It is symptomatic of our modern society that parents are increasingly taking over responsibility for their sons’ and daughters’ actions, and as a consequence students are lacking in resilience and self-reliance in greater numbers than previous generations. There is a growing body of research examining the relationship between parental control and learning in their sons and daughters. Evidence is mounting that we as a society may be doing harm to the next generation. This natural nurturing of the young by adults has become, in some cases, overprotection. It limits and stifles their growth, independence and creativity. How can something so central to parenting have come to this?

In short, the balance between performance and achievement on the one hand, and experience and learning on the other has shifted. Have we become more concerned with the ‘destination’, the good marks, and the social standing? Have we as a consequence become overwhelmed by fear of failure, and have we given up experience and long-term learning for short-term achievement and a place on the podium?

Good parenting, like a good education, involves the provision of a caring, ‘secure base’ and ‘safe haven’ from which children can grow; as well as opportunities that may mean facing risks and disappointments. It involves allowing young people the time to move from being a novice to becoming an expert. You can only do this by making mistakes, putting these mistakes into perspective and trying something different next time. It’s what psychologist Angela Duckworth calls, “Grit”.

We all need a great store of self-confidence and self-esteem to deal with and master initial failure. From the ensuing successes we gain confidence in doing new things, but it’s not always easy to see that initially. As we begin to believe in ourselves we become able to approach novel situations with the confidence that we can master this new skill or knowledge. This ‘growth mindset’ is all important; it’s what we all want in our children. I invite you to ponder these matters in this edition of Connections, as we look at some of the big issues facing parents and schools in ‘building capacity; not dependency’ in our young people.

Geoff Newton, Principal
Renowned British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, John Bowlby (1907-1990), changed Western parenting when he proposed ‘Attachment Theory’. This was based on the observations of orphans after World War II and young children in the 1950s who were separated from their parents for medical procedures. (Back then, you dropped your 2 year old child off for their tonsillectomy and picked them up a week later.) Bowlby purported that a parent’s or care giver’s relationship with their child influences the child’s emotional development. Before the 1950s, this had not been recognised by the scientific community.

There are two aspects to a secure attachment relationship between a parent and their child. The parent provides a ‘secure base’ from which a child can confidently explore their world. And, as they develop from adolescence into an adult, the world they explore becomes increasingly complex, unpredictable and exciting.

Of equal importance, the parent will offer a ‘safe haven’. When their child is emotional or distressed, tired or in trouble, they will welcome the child back and support and comfort them. If this is a predictable response, then the child will turn to the parent to seek the support they need. Where a secure attachment exists, even adult children will return to their parents for help or support. Attachment theory has been elegantly summarised in the ‘Circle of Security’ Programme

http://circleofsecurity.net/

To increase the likelihood of a healthy emotional trajectory, we need to encourage our adolescents to engage in exploration and welcome them back when they need our support and advice.

What is “Grit”? 

Credit for coining the current usage of “Grit” in education circles goes to University of Pennsylvania psychologist, Angela Lee Duckworth, who in a 2009 TED Talk said that her archetype was Mattie Ross, the 14-year-old protagonist of True Grit, the 1968 novel by Charles Portis.

Duckworth explains “It is really about this young girl, who against all odds, pursues a very long-term, almost impossible goal and eventually, eventually — with the emphasis on “eventually”—succeeds in that goal”.

Duckworth’s research connects noncognitive skills like self-control to school success. “Grit” captures something educators recognise but had not named or tried to teach. Duckworth has developed the Grit Scale for children, which identifies qualities like diligence, hard work, sustained effort, and the ability to focus on a goal without getting discouraged by setbacks. “Grit”, though, is context specific. “By definition, you cannot be gritty at everything,” says Duckworth.

Take the “Grit” test at http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/
The Growth Mindset
(by Craig Merritt, Deputy Principal)

Will I succeed or fail? Will I look smart or dumb? Will I be rejected or accepted? Will I feel like a winner or a loser? These are pretty common thoughts and fears at the start of a new school year, and not just for our students.

