

Through the eyes of...

During the week I was very fortunate to experience some different perspectives and gain new insights through the educational program, particularly seeing teaching and learning through the eyes of two Riverview students.

The Students

Last Friday I shadowed two students in Year 9 who undertake quite disparate aspects of the learning spectrum. The first was one of our First Nations students; seeing the world from his perspective with its challenges but also its unique rewards. This was a window into a world that I have not experienced before in subjects such as History, Business Studies, Writing Mastery and Science. The second was a student who is involved in the Advanced Mathematics program and a suite of classes that are associated with it. Re-learning about factorisation of algebra in mathematics, attending French classes and pursuing the subtleties of language forms in English was, for want of a better term, a journey back in time. In shadowing two students for a full day of classes it is abundantly clear that teaching methodologies in contemporary times, classroom engagement of students and the daily regimen of school are all in a state of dynamic, profound and ongoing change – as they should be. This type of shadowing, namely, *Stepping Into a Student's Shoes* (*Educational Leadership*, Feb 2012, Vol 65, No 9), has been the object of educational research for the way it focuses on the efficacy of the educational process and how that is optimised on a classroom level. I sincerely wish to thank the boys who enabled me to share their day and gain such insight into their lived reality on a daily basis.

The Denied

On the same day, I was privileged to attend a breakfast in Cova Cottage coordinated by the LBW Trust, which supports the cause of marginalised children in disadvantaged countries. The guest speaker was Dr Kakenya Ntaiya, who is internationally renowned for her efforts to protect women's rights and to provide education for girls throughout the world. Among many of Kekenya's compelling insights, was the disturbing fact that 62 million girls in nations across the world such as Uganda, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, South Africa, Jamaica, Pakistan and Afghanistan, are denied education. Equally disturbing is the fact that three million girls every year are subject to female genital mutilation through the sedimentation of social custom and traditional conventions. These girls are consigned to a life of subservience, servitude and poverty through the cultural forces that define the role of women and their place in the occupational and political hierarchy. That Student Leaders from a number of local schools including Riverview, Loreto Kirribilli, Loreto Normanhurst and St Aloysius, attended this function and were so moved by Kekenya's wisdom is testament to the fact that the message has gone far and wide. Through the process of conscientisation - namely, informing the consciousness and through it, forming a conscience disposed towards social justice, let us hope that this will lead to a greater awareness of, and response to, the need for education in the Third World that will progressively release young women from the bondage and hardship that have subjugated generations for so long.

The Emergent

First Field celebrated the relationship between Riverview and Jarjum College on Monday evening in the form of the annual 20x20 Bash. Jarjum is a Jesuit primary school in Redfern that provides educational opportunities for young Aboriginal boys and girls who lack the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy in a

world that is requiring increasing levels of them. The aim of the game? To raise funds to continue this important work in a context where resources are scarce and difficult to access. Tremendous support was given from the school community who collectively raised \$23,000 through the raffle, and with other funded projects, almost \$30,000 was raised in total to assist Jarjum carry out its mission. The game itself was a truly memorable convocation of a community that advocates for the cause of social justice and challenges the institutions that mitigate against it. To the All Stars who gave so generously of their time – Adam Goodes, Simon Katich, Jason Krejza, Monte Panesar, Phil Waugh, Jason Little and their team – I extend an enormous statement of thanks, and also to the many parents and students who supported such a rich intercultural and interfaith experience.

The Jesuit Lens

So much of what the College undertakes is written through the script of its tradition. When St Ignatius formally commissioned the first school to open in Messina in Italy in 1548, he had clear prerogatives in mind. He was emphatic about the importance of scholarship, for that would provide the vehicle for social change going forward. It was also to provide opportunity for the marginalised, for in the early stages, the schools were funded by benefactors, as students and their families had no means to pay. And, seated in Gospel teachings, is the impulse to embrace Christian values and make them manifest in the world, one which is always fractured and one which needs the ministrations of those who have the capacity to respond to the cause of the disadvantaged. To the least, St Ignatius offered the most, and while this continues to challenge Riverview in a cost-rich environment, it is something that we need to be mindful of and responsive to on a daily basis. That major causes such as women's rights to exercise control over their bodies and to have access to education as well as funds to support our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Redfern featured during the week is something to behold. While we grapple with the paradoxes of the modern world, these matters are no less important in our time than they were centuries ago when the Jesuit enterprise began.

Very best wishes as we enter the latter stages of the term.