her school, MLC Sydney, prior to the Chapel Service on the day after Australia Day, Barbara immediately turned her moment of recognition into a thank you to the staff at MLC School. "I could not do what I do without my colleagues, without the many people who give so much to support what we do here at MLC. You really deserve this."

Congratulations Barbara

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER...

Student Leadership Conference 2004 - Pymble Ladies' College



Saturday January 17 2004 was marked in Sydney by the arrival at Pymble Ladies' College of 142 girls from around the nation and across the Tasman. These girls all shared the honour of having a major leadership role to play in their school in 2004. They were at Pymble to learn how to best fulfil their responsibilities.

Pymble Ladies' College provided a remarkable venue for the activities of the next four days. And for many it was the first opportunity to live the life of a boarder. Most very quickly identified themselves with their house; Lang, Goodlet or Marden, and learned what it was like to live under the rule of Sergeant Major Brooke. The girls immediately knew that they had a mother at Pymble and their growing affection for the sergeant was very obvious over the period of the conference.

From the outset the conference delegates were kept occupied by the team from Synergy. As a member of either the Air, Land, Fire or Sea group the girls travelled together and shared their experiences, fears, ideas and aspirations for the year ahead. Through a variety of group activities delegates explored their emotions in order to better understand themselves so that they could empathise with those they would be guiding during 2004. Each day there were new challenges: how to take an unpopular but necessary stance with your peers; how to relate to the school teaching executive; how to delegate; how to be inclusive of all groups within your year and school; how to speak competently and confidently; how to address inequities in your school community; and how to survive these and many other challenges while completing an arduous year of study.

To achieve these goals the girls took part in a variety of physical and intellectual pursuits that took them from lecture theatres, to the Sydney

monorail, Darling Harbour and beneath the waters of the PLC pool and Sydney Harbour.

Learning from the experiences of others is always a valuable education and the delegates at Pymble were given the opportunity to hear a number of inspirational speakers. These included the 2003 Captain of PLC Sasha Boder-Smith, the AGSA Student Ambassadors who attended the National Coalition of Girls' Schools Conference and Girls' Forum in the US and Associate Professor Janet Vaughan, Head of the Ultrasound and Fetal Medicine Department, Prince Alfred Hospital. After hearing these speakers there was no doubt in the minds of each member of the audience that while the leadership road may have its hurdles, overcoming these hurdles and the ensuing rewards make the journey worthwhile.

On January 21 when 142 tired and weary girls left Pymble many new friendships had been forged and each girl felt quite exhilarated and ready to take up the task to which she had been elected with more confidence, motivation and enthusiasm than she had had just a few days earlier.

Good Luck to all the 2004 leaders in our schools and a special thank you to those at Pymble Ladies' College who made the 2004 Student Leadership Conference such a success. In particular The Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia would like to thank Mrs Gillian Moore, Mrs Julie Greenhalgh, Mrs Heather Underwood and Mrs Margaret Brooke.

Marita MacMahon Ball

Executive Officer

The Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia



LEADERSHIP IN SPORT

I was fortunate to once again attend the National Coalition of Girls' Schools conference in the United States this year. The speakers were excellent and provided insight into the problems we share as we do everything in our power to meet the needs of the girls within our schools.

Dr Donna Lopiano addressed us on the topic of 'Leadership in Sport'. The topic was broad in the extreme because she revealed the link she perceives between sport and the development of a well balanced young woman who has been afforded the chance to acquire the skills of a true leader.

Dr Lopiano began by pointing out that playing sport is not just fun and games. The stakes, she said, are psychological, sociological and physiological. For the health and well being of all young people, the playing of sport should not be an option – it should be viewed as essential. She informed those present that it is statistically shown that in the United States, if a child has not learned the skills of team sports by the age of 10, there is a smaller than 10% chance that the adult of 25 will play any sport at all.

In viewing sport as a forum for the development of broader skills and attributes, Dr Lopiano contended that sport is a 'performing art' and that, as such, students learn the responsibility of performance; the responsibility to team mates and to oneself. To learn the limits of the body and mind is clearly a life skill taught within the classroom of sport.

The concept of 'good sportsmanship' was discussed through viewing sport as a values and ethics laboratory. Leadership was also viewed in this way. Involvement in sport allows each participant the opportunity to lead by example, encourage team mates and to help each individual to put failure into perspective.

Transferable skills developed by participation in sport include:

- Picking teams
- Taking care of team mates
- Separating worth from performance
- Dealing with pressure
- Doing whatever it takes – not giving up for the sake of the team

Clearly Dr Lopiano is passionate about her role as ambassador for the advancement of sport for young people in the United States. Her message was a salient one for all who work within girls' schools. Her final comments related to the fact that sport views the body as an engine, an instrument and a powerful tool rather than an object. Involvement in sport is an antidote for obesity, provides relevant nutrition education and encourages a healthy respect for the body and mind.

