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ENGAGING TEENAGE BOYS WITH A POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Boys in Year 9 (age 14 and 15) are at a time in their lives where they start to question life a little more closely, hormones can take over and boredom can become the enemy. Whilst boys may see schooling as important, they also can see it as a distraction. In response to this sometimes challenging age, St Augustine’s College - Sydney initiated their ‘Year 9 Unitas Programme’ to engage in some additionally important, yet sometimes forgotten skills.

Dean of the Middle School, Peter Nolan said “We initiated some interesting activities to create a sense of unity and connectedness for the boys within their local community and class groups. Whilst not at all taking away any of these roles from their parents, we wanted to ‘value add’ in the hope to up skill them in addition to their educational curriculum and make their school day even more exciting. So we threw them in the deep end”.

From the beginning of the 2012 school term, Year 9 boys have two hour lessons every fortnight, taking on mental and physical challenges, as well as day to day skills of life such as:

Positive Psychology – Every boy is strong in something! This component will allow boys to explore and identify their key signature strengths and how to use them in a positive way.

Grooming and Etiquette – learning ironing, sewing, bed making, tying a Windsor knot, phone etiquette, menu preparing, setting a table, basic food and meal preparation, cooking and baking a loaf of bread.

Service Projects – in conjunction with the College’s community service programme they work with ‘Clean Up Australia’ and join in on local community activities as they arise.

Infants Immersion – assisting pre-schoolers at local schools and children’s centres with reading, art and craft, sports activities, computer work etc.

CPR – gaining basic CPR training from qualified instructors.

Golf and Fencing – probably skills most boys wouldn’t consider until a later age. Boys do two sessions of golf and two introductory fencing lessons learning the finer skills of this ancient Olympic sport.

Healthy Relationships – a representative from ‘Relationships Australia’ talks to the boys about understanding healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships, ways to communicate and strategies for a good outcome when building relationship.

Aboriginal Heritage – An Aboriginal Heritage member educates the boys on local indigenous heritage along with visiting local sites to view Aboriginal carvings and learn about ‘bush tucker’.

Automotive - boys do an introduction to car maintenance and motor mechanics learning the basics before reaching the age of getting behind the wheel of a car.

Horticulture – boys get their hands dirty and love it, whilst learning landscaping and horticulture skills.

Parents at the College have responded positively to the Unitas Programme and are glad to be assisted in these valuable skills. “My son goes to school excited about the day ahead of him and has come home proud of these extra skills he is learning. He’s showing some humility and appreciation of what mum and dad do” said Rina Cipri, Year 9 parent.

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