When ritual is absent, the young ones are restless or violent, there are no real elders, and the grown-ups are bewildered
Malidoma Somé

the rite journey

Guiding Students Towards Adulthood

Sacred Heart College Middle School
Questions for today’s adults

• At what point did you realise you were an adult man or woman?
• What guidance/training did you have in this transition process?
• Who was the most influential guide in your adolescence? How did they help you in your transition?
• Whose stories of successful adulthood did you hear?
"Your mother and I found out you've been blogging. We don't know what that means, but we'd like you to stop."
Why The Rite Journey?

Some reasons include:

- Boys and girls are different and long to explore these differences.
- Adolescents lack guidance in the journey towards adulthood. They need many models on which to define themselves.
- Adolescents yearn for values and meaning.
- The media can’t be trusted to guide our students towards positive and healthy adulthoods.
- The adolescent brain is redeveloping identity.
The changing phenomena of adolescence

RITE OF PASSAGE

CHILDHOOD

ADULTHOOD

Adult Responsibilities
Adult Consequences

THE EXTENSION OF ADOLESCENCE

CHILDHOOD

Adolescence
Age 9-26

ADULTHOOD

Adult Responsibilities
Adult Consequences

EXTENDED ADOLESCENCE
during which the age of Adult Responsibility moves farther and farther away from birth.

DIAGRAM 5
The Adolescent

- Beginning adult
- Grown up in a very different world to current adults
- Need challenge
- Need opportunities for responsibility
- Will still react impulsively (brain anatomy)
The School’s Role

- Acknowledge and celebrate the students’ transition from childhood to adulthood
- Offer a mentoring program
- Providing physical, emotional, social and spiritual challenges
- Revealing to them how gender is constructed
- Allowing them to share their dreams and doubts
- Providing an alternative model of healthy adulthood
- Genuinely listen to them and hear them
- Give them TIME
The parent’s and carer’s role

- Be there (act if asked)
- Letting go (The Bridge)
- Be conscious of our actions (What lessons, do our responses as parents, teach our children?)
- Encourage and allow increasing responsibility
- Allowing our children to experience consequences for their actions rather than ‘saving them’
“If we want to help our children navigate the challenges of adolescence and become independent moral adults, we must have the courage to look at our actions – especially when we think we are being our children’s champions and advocates.”
In 50 years a lot has changed in school.

1961: What's the meaning of these marks?

2011: What's the meaning of these marks?
“I propose that Year 9 be totally reconstructed. The traditional program should be scrapped and replaced with a comprehensive Preparation for Adulthood program”
“A successful and happy adolescence entails hundreds of conversations about what matters, who you are and what you stand for. Yet many (young people) are basically abandoned by distracted parents and the impersonal melee of large secondary schools.”
Richard Rohr

‘Boys to men: rediscovering rites of passage for our time,’

‘It seems that it is only the recent West that has deemed it unnecessary to “initiate” young men. Otherwise, culture after culture felt that if the young man were not introduced to “the mysteries,” he would not know what to do with his pain and would almost always abuse his power. It looks like they were right.’
Michael Ungar
‘Too Safe for their Own Good’

‘If we can learn from the past and today’s less industrialised societies, then we will see that children require appropriate rites of passage to mark their transition to adulthood’
Leonard Sax
‘Why Gender Matters’

“More than in any other realm, (transition to adulthood) is where our society lets kids down. We offer our children no guidance about what it means to be an adult woman or an adult man. No other culture has ever abandoned young people making the transition to a gendered adulthood as completely as the twenty-first century post-industrial societies of North America, Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand.”
Default Rites

- Vandalism
- Hoon driving
- Gang activity
- Drink driving
- Sexual activity
- Suicide attempts
- Extreme risk-taking
- ‘Schoolies’ week
The 5 Rite Journey Outcomes

- CONNECTION
- CONSCIOUSNESS
- COMMUNICATION
- CHALLENGE
- CELEBRATION

All five outcomes are found within each term’s focus:

Relationship with Self
Relationship with Others
Relationship with Spirit
Relationship with the World
The 14 Rite Journey Principles

• to offer a healthy rite of passage for adolescents
• to provide a same-gender teacher-guide to promote a passage towards and an example of responsible, respectful adulthood for the students
• to acknowledge & develop the holistic nature of the students
• to show students by example that they are cared for and loved
The 14 Rite Journey Principles

- to develop strong relationships – with peers and adults
- to incorporate mentoring from “elders” and to “younger students”
- to challenge students with their own talents and abilities
- to celebrate the physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth of students throughout the year
- to nurture the self esteem of students
The 14 Rite Journey Principles

• to help students understand that individual rights should be balanced by reciprocal responsibilities and service to others
• to open students in understanding themselves and what they believe
• to encourage resilience in the students in the face of challenge
• to provide a space for young people to share and discover who they are
The Rite Journey Framework

Seven steps of the *Hero’s Journey*

- The Call
- The Departure
- The Following
- The Challenges
- The Abyss
- The Return
- The Home-Coming
Ceremonies & Celebrations

Each of the 7 steps incorporates a ceremony or celebration that leads the students to acknowledge their personal journey towards adulthood.
Selecting a mentor

- A same gender adult mentor
- Willing to spend time
- Be in regular contact
- For at least an hour a fortnight
Role of the mentor

- Develop a trusting relationship
- Support parental values
- Help in developing social skills
- Share in celebrating milestones
- Listen to dreams, ideas & concerns
- Promote the discovery of undeveloped potential
- Take an interest in the student beyond The Rite Journey year
If you select a mentor, approach ...

- Someone who is safe and trustworthy
- Someone willing to be contacted by parents and/or teachers
- Someone the student and the family agree upon
- Someone who shares an interest with your child
- Someone who is clearly the child’s elder
Relationship with Self
Who am I, really?

• My story so far
• Gender identity, construction and expectations
• *Living life as a male/female*
• Self talk
• Belonging
• Mentoring program
• Understanding Feelings and beliefs
Relationship with Others

How do I get on with others?

- Communication, listening & body language
- Dealing with anger, violence, bullying and intolerance
- Feelings, beliefs, actions & consequences
- Mateship/friendship
- Peer pressure
- Depression
- Understanding the opposite gender
- Love, relationships & sexuality
- Lying, taking responsibility, apologising, forgiving
Relationship with Spirit
Is there something more?

• Silence, Stillness & Solitude
• Relaxation, meditation, listening
• Exploring beliefs and values
• Reflection & wisdom
• Mortality
Relationship with the World

What is my purpose?

- Risk Taking - Alcohol, Drugs, Sexual Health
- Mentoring younger students
- Life purpose
- Wellness and Bliss
- Self - Leadership
- Taking a stand/making a difference/what can I give?
- Elders
- Me as a man/woman in the future
A gift of love

PARENTS: share one or more of these:
  • Recollections of your child’s birth
  • Your favourite parenting moments with your child
  • Your hopes and dreams for your child’s future

STUDENTS:
  • give your parent/s or carer your letter.
Working together

As teachers, parents and students we must be united on this journey of transformation from childhood to adulthood.
"There's nothing wrong with your iPod, Dad. It's just too embarrassed to play the kind of music you like!"
Blessing Ceremony