

## Living With Integrity

The old proverb: “The ship that will not obey the helm will have to obey the rocks” is a neat analogy of the consequences we risk when we ignore the rules or guidelines or laws we are bound by.

No young person is inspired to enter a career in teaching to be a monitor of uniform, traffic, jewellery, hair, phones, pick up zones, language, smoking/vaping, chewing gum etc. A love of learning and a deep passion to share that learning with others is the primary motivation for those who become educators. But humans are complex and schools are incredibly complex places that necessitate teachers to not only deliver curriculum but help young people become socially responsible citizens who live by the rules of the community that they join. This only works best when home and school dovetail with each other.

Increasingly though, one of the most challenging features within Western society, and therefore schools, is the undermining of community by ‘entitled individualism’. A new study has found that some people, who see themselves as special or entitled in some way that others are not, are more likely to disregard ordinary instructions or the usual “order” of things, which most others will accept and follow. Researchers who explored this topic found that the underlying reason is a narcissistic outlook about how the world should work for them.

In their study, Emily Zitek and Alexander Jordan pointed out that previous research found that “entitled” people—technically, individuals with a higher sense of entitlement—are more likely to believe they deserve preferences and resources that others don’t. And they are also less concerned about what is socially acceptable or beneficial.

Berliner and Eyre’s book titled, *Great Minds and How to Grow Them* argues that first and foremost, parents need to support the school as an institution. If teenagers receive conflicting messages from their parents about the school, then this will undermine the student’s approach and attitude to learning. That is, the more parents run-down, challenge, ignore rules and procedures, speak disrespectfully about staff, the more likely a student is to underperform in their learning.

Families that sign an enrolment agreement that commits to following certain behaviours and rules and then blatantly disregard them severely undermine their own child’s development as a young person with integrity.

Take for example those parents who choose to drop students off in front of signs that clearly state ‘No Drop Off Zone’ in front of the administration building. Surely the only lesson their children can glean from this experience is that their convenience is more important than others’ safety. Their day commences with a statement that we do what suits us, not what is good for the whole community.

When students leave home with the incorrect uniform, hair colouring, jewellery and this is sanctioned by parents then the message is clear - do what suits you because what you want matters more than anything else. This family will only cooperate when we get what we like and if we don’t we’ll do our own thing.

It is no surprise then to discover that many of the young people who are raised this way also take their narcissism into the classroom and interrupt the learning of others and later on when they

don't achieve the results they believe they deserve are the loudest in bemoaning the quality of the teaching.

Pope Francis made a pertinent statement about the necessity for parents to support schools:

“Without respectfully collaborating with teachers and schools, parents will risk being on their own when it comes to educating their children and be at a greater disadvantage for facing the challenges emerging from today's culture, mass media and technology”.

Speaking to hundreds of parents, the pope told them that “teachers are like you - dedicated each day in the educational service of your children.”

Each of the young people we have supported to leave the school this year have been examples of people who “ignore the helm” and have found the “rocks” instead. This work will continue apace as we drive relentlessly towards building a community where the common good takes precedence over the shallow and superficial individualism of some. This is all in an effort to ensure young people live lives of integrity.