They can also indicate how we perceive our world, the mindset we hold about ourselves. In her book, Mindset (2006), Dr Carol Dweck makes a compelling case for how the attitude we hold has a profound influence on our lives. Dweck points to two different mindsets; a ‘fixed mindset’ where we view our talents and temperament as determined at birth, and a ‘growth mindset’, where we view our basic qualities as elements that can be cultivated through our own efforts.

In the world of the ‘fixed mindset’, getting a bad result on an exam is about failure. Why get involved in something that is going to make me look bad or show me as a loser? However, in the world of the ‘growth mindset’ getting a bad result is not about being smart or dumb or a loser, it is about effort. How hard did I try on the exam? Was I realistic about how much study I needed to do? What am I going to do next time to improve? Although people may differ in talents, aptitudes, interests and temperaments, the ‘growth mindset’ encourages us to see that everyone can grow and change through application and experience.

It is easy to see how this belief, that certain desired qualities can be developed over time, creates a passion for learning. Why hide deficiencies when we can work on overcoming them? Why seek out the safe and known instead of experiences that will stretch and challenge us to do better?

The desire to stretch ourselves and stick at an activity, even when it is getting difficult or not going well, is the hallmark of the ‘growth mindset’. This encourages us to thrive during some of the most challenging times of our lives.

Parents, according to Dweck, play a key role in helping children develop a ‘growth mindset’. Often, parents think they can hand children permanent confidence, like a gift by praising their brains and talent. This however, can backfire as children can doubt themselves as soon as something gets hard or goes wrong. The best gift we can give our children is to teach them to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning. This way, children won’t be slaves of praise, but masters of their own burgeoning sense of confidence.

“It’s not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves, that will make them successful human beings.” ANN LANDERS.
“Back when I was young we…”

It is easy to indulge in conversations about “the good old days” and remember the adventurous childhoods of yesteryear. Many adults typically feel there is strong anecdotal evidence about big shifts in this aspect of children’s lives, but do we know what is really happening?

Has outdoor play and interaction with outdoor places actually changed for young people? Here are some interesting statistics:

“The radius of play of the average nine-year-old has shrunk to one-ninth of what it was in the 1970s.” (Foster and Linney, 2007).

“Currently only 1 in 5 children have climbed a tree – an experience enjoyed by two thirds of their parents.” (Planet Ark commissioned University of Sydney reported in Bita 2012).

“Three quarters of today’s parents remember playing in the street – yet would not let their own children do the same.” VicHealth (reported in Bita 2012).

“One generation ago 73% of total playtime was spent outdoors. Today for the same age group it is 13%.” (Growing Up in Australia – Longitudinal Study of Australian Children).

Fifty-five percent of young people in 1970 walked to school compared to 22% in 1994. In the same time period, cycling to school declined from 7.5% to 3.9%, and car travel increased from 14.3% to 55.3%. (Thompson, 2007).

So yes, it appears that things have changed…

There are a number of well-reported factors that have produced a quantum shift in the way children and adolescents use their free time; including technological advances in social media and gaming; the proliferation of multi-car families and changes to parental work patterns.

In this article, we explore the growing pressure on parents and schools to provide a 24/7 safe, risk-free environment. Driving this risk aversion, research suggests, is the discourse of ‘good parenting’, where young people therefore experience less independence and more supervision and control.

The Sydney Morning Herald recently reported most crime statistics over the last 10 years have fallen dramatically in relation to issues of personal safety. In fact, the rate is very low at 2.7 incidents per 100,000 population. You wouldn’t expect to see a trend in homicide, the rate of which is also very low at 1.2 incidents per 100,000 population. But, after being well above 300 a year until 2006, it’s been below 300 a year since then. No trend in the number of assaults is visible to the naked eye, but the rate of assault seemed to peak in 2007 at 840 victims per 100,000, and is now down to 770 per 100,000. (Gittins 2012).

Further, Thompson (2011) states that, “Statistically speaking, children are more likely to die in car crashes than at the hands of a stranger. There is a general public perception that the threat to children from strangers is dangerous and growing”. Ronken and Johnston (2011) in their compilation on child sexual assault statistics give a snapshot of where abuse happened in 1996, revealing “94% of all cases took place in private dwellings.”

