

SYDNEY CONFERENCE

On Tuesday 12th March, Mr Joshua Pacek and I flew to Sydney to speak at a two-day conference at the Novotel Hotel. We had been invited by Criterion Conferences to speak to a group of approx. 80 people made up of architects, primary and secondary teachers, Deputy Principals and Principals, as well as furniture designers. We spoke about the Bethany journey around transitioning all our stakeholders to Agile Learning.

OUR JOB IS NOT TO
PREPARE STUDENTS
FOR SOMETHING.
OUR JOB IS TO HELP
STUDENTS PREPARE
THEMSELVES FOR
ANYTHING.

- A.J. JULIANI -

For us as a school, we are driven always to improve student outcomes; it consistently comes back to the question of what is best for our students. We spoke about understanding where we wanted to be and how we believed Agile Learning was an approach we could use to prepare our students for the further ahead, whilst making their primary schooling experience one that was enjoyable, engaging and educationally valuable. There are still many teaching practises that must remain in innovative learning environments, such as the need for explicit teaching and direct instruction at times, but we are also deeply committed to creating opportunities for our students to be in the driver's seat.

We have gained a great deal of wisdom from the work of Simon Sinek, who is a motivational speaker, best known for popularising the concept of 'The Golden Circle and to 'Start with the 'Why'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5TwOPGcyNO>



We believe in challenging the status quo and thinking differently.

We understand our 'Why' and work to communicate this well to everyone.

We believe in creating Bethany as a place where everybody learns- anywhere, anytime.

What do we know?

- The physical structure of a classroom affects student morale and learning.
- Student voice and choice is important in creating their environment- this empowers them to create community and increases motivation.
- Movement activates the brain and improves cognition.
- Soft skills should be renamed ESSENTIAL SKILLS.

**Traditionally we planned the learning experience around the knowledge,
Now we plan the learning around the skill.**

We are not teaching one-off skills in isolation. The skill is the driver; knowledge is the flavour.

What are the skills we are talking about?

1. **Character**- the way we think, the words we use and the actions we show others.
2. **Citizenship**- being an active and empowered member of the community.
3. **Collaboration**- working together, making decisions, sharing responsibility and interdependence.
4. **Critical Thinking**- being able to come up with innovative ways to solve problems.
5. **Creativity**- generate deeper understanding by linking knowledge with skills.
6. **Communication**- sharing ideas, thoughts, questions and solutions effectively.



We explained how we have worked to transition, and continue to transition, the Bethany community- students, staff and families to understand and appreciate the way we know and see, students work well.

Examples of community opportunities to understand our 'Why'



We concluded our presentation with the following quote below. Whether this quote can be verified by National Geographic is irrelevant, we understand and appreciate the thinking behind it- let's create an environment where the growth possibilities are immeasurable and endless, where our students are able to grow into their full capabilities and strengths.

"A shark in a fish tank will grow 8 inches, but in the ocean it will grow 8 ft or more. The shark will never out grow its environment, and the same is true about you. Many times we're around small thinking people, so we don't grow. Change your environment and watch your growth."
—UNKNOWN

We also planned and presented an interactive 3-hour workshop on design innovation, shared ideas and strategies on how to effectively transition staff, students and parents to 21st century schooling, as well as maximising the participant's new spaces and pedagogy.

The two-day conference was a great opportunity to share our story, as well as learn from other schools and education professionals. <https://www.criterionconferences.com/event/learning-space-conference/agenda/>

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