Margaret White
Principal
Kambala, NSW

LEADERSHIP IS A DIALOGUE, NOT A MONOLOGUE

In the heat of summer in Charleston, capital of South Carolina, twelve young women gathered in the McBee House of Ashley Hall School. On this day, 24 June, I was lucky enough to be among this group of excited young people who had come together from Australia, South Africa, Canada and the United States for a conference entitled "Lessons in Leadership". As well as listening to presentations about what it means for women to be leaders in today's world, we were to take part in a full-day kayaking adventure and speak as a panel in front of the two hundred or so teachers who were attending the conference.

When I heard about the life of Eleanor Roosevelt, the benefits of sport for personal growth, the under-representation of women in politics and other topics speakers at the conference addressed, I realised that having strong female leaders in today's changing world - female leaders who are neither masculinised nor sexualised - is becoming increasingly valuable. Our "band-aid" solutions for women's issues have encouraged us to become complacent about many unsolved problems.

Perhaps the most important thing I learnt about leadership was that there is no single way of defining 'leader', because there are so many elements to leadership. But underpinning it all for me, was the message that the ability to communicate effectively is vital to leadership. Evidence suggests women are very good at communicating - we seem to realise leaders don't just speak, they also listen; that leadership is not a monologue, but a dialogue.

At the conference my part of the dialogue was to contribute perspectives that were uniquely Australian. I know the challenges Australia faces in reconciling its western, English-speaking heritage with its location in a region dominated by eastern and Pacific traditions. I am aware of the current tensions in Australia in regard to indigenous Australians, asylum seekers and our part in the War in Iraq and I know what it's like to be uncomfortable with my Government's stand on these issues. I know the challenges associated with strengthening our traditional alliances with our American and British cousins at the expense of relationships with our nearest neighbours. This awareness endowed me with a frame of reference that expanded our discussions.

But every discussion has more than one side, and I learnt leadership is just the same: leadership is about teams having conversations, not individuals presenting diatribes. This was illuminated for me a number of times at the conference: the discussions we had about what we thought were the most important facets of leadership, the questions we asked each other about our different countries, our eagerness to learn about each other and the sense of camaraderie that developed on our kayaking adventure. Very quickly, we established an environment in which each and every one of us was prepared to be both a giver and a receiver of information and encouragement.

The conference gave me the opportunity to get to know eleven other amazing young women. I learnt much about them and also much about myself. Definitely, a life-changing experience.

Naomi Hart
MLC School, Burwood

PIPELINE TO THE FUTURE...

...young women, motivation and success in politics



Young women need exposure to relevant, successful role models and experience elections and associated activities.

At the NGSC Conference, Bev Neufeld presented a report on the White House Project. This project was born out of the question: What would it take to have a woman elected as the President of the USA in 2008?

Firstly, it would need an active plan to create an understanding that if women want to make the country better, they need to have more women in roles of political leadership. Young women need to be educated to be interested in politics, to choose to seek public office and have a liking for this aspect of their democratic community.

Research revealed that when women assume political roles, they focus on health and family issues, education, aged care and social welfare. It was found that the few successful women in politics in USA usually have been members of a politically active family. Another fact revealed was that whilst Americans say that they want a woman, when given a choice between a man or woman, voters usually choose a man.

Another question asked was “Would it really change anything if the US President was a woman?”

In response to this question, it was believed that a woman President would validate women’s work to rise to the top of every profession. It would not be merely symbolic, but create a positive role model for young women and their aspirations. When Iceland had a female president for sixteen years, many young boys thought that only women could be the leader of Iceland. Role models have the power of a mirror and young women believe that they are entitled to be what they see.

Perception equals reality and the media contributes greatly to the poor perception held by young women by reporting very differently on male and female politicians.

To focus on a plan for a female President may assist to arrest the current decline in American young people aged 18 to 25 years in voting. Currently, only 18% of this eligible group vote, with politics not seen as a way of making meaningful change.

Thus the project has created a focus on the methods and strategies that appear to assist young women to view a political role as a significant, preferred, positive means by which to make a genuine difference and thus actively seek such opportunities.

Identified was the need for young women to understand the “who” and “how” of the political system. Women need to be invited, often over and over again, to run for public office. Young women need exposure to relevant, successful role models and experience elections and associated activities. Girls need to learn about the use of lobbying techniques and the power of letter writing, (e.g. letters to the editor) and their opinions.

Young women can develop networking skills through volunteering, particularly during political campaigns. Schools are often a source of practical leadership, knowledge and experiences and where opportunities are provided to serve their school communities in a wide variety of leadership roles.

If women are to no longer see politics as unfriendly and inhospitable and to change the current political landscape, much work must be done and the White House Project is one such attempt to provide the appropriate impetus and resources to hear those words “Madam President”.

For further information go to www.thewhitehouseproject.org

As quoted by Bev Neufeld:

Women are like snowflakes:
One alone can melt, but
Together they can stop traffic!

Carolyn Hauff
Clayfield College, Qld



OBSERVATIONS ACROSS FIVE YEARS OF ALLIANCE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2000 – 2004

As Director/Facilitator of Synergy, Andrew Murray has been actively involved in providing leadership training for our Student leaders at the Alliance Student Leadership Conference, for the past five years. He offers the following interesting observations and trends of our girls' attitudes, approaches and awareness of leadership issues.