Why do we have such a preoccupation with child safety and the (non-existent) stranger-snatcher epidemic? Finkelhorn (as quoted in Louv 2005) elaborates by saying it is “an optical illusion caused by generalised social anxiety, new coordination between law enforcement and missing children groups, and media excitability.” While this research is from North America, the parallels with Australia are evident.Whilst risk of abduction to our young people remains static there are disproportionate and growing levels of concern.

Megan Mitchell, NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People suggests “I am concerned there is a message to parents, ‘Don’t let your child out into the world’, when it is rightly theirs to populate... If we don’t encourage kids’ independence, we are potentially limiting their development. It’s better for us not to be afraid of our neighbours.” (Bita 2012).

While only 1 in 5 kids have climbed a tree in Australia, Bravehearts report that 1 in 5 Australians are the victim of sexual assault before their 18th birthday. They also report...
the majority of sex offenders are known to the family. ‘Day for Daniel’ gets saturation media coverage. The tragedy of the events leading to this day cannot be overstated or reduced. Yet this type of offence is so incredibly rare that our current model of news reporting feel they have to make the most of it. Is it OK to deny aspects of growing up that most adults hold so dearly in their memories? (While causal links are notoriously difficult to prove, it is interesting to note the explosion in rates of adolescent mental health issues and obesity during the same time, that there has been such a shift in patterns of play and supervision.) Are there more pressing dangers to the “protection” of our young people than such rare and terrible events?

Paradoxically (and tragically) some of the institutions that should be the most caring and who have provided the most supervision to young people (and often the most vulnerable) have done the most damage to children and been the most resistant to change. The 1 in 5 statistic is terrible, but does not support the populist view that unsupervised kids are in danger. In fact a compelling argument could be mounted for the reverse. “... research suggests that women and children’s safety is more likely to be compromised by sources within the home than in public spaces.” Thomson (2009).

The world outside is as safe as it ever was; but we have introduced anxiety about the perceived yet nonexistent rise in risks to children. This poses challenges to the educational opportunities that we provide students as we manage the risks involved around expectations.

If the risk appetite of parents has diminished, a choice is posed for Hillbrook. We can either get better at sharing with parents the benefits for our students to be independently active outdoors; where they experience adventure along with anxiety, frustration, relief and reward. Or, we can slowly retreat from public spaces, or have supervision hovering everywhere. While our choices are not that simplistic, and our answers must be much more nuanced than the solutions offered, it is important to keep in mind that the world is a wonderful place, and it would be a shame to deny kids their rightful place in it.

Our feature articles have been illustrated with photos provided by 2012 Graduate Erin McNeill...

‘Bubble Wrapped Society’
(Artist Statement by Erin McNeill, Grad 2012)

‘A Bubble Wrapped Society’ explores the limitations a child must endure when their parents are fearful that everything they see, do and touch could be a potential threat, and therefore never allow their children to experience the real world. The work consists of a series of 6 photographs which have been digitally manipulated to focus on the extent of the parent’s over protection of their children.

The black and white image represents the closed world in which a bubble-wrapped child cannot enjoy the opportunities to express themselves and to take risks. The vibrant colours of the bubble wrapped child represent how precious they are to their parents and how they must be protected at all times.

(Year 12 Art Assignment – ‘Understand and document a 21st century phenomenon relating to Ethics, Science or Technology’. We are proud to use Erin’s photos in this edition of Connections).
Senior Science students were invited to the new Science and Technology building at QUT. The STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) offers students the opportunity to meet with researchers and ask questions about their research.

The aim to boost engagement in Science subjects exposes students to some cutting-edge research, hopefully motivating them to seek technical careers in STEM.

We anticipate that this immersion program will lead to mentoring relationships between researchers and students, which will support them through their own school-based research tasks.
SRC/Year 12 Leadership Ceremony

On 25 February our school community gathered to recognise our Student Leaders for 2013. During the ceremony our Year 8 to 11 class Student Representative Councillors and our 118 Year 12 Senior Leaders were acknowledged. Collectively our Senior Leaders will contribute more than 2000 hours of school leadership. We wish all our Student Leaders a meaningful leadership journey throughout the year.

