

FROM THE DEAN OF BOYS' EDUCATION

LAZY AND UNMOTIVATED BOYS – DO THEY EXIST?

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Motivation plays a significant role in a boy's interest and enjoyment of school and learning. Professor Andrew Martin's research shows how motivation can underpin student achievement. He also identifies how motivation does not remain constant and is not necessarily independent of the influence of relationships students have with their teachers, peers and parents. In exploring these and other influences we can consider the role that the School and home can play in ensuring our boys maximise their potential for learning and achievement.

Professor Guy Claxton in his book, *What's the Point of School?*, proposes whether it is a myth that there truly exist students who are lazy and unmotivated, and who don't want to learn anything in any setting. He suggests that a student's level of motivation can be due to a combination of a number of interlocking process and forces which, when they line up one way, one kind of learning happens and when they line up differently, another kind happens.

Some examples of these combining forces and processes that can lead to a boy being "unmotivated" may be:

- He is interested in X but has competing priorities, often to do with emotions, mental health, self-doubt, family or friendships.
- There are distractions that are disrupting his concentration, and/or he has difficulty concentrating.
- He is not confident in his learning; he doubts that his efforts and resources will be equal to the learning task.
- He believes that if he tries and fails to learn X, he will feel even worse about himself than he already does, so it is better not to try.
- He believes doing well at X conflicts with his image or the values of his social group.
- He is not clear about future opportunities and pathways to contextual his learning of X.

At Trinity our pastoral care system is central to everything we do. Trinity is much more than an institution where content is simply "delivered" to students. The quality of a school as a social institution has vital importance in the provision of a quality education. Knowing and connecting with boys' interests does have a significant positive influence on their motivation for learning. Knowing and responding to how boys best learn helps to ensure the curriculum is responsive to meeting their individual needs. Knowing boys' readiness for new learning challenges ensures teachers are able to optimise their learning progression.

Our intentional emphasis on classroom relationships, as well as those established through sport and co-curricular activities, is not only socially beneficial for our boys, but also has significant importance in optimising their educational provision across all levels of schooling. Professor Martin describes how individuals develop beliefs, orientations and values that are consistent with their relational environment. These beliefs at home and school (if positive and adaptive) direct behaviour in the form of enhanced persistence, goal striving and self-regulation – all of which contribute to motivation.

To quote Professor Martin from his book, *Building Classroom Success*, "You can lead a horse to water, and although you cannot make it drink, you can salt the oats to make it thirsty." High-quality interpersonal relationships in students' lives contribute to their academic motivation, engagement, and achievement. Our aim at Trinity, in all that we do, is to provide the very best learning environment for our boys to achieve, and grow and develop into fine young men.



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