- The participants have been consistently high calibre by anyone's standard.
- I believe there to have been an increasing maturity across the years in the way that delegates view leadership generally, as well as their own leadership roles.
- The most obvious and least subtle change has been a higher and higher level of preparedness to question and challenge the status quo within their schools. As I see it, there are two basic types of questioner/challenger:

Type 1 is what I term "the saboteur" – essentially an individual who challenges and questions from an adversarial stance, with the intent of undermining the organization for reasons related to a personal agenda or philosophy. Ultimately, the outcome of this person's activities is negative, often both for them and for the organization.

Type 2 is "the heretic" – this individual challenges and questions from a genuine concern and commitment to improve the current situation. Heretics frequently have useful suggestions and are prepared to engage in constructive dialogue and commit to action in order to improve an existing situation. This year I heard quite a few more heretics speaking up and really no saboteurs!

We need heretics to keep us honest and to help us avoid falling into complacency or "groupthink". Nobody needs saboteurs. More and more, this function of leadership – questioning the status quo

and challenging the "sacred cows" – is being seen as an important mechanism for responding to, or initiating change.

- I sense an increasing commitment to the concept of "servant leader", where the leader exists to serve their "followers" and to exercise power and influence on their behalf as well as leading them. To some degree, this manifests itself as a desire to understand how to build trust and credibility in order to influence, rather than the unquestioning acceptance of positional power. Certainly, the increasing interest in, and understanding of, Emotional Intelligence reflects this commitment.
- There continues to be an increasing amount of discussion about developing supportive relationships with younger members of the school community.
- Finally, and wonderfully; there is an increasing recognition and commitment to "being who you are" – bringing your own style and personality to the leadership role. I find this confidence reassuring and refreshing. Reassuring because it means less comparisons to others and hence less stress and pressure. Refreshing, because of the originality and energy that this confidence unleashes.

New ideas, new ways of expressing universal values and a new approach in a new millennium! It gives me great confidence in the future to know that these are our future leaders and leaders into the future.

Andrew Murray
Synergy

GIRLS AND LEADERSHIP...

...a healthy connection

*Young women
need to be
determined to
pursue what
matters to
them and apply
themselves to
achieving their
goals.*

At the 2003 USA National Coalition of Girls Schools Conference, Dr Catherine Stein-Adair, a leading US Psychologist and Counsellor, presented a very different perception of the occurrence of eating disorders in our communities. In a harsh, judgmental world in which young women are trying to achieve success, the focus on weight provides a distraction and tragically a focus for the girls' energy and education. These girls have an extraordinary and very detailed knowledge of nutrition, food, exercise and other associated topics.

It was the most educationally advantaged females that provided the first victims of eating disorders and an unhealthy preoccupation with their bodies. Whilst originally, there was a strong urban focus, the effect of the "thin is beautiful" message is being felt even in societies such as Fiji where traditionally "big is beautiful" and there were no words for diet, thin or skinny in the national language. The intrusive global media (TV, DVD and print) has contributed significantly to the global spread.

As Catherine sees it, when women have wanted "to throw their weight around" in their communities, it is a signal to focus on light body weight, e.g. 1920s had the flappers, the 1960s Twiggy. It strips away "womanliness" – no breasts, bottoms or bellies.

There is a need to recast as a social justice issue taking the sense of guilt and blame away from the victim and other family members, especially mothers. Prejudice usually occurs when a different group of people wants to access power, which lies in the hands of a dominant group. The retaliation by the dominant group focuses on factors over which there is no or limited control, e.g. skin colour as a basis of racism, but for women its body shape and size. Only 5% of Caucasian women have a natural ultra thin physique, so for 95% of women "ultrathin" is unhealthy and undesirable. Sadly, many young women over identify with the "aggressor" – media, which has normalized "ultrathin" through language and image (e.g. tampered photographs). In reality, it teaches young women to feel bad about themselves – the beginning step of self hatred.

When weight is used as a barometer of self-esteem, girls become less self-assured, powerful and competent. Eating disorders are highly genderised with 90% of victims being women. More important still, is that anorexia is the most lethal of the psychiatric illnesses with 10% death rate.

Our young women need to know that they have one body, which they should care for and focus on being healthy. Girls need to change coping techniques. It is not necessary to buy new outfits or diet before major events, job interviews or holidays to look good.

Young women need to learn the "art of disagreeing" and to be able to stand-alone and argue issues/beliefs. Our young women need to know who they are and what really matters and what really matters to them personally. They need to be determined to pursue what matters to them and apply themselves to achieving their goals. We need a community of self-assured, powerful, competent young women who seek and achieve social justice.

Carolyn Hauff
Clayfield College, Qld



THE ALLIANCE OF GIRLS'
SCHOOLS (AUSTRALASIA) LTD

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

18 - 20 JUNE 2004

Leading Women: Leading Girls

to be held at
SCEGGS Darlinghurst, Sydney

with optional workshop at
MLC School Burwood
Monday 21 June 2004

Registration details - www.agsa.org.au