Congratulations Graduates of 2012

Last year’s graduates have achieved excellent results, with 87% of the group falling into the OP range of 1-15.

We would like to acknowledge the stories that lie behind these statistics. To the students who worked consistently throughout the year balancing their commitments, who experienced a sense of achievement and challenge, discovering moments of wonder, and dare we say, joy as they progressed through their studies. We sincerely wish them the best as they pursue their dreams.

Our congratulations must also go to their parents and the teachers who worked with and supported these students not only in Years 11 and 12, but also during their earlier high school and primary school years, where much of the foundation was laid.

‘Smiling for Smiddy’ Cycle Challenge

4 Days: 400kms: $10,000

During the 2013 September school holidays 20 students will be taking on the challenge of riding 400kms in four days to help raise funds for the ‘Smiling for Smiddy’ Foundation. The students, supported by teachers and parents, will be cycling from Miles (via Jandowae, Crows Nest and Kilcoy) to Hillbrook. The goal is to raise $10,000 for the ‘Smiling for Smiddy’ Foundation www.smiddy.org.au, sponsoring vital cancer research and support services. If you can support our Cycle Challenge, please contact Glenn Stevenson or Craig Merritt.

Forensic Science Excursion

Year 11 Science students visited the Queensland Police Museum as part of their Forensic Science unit. Students heard from an expert who explained forensic techniques used in solving crime. Utilising their class room knowledge students solved mock crimes and completed activities based on other forensic techniques.
Ancient History
(by CJ Strong, Year 11 Student)

Mr Behan’s class gathered in a makeshift temple, worshipping the Ancient Egyptian Sun God Amun. After a procession throughout the school, led by High Priests, members were purified with splashes of Natron before entering the sanctum precinct. The room was dark, lit by blazing candles, as the group assembled before the statue of Amun in silence. The aromatic scent of burning incense filled the air as the congregation chanted ancient hymns of worship, and a single High Priest recited the secret names of the Seven Spirits. After sanctifying the images of the deities, we presented offerings of comestibles and libations. Once the gods were satisfied with these, the curtains of the room were thrown open, allowing the light of the sun to penetrate the room. The offerings were divided among the class and a sumptuous banquet held.

This was a re-creation of the traditional Egyptian ceremony, marking the daily death and rebirth of the sun - a celebration of the life and energy it provides for us. Not only did this re-enacted ritual of worship give us an empirical experience of Egypt's ancient ceremonies, it clearly displayed the relationship between the Ancient Egyptians and their heavenly gods. This personal and moving experience created a deeper comprehension of this ancient life.

EAC/Safe Driver Training Feedback

Organised by parents from our Education Advisory Committee (EAC) and in conjunction with a unit taught during PSD classes, our Year 11 and 12 students have the opportunity of participating in a young driver training program. We received the following feedback from Joel Neilsen (Managing Director of Safe Drive Training www.sdt.com.au following last year’s session at Willowbank. (This year’s session will be held on 26 October).

Dear Wilma,
Thanks for your assistance to organise the students to attend our driver training program on Saturday. My instructors report that the Hillbrook students were an absolute pleasure to instruct, they asked me to write to pass on this testimonial as they greatly enjoyed working with these youth. My team said the students displayed impeccable manners, discipline and were all-round nice people. Please ensure staff at Hillbrook are made aware of how impressed we were.
And no (unfortunately) we don’t write to many schools with such glowing remarks. I trust the students enjoyed their day and let me know if any feedback is received.
Regards
Joel Neilsen
Managing Director

Hillbrook Crèche

Past and current Crèche families and staff reunited in March to celebrate the blessing and reopening of the new-look Hillbrook Crèche. Now accommodating 25 children, the Crèche continues to provide a warm, nurturing play-based learning environment for the children of staff and local families. Enquiries regarding vacancies are welcome and can be directed to Di Shannon (Director) on 3354 6424.
Oxfam and Shave for a Cure Joint Fundraiser

Students from Green Justice and 12 White combined efforts in a joint fund-raising venture for Oxfam and the Leukaemia Foundation. Green Justice hosted an Obstacle Course race and Free Dress day, with 12 White hosted a Shave for a Cure sausage sizzle. Special mention to Will Cook, Amy Dahl, Peter Dal Bon, Christian Hedemann, Dermot McNamara, Iain Russell and Mason Tierney, who went under the clippers and ‘Shaved for a Cure’. Just over $2550 was raised, to be shared between these two worthy charities.

