

National Boys' Education Conference K-12

Boosting boys' achievements

As a child I saw ghosts!

John Laursen
Shirley Boys' High School, Christchurch, NZ

Headmaster
laursenj@shirley.school.nz



Can a boys' school help all its students to become *Good Men*? A sterile environment has a negative impact on a boy's development. A rich environment has humour in abundance and all staff, teaching and support are in synch with each other. A rich environment has institutions that ensure this happens.

Such institutions include having a house system with vertical forms. Also included will be the teaching of leadership skills to all pupils and giving practical examples of this through a variety of leadership opportunities, including prefectship, competition without failure, development of a moral code based on the *Good Man*. Mention will also be made of the act of faith involved in letting the staff design their own school. Special mention will be made of Pareto and the development of his 80:20 principle to a 60:40 model, in which the staff become *lore keepers* and *change merchants*. In such an environment, the school leaders become experts in keeping a harmonious balance between two forces, one demanding stasis, the other change! Finally, the power of stories and their importance to boys will be explored; demonstration of this will be given and indeed sought from workshop delegates.

BioNote

Shirley has more than 1500 boys and is currently the largest single sex school in the South Island of New Zealand. Boys are drawn from all over Christchurch, including its poorer as well as its wealthier suburbs making it a truly heterogeneous place. The school has a long waiting list. Currently John serves on the Central South Island Principals' Association Executive as its Treasurer. He is one of the Directors of Canterbury Education Services, the largest school financial and property support organisation in New Zealand. John has represented New Zealand in debating and in public speaking over the years and is regularly invited to address aspiring principals as well as Rotary, Probus and Lions' Clubs in New Zealand.

In 2008, Laursen was awarded a Woolf Fisher scholarship to attend Harvard University for study.