Do you have conversations or interrogations with your kids?

by Michael Grose

Lately I have been challenged at home trying to converse with a young person who is consumed by the usual fare for kids in the last year of schooling - study, boy/girlfriends, peer relationships and parties (not in that order necessarily!). My attempts at conversation have been more like interrogations as I try to find out what is happening in her life. In many ways I need to stop grilling her and start chatting with her.

But talking involves time, disclosure and respect for privacy. That’s a little different than conducting an interrogation. Let’s take a little look at each of these processes needed for conversation.

1. Taking the time for talking:

Busyness is the enemy of effective communication. When conversation happens on the run it tends to be bland and happen on a superficial level. Our daily conversations often don’t get past the informational level where we try to extract some information about our kids’ activities. I am not sure about you but I can’t stand being asked, “How was your day?” “It’s still going” is my usual reply.

The conversation will drop to a level of disclosure generally when no one is trying hard to get the conversation to drop to a level of disclosure. The best conversation generally happens when no one is working hard at it. Here’s the rub – I believe you have to create little pockets of time and space where you are interacting with kids in a natural way and stuff just crops up. Weekends, school holidays, shared interests and games can provide these opportunities for connection with kids. You may have to use some native cunning to create those opportunities to connect but it may well be worth the effort.

2. Disclose then listen:

Sometimes you have to give a little of yourself to get the conversational ball rolling. Family mealtimes still offer the best opportunities for conversations as bottoms are glued to seats, distractions are removed and you can actually talk in a natural way. I have found it often useful to get things moving by talking about something different, unusual, funny or friendly that may have happened during my day. It is a little like throwing a rope out and see who picks it up. Conversation invites reply. Often someone will respond, ask a question, raise an eyebrow, burp or whatever and some type of conversation sparks up. If conversation does start then step back a little and listen. Avoid being too analytical or critical. When we interrupt with our life lessons and parental wisdom our kids will soon learn to stay silent.

3. Respect their privacy:

Modern parents are constantly reminded to take an interest in and be involved in their children’s lives. But this doesn’t mean we should get tied up in the minutiae of their lives. Much of what happens to them on a daily basis is boring and some of it is none of our business. We really don’t need to know everything (although some readers may think that it would be nice to know something)! Kids will generally choose what to tell us in the same way that we choose what to tell them, our spouses, parents and friends.

In an era when increasingly communication between people occurs via an electronic medium of some type it is easy to forget about the art of conversation. It is something we can help our kids with and it is not too technical. For the most part conversation is simply a personal communication between people who are interested in each other. We can all do that.
From the Principal

In this issue of Xavier News I have included a couple of extracts from articles by Michael Grose that might provide some benefit for parents over the school holiday period. When I read the article that is printed on the cover page, I became determined to try and spend some time in casual conversation with my youngest son during his holiday time. I also included another of Grose’s reflections as part of this section as an insight into one of the most important human qualities and one which will be important for many students as they approach the final term of 2006.

The end of Term 3 brings to a conclusion arguably the most strenuous period of the school year. From a student’s perspective it is often identified as being a difficult time to maintain motivation, the freshness of the new-year has long passed and it is too early to recognise how near they are to the end of the school year. Of course the term spans the dreary winter months and is also a very busy period, during which a wide range of extra-curricula activities coming to a conclusion: Knockout sport, Rock Eisteddfod, Tournament of Minds, Pedal Prix, various music events and faith formation days. School events such as Xavier Day and the Arts Night also occur during this time.

On the other hand, in two weeks time students will return for Term 4 and this period will seemingly pass in a ‘blink of the eye’. Year 12 students conclude their formal lessons during week 3 and this will signal the commencement of end of year events that spread across all year levels. Over the course of this period pressure will begin to grow as assessment appears to play a more prominent part in a student’s academic life. Hence I refer parents to the important advice provided in the following article.

Teach children to persist by Michael Grose

“Young people can drive themselves very hard to succeed. Some children are more naturally predisposed to persist than others. They have a determined, even competitive streak in their temperament that doesn’t allow them to give in. These children and young people can drive themselves very hard to succeed.

The ability to persist at a task and see it through to the end is one of the most important success attributes that you can develop in a child. There are numerous times every day when children must persist rather than give in. A toddler learning to tie shoelaces must persist. A primary aged student must show determination to finish tasks and a secondary student needs to work through difficulties particularly those he doesn’t understand or complete right away.

They need to be able to persist when work gets hard or life gets tough. They need the ‘stickability’ to work through difficulties and hang in there when things don’t go their way.

The students are great and I love being creative, listening to music. It relaxes me too.

Why did you want to be a House Leader? For the badge to strengthen my public speaking skills.

What is the best/worst thing about being a house leader? Best - that people feel they can come to me about anything, leaves me feeling good.

What do you love the most about being a student at Xavier College? Xavier is a great place and everyone is like a big family. Good curriculum.

What do you want to do when you leave school? Travel! I want to travel and become a sales and marketing manager.

What is your favourite subject and why? Art, I love being creative, listening to music. It relaxes me too.

What word or phrase describes you best? Cheerful.

Bosco House Profiles

House Leader

Olivia Clasohm, Bosco Junior House Leader

Age: 15

Interests: Netball, the beach, shopping and enjoying life.

Why did you want to be a House Leader? For the badge to strengthen my public speaking skills.

What is the best/worst thing about being a house leader? Best - that people feel they can come to me about anything, leaves me feeling good.

