

Martin Fisk

Chief Executive Officer

Menslink – supporting young men for over ten years

Dear Martin

Today I attended a session of your guys (Mac and Neal) talking to 150 year 9 and 10 boys in the Stromlo Performing Arts Centre (SPACE). I understand your team spoke the earlier hour to a same sized group of Year 7 and 8 boys by arrangement of our Pastoral Care coordinator Kate Bolton.

The issue of boys not being as communicative or talkative as girls has bothered me for most of my teaching years. In the three years at this school, I have attended one funeral in 2012 of a student and learned of another student who took their life last year. School leaders especially are negatively impacted when this happens, because losing a young life is simply the worst thing that happens to us. I know of colleagues who never recover.

As I am sure you are aware, silence, heightened levels of anxiety and depression are increasingly prominent features of contemporary adolescence, followed closely by self-harm. While there are many families in our Enrolment Area who are simply fantastic, there are also families in which young men struggle to be accepted, appreciated or valued. Insecurity and low self-esteem accompany boys from such families and so often attendance begins to suffer, followed or accompanied by substance abuse.

So I was deeply impressed by the way in which your team talked and engaged our boys. It is never easy to hold the concentration span of teenagers for a full hour. Not only did I witness this today, but your team created an atmosphere where all manner of student felt empowered to ask real life situational questions and genuinely sought advice.

At a time when student well-being is increasingly on the radar of school leaders, our school does not have a boys only group, as we aim our programs to be coeducational. So Menslink is especially helpful to us as it meets an otherwise unmet need for boys to be able to express themselves. Of course they have opportunities in lessons, but either the content of the learning area or the coeducational setting does not allow them to ask the kind of questions I heard them ask today.

For these reasons I write to say that teachers of this school speak highly of your approach, which is not sensational and not hysterical, but simply factual and directly addresses boys' emotions. I commend the work of Menslink and thank you for your time and input at our school. Happy to recommend your endeavor to secure future funding.

Regards



Dr Michael Kindler
Principal
22 October 2014

Learning

Endeavour

Respect

Pride