

LOST THE PLOT?

In his superb book, 'Out of our minds – Learning to be Creative', Ken Robinson summarises his investigation into how organisations are trying to survive in today's competitive and fast-paced marketplace by saying,

"Many employers are facing a crisis in recruitment. It's not that there are not enough graduates to go around. But many do not have what business urgently needs: they can't communicate well, they can't work in teams and they can't think creatively."

Research indicates that many children's schooling is just not meeting the needs of employers and that education in many institutions has simply lost the plot! We at St. James' Preparatory School have developed a strategy which we believe will buck this troubling trend. One could say, in fact, that we have come up with a PLOT to take over the world!

Our PLOT is simply this:

To create in our children highly developed and strongly ingrained Personal Learning or Thinking Skills. This involves teaching children in such a way that HOW and WHY

they learn become an integral part of their lives. Our aim is to develop children who meet the needs of their future employers by being:

- Self Managers
- Team Workers
- Creative Thinkers
- Effective Participants
- Reflective Learners
- Independent Enquirers

We implement the PLOT in the following ways:

Each classroom has on display a set of posters of the PLOTS, with clearly assigned, easily recognised colours and icons. All children in Preps 3 to 6 have the PLOTS inside their individual desk-top boxes for quick reference; they are referred to by teachers and have become part of the school vernacular in each lesson, for instance, "What if...?" questions are now as much part of English as they are of R.E. or Science.

We teach children to recognise their skills in these areas and to identify their talents. We set individual and group targets to address the particular areas that need work. PLOTS are highly motivational and accessible to all children. Tasks and work, which are assessed against PLOT standards, enable every child to experience success, which make them a valuable supplement to conventional assessment and testing. Each week, we

celebrate the Creative Thinkers and the good Self-Managers alongside those who have done well at sports or reading.

We believe that this personalised, dynamic and highly purpose-driven approach to teaching and learning singles us out amongst a large number of schools.

We have found the PLOT!

I conclude with more words from Ken Robinson, as they best sum up our Prep School vision:

"to develop people who can cope with and contribute to the breathless rate of change in the 21st Century – people who are flexible, creative and have found their talents."

*Miss J. Owen,
Head of Prep Department*



Meet the Plots:

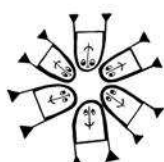
Independent enquirers

- Plan and organise your work.
- Give reasons for your ideas.
- Use many resources to find things out.
- Be willing to change your mind.
- Ask different kinds of questions.
- See more than one side of an argument.
- Explore different possibilities and ask 'What if...?'



Team Workers

- Share your ideas generously.
- Listen to what people say.
- Bring the team back to the task in hand.
- Cope sensibly with disagreements.
- Show loyalty to your team.
- Suggest changes to how the team works.
- Keep a sense of time.



Effective Participants

- Join clubs and organisations.
- See things from others' points of view.
- Resolve disagreements.
- Stay focused on task.
- Organise your time well.
- Enjoy taking responsibility.
- Try to persuade others to see your point of view.



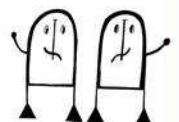
Self Managers

- Manage your homestudy.
- Try to complete tasks.
- Know where to go for advice.
- Use the internet and a computer competently.
- Use an index, the library and a dictionary effectively.
- Be willing to try again when things don't work.
- Be on time.



Reflective Learners

- Put time into planning.
- Learn from mistakes.
- Change plans if you have a better idea.
- Know what to do when you are stuck.
- Treat criticism positively.
- Recognise your learning strengths.
- Keep going even when you have a setback.



Creative Thinkers

- Ask 'What if...?' questions.
- Enjoy creating new ideas.
- Be interested in what's going on around you.
- Make links between ideas.
- Be prepared to try something different.
- Try presenting work in different ways.
- Notice the unusual.



ROOSTER RAG



A paltry farm was turned into a poultry farm, of some note, this term, when it was transformed by the superb singing, excellent acting and lively dance routines of the cast of Rooster Rag. The audience laughed and sang along, in support of the performers, and the production was declared a hit by all who saw and participated in the show. Well done to the cast, all the children in Prep 3 to 6, for their enthusiasm and their confidence in singing. It is wonderful to see the large number of children who have the courage and talent to perform solo numbers, with great skill and gusto. Mrs. Hindley has once again proved her credentials as a director, and Mrs. Overton's accompaniment was superb, showcasing her accomplishment and talent! Mrs. Benzon has certainly earned our thanks for returning from her absence to learn the music and to assist in the accompaniment of the show. Thanks to these ladies, who made this term's production both possible and enormously successful.

Behind the scenes, a team of tireless teachers undertook supervising over-excited chickens, serving drinks, painting faces, attaching beaks, prompting and clearing up after the show – thanks to you for all your help!

Parents who lent a hand included Mrs. Gillett and Mrs. Alex, who photographed and filmed the cast; Mrs. Jennings, who managed the ticket-sales; whilst Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Hoyle sold tickets on the door. We really appreciate your help and thank you for your support.

In the words of a den of foxes (who very nearly stole the show AND the chickens), " They certainly know how to shake a tail-feather!". Well done to all!

Miss J. Owen, Head of Prep Department