What do you love the most about being a student at Xavier College? Xavier is a great place and everyone is like a big family. Good curriculum.

What do you want to do when you leave school? Travel! I want to travel and become a sales and marketing manager.

What is your favourite subject and why? Art, I love being creative, listening to music. It relaxes me too.

What word or phrase describes you best? Cheerful.

Tutor Teacher

Martin Docherty, Bosco Tutor Teacher

Age: 51

Interests: Archery, Geology, History, Construction.

Why did you want to be a teacher? I didn’t originally, however, realised I had a lot of knowledge to offer and wanted to help develop younger generations.

What is the best/worst thing about being a teacher at Xavier? Best thing is learning new information and the fulfilment I receive.

What do you love the most about being a staff member at Xavier College? The students are great and I also love the friendships with staff.

Did you ever consider not being a teacher? If so, what were you going to do? Wanted to be a priest originally, but realised it wasn’t for me.

What is your favourite subject to teach and why? History and Geography because they are my fields of interest. Always learning more about them.

What word or phrase describes you best? Thoughtful.

What are the biggest differences in schools now compared to when you were a student? Better technology, more resources, better teaching methods!
The evening of August 22\textsuperscript{nd} saw the 3\textsuperscript{rd} annual Combined Arts Night at Xavier College. This is a night when musical performances are held to complement the presentation of Visual Arts, Media and Multi-media works. A crowd of over 200 people witnessed polished performances by the newly created soul band, headed up by singer Tara Behen, and guitar band with Matt Buckoke, solo performances from senior students and other talented and entertaining presentations. A feature of this years evening was the first performance by the drama club. This group of dedicated students have been meeting to rehearse a short play which they performed under quite difficult conditions. We look forward to the group being a regular spot at Arts night in the future.

Another first for the evening was an Arts competition which included junior and senior, drawing, painting and multi-media categories. Entries were judged by prominent local artist, Veronica Wohlstadt who commented on the quality of the winner’s work. Encouragement awards to enthusiastic and up and coming music students were also announced. Prizes will be awarded at the end of term assembly. Many thanks to Premier Art Supplies and Eckersleys, for their generous sponsorship and thanks to all students who entered their art and media works. We look forward to making this event even bigger and better next year.

The evening was made even more professional by the contribution of the hospitality students who provided a very tasty supper, overseen by their talented instructor, Mr Reto Gasser. It also could not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of all the arts staff who assisted in presentation of the work and supervision on the evening.

Many thanks to all students, staff and families who participated and enjoyed the evening.

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**Tim and Rhys chosen for National Championships**

Congratulations to Tim Newman and Rhys Wilson for being selected along with Nathan Farrell to play Soccer in the Under 14 team for South Australia.

Our apologies for omitting Tim and Rhys from last week’s story - good luck boys.

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**R.I.P.**

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Alicia Butler (Year 11) on the recent loss of her Aunt. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Butler family.
During the school holidays the Uniform Shop will be open on Friday 13 October from 9am to 1pm. For uniform enquiries please phone 8521 4547 and leave a short message.

**Uniform Shop**

The Light Regional Council will be holding **drumMUSTER** collections at Roseworthy Waste Management Station Haydon Road, Kangaroo Flat 8am – noon. Kapunda Waste Management Station Scotty’s Grave Rd. Kapunda 1 – 5pm Thurs. Oct. 5th & Sat. Oct. 7th

Containers must be:

- Triple or pressure rinsed
- Clean – no chemical residue
- Inspected by a **drumMUSTER** inspector
- Metal containers must be punctured
- Lids must be removed

Only containers displaying the **drumMUSTERS** logo can be accepted as these are the only containers on which the levy has been paid.

To date over 1.5 million drums have been collected in SA representing over 1900 tonnes of material. Local farmers who have supported the program are to be commended.

Containers can be delivered between 8am to noon at Roseworthy on both days and 1pm to 5pm at Kapunda on both days.

For enquiries please contact Andrew Philpott on 85253200

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Parents can promote persistence by encouraging their children to keep going and not give in at the slightest hurdle or difficulty. Parents can be a sounding board for children’s gripes but they should show confidence in their ability to cope and get through their difficulties. “You can do it” is far more powerful in terms of promoting an attitude of persistence than “If it is a little too hard then try something else.”

Let children know that there is a correlation between effort and success. In fact, they need to learn that by GIVING EFFORT they will more than likely experience more success. The ability to persist in the face of difficulties maybe an old-fashioned quality but it is one of the best success attributes that children will ever develop.

Here are four practical strategies you can use to promote a sense of persistence in your children:

**1. Develop a vocabulary for persistence.** Words like “Hang tough”, “Work hard” and “Hang in there” can become part of their every day vocabulary.

**2. Point out to children when they stick at a task.** Let them see when they have been persistent and that persistence generally pays off.

**3. Help children to remember** times when they experienced success by HANGING IN when they were younger.

**4. Talk about HARD WORK with your children.** They need to understand that to be successful they need to do things that are NOT fun or easy. While it would be good if all work and learning was fun, in reality, this is not always the case.

I encourage students to use the holiday break to reflect on their academic report and for parents to discuss the results with students. It is an ideal opportunity to examine whether results are commensurate with ability and whether appropriate strategies need to be put into place during the final term to ensure that students achieve to their potential.

In closing I wish all staff and students a restful holiday and I look forward to your return, hopefully refreshed and ready for the final term.

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"a school of the future in the present"