



Wellbeing Insight

The Remarkable Will Become the Benchmark.

You will notice in our current newsletter, that we are currently conducting our inaugural **Principal Manifesto Series**. As I was thinking about this unique opportunity to assist Principals to reveal their personal manifestos in the specific context of their leadership roles, my mind turned to some memorable words of Principals that I have experienced in my teaching years.

The first occurred during my time as Teacher/Library Manager at Matthew Flinder's Girls Secondary College. I had requested a considerable increase in my budget allocation for the new year and submitted a detailed analysis of why I felt this was both important and necessary. The Principal of the time, Mr Russell Elliott, called me into his office to reply to me directly. He said that he would have to say 'No' to my request, but he would like to share his reasons with me. He did so at some length together with supporting costing details. At the end of his explanation, whilst I was disappointed, and to be truthful, reluctant to accept the decision, I at least understood it and had been given his rationale for making it. In a word, I had been treated with dignity. I had not been dismissed or diminished.

The second comment was made during my time as Teacher/Library Manager at Goulburn Valley Grammar School. Mr Vic Ryall, in a meeting with his teaching staff, was addressing the recurring poor behaviour of some particular students. Many of the teachers of these students had expressed frustration, even exasperation with them, and some were becoming quite averse to trying further ways to manage their behaviour, having little to no hope that they would have any impact. Mr Ryall's address culminated with the words: *"If we do not believe in the capacity of the children to change, then we don't deserve to call ourselves educators."*

We have a leader here, who could have become cynical during the process of teaching over a number of years. However, happily, and obviously memorably to me, he rose to the higher ground. In his comment was the belief in and hope for the children's capacity for change. As a growth coach, I know this mindset is essential to maintaining and nourishing the wellbeing of the whole child or indeed the adult, as without it, there will be no change. The 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (sociologist, Robert K. Merton) – what you expect to see you will see – operates. And 'Believing is Seeing' (Michael Guillen) is the philosophical underpinning.

The third occurred during my time as English Teacher/Growth Coach at Geelong Grammar School. I had the good fortune to inherit the Positive Education culture which Justin and the Positive Education Institute had embedded. In a 'crossing of paths' moment, the then Head of Campus, Mr Dean Dell'Oro and I had this exchange:

How are you, Sue? How are you finding the Positive Education concept?

I love it. I am doing my best to live it.

Great. Are you happy with the load that you have? Do you want more or less?



Unremarkable? Not to me. He saw me, a recently arrived part-timer, and stopped to ask me a question to which he genuinely wanted to know the answer. He listened to my reply and asked another question. The implication of the second question was that I had a choice to express a preference for the amount of work that I undertook, and that he had the authority to act on that information. I know there are processes – and forms – that would have had to be followed and filled in, if I wanted change, but even to be asked, showed a concern and respect for me that in my years of service was unexpected, and deeply valued.

Significantly, these exchanges have stayed with me many years later. The commonalities I see are the humanity and genuineness of the Principal's involved; the respect conveyed by their approach and the impact of such treatment upon me.

Our Principal Manifesto Series enables this cohort of Principals to explicitly reveal their values-aligned personal manifestos, to lay down a powerful foundation on the basis of which they are able to consider the opportunities that will present as they lead their teams, as intentional, authentic and human-centred leaders.

Rather than remarkable, these exchanges will be the norm – the remarkable will become the benchmark.

Warm wishes,
Sue