Music Camp

This year’s Music Camp in March was once again a huge success with 70 students attending the Junior Camp and 75 attending the Senior camp at Brookfield.
Year 9 Global Studies

Recreating Industrial Revolution coal mines in the classroom? Some said it wasn’t possible, some even called us insane. However, with a combination of desks, blankets and heaters, students were able to experience the claustrophobic nightmare of cramped mine tunnels and horrific child labour.

Campus Redevelopment

The arrival of Year 7 students in 2015 has required planning on several levels, including curriculum for all year levels, staffing and our built environment. It is important that our expanded built environment continues to support teaching and learning, provides fresh and innovative student social spaces and harmonises with our surroundings and school culture. Planning and design work is ongoing with work in progress for several projects to be completed over the next two years. This image shows the new two-story building replacing B Block and incorporates four Year 7 classrooms and five new general classrooms (to replace those currently in B Block), an expanded quadrangle of seating terraces and new student amenities.

Swimming Carnival
I’m the new Biology/Science Teacher and have been teaching science for over 25 years at various schools in Queensland, Victoria and overseas. It is an exciting opportunity to be appointed to Hillbrook Anglican School for the next 12 months as I have heard many wonderful things from friends about the school and its ethos. I very much look forward to working with the staff and students during 2013.

Hi, I am the new I.T. Helpdesk Manager. I am a long-term Apple user and am very excited to be working at Hillbrook. I have previously worked selling Education Apple products, and I am looking forward to becoming part of the school community. If you need any Mac or general I.T. support please do not hesitate to call on me on 3354 6477.

I am delighted to be able to teach German at Hillbrook for this semester. I grew up in Hamburg, Germany and learned English and French as second languages. Teaching in different schools and educational systems, and across different subjects areas has always kept my professional life interesting and challenging. Learning a language has been a constant joy for me, and I look forward to sharing this with students here at Hillbrook.

I am very excited to be starting the year as the new Library Assistant at Hillbrook. Previously I spent a wonderful five years working at Mt Maria College as a Library Aide and also as a support staff for the Learning Enrichment Program. I have enjoyed getting to know the staff and students here and would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome.

As a past student I am very excited to rejoin the Hillbrook community. I graduated from the Qld Conservatorium of Music before completing my Post-Grad Education studies, and last year began work at St Andrew’s Anglican College at Peregian Springs as a woodwind Instrumental Music teacher. When I’m not teaching, rehearsing or performing, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and travelling.

To find out more or to be involved contact sustainabilityday@hillbrook.qld.edu.au
Past Connections

Anna Leikvold (Grad 09)
Anna, after battling ill health during her final year of high school completed a Bachelor of Exercise and Nutrition Science at UQ in December 2012. Anna has since been accepted into the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery program for 2013 at Deakin University in Geelong and is expected to graduate in 2016.

Talitha Ockey (Grad 05)
Talitha (nee Lawson) married Leigh in September 2012. They met at Griffith Film School and are now living in Sydney, having both successfully pursued careers working in the television industry.

Lauren Williamson (Grad 08)
Lauren was awarded a 10-day journalism internship to Vietnam. Lauren is travelling with 9 other UQ Journalism and Communication students who are reporting on a range of issues and events. You can see her work at http://vietnamreporter.com.au/category/reporters/lauren-williamson/

Dean De Bortoli (Grad 11)
Dean is studying a double degree in mathematics and physics at QUT. At the end of 2012 Dean was admitted to the Dean’s List of “Students With Excellent Academic Performance” (Dean’s GPA was 6.7).

Emma Drayson (Grad 05)
In 2008 Emma completed a Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Language and Culture at UQ, having also completed a 6-month student exchange in Jinan, China. During 2010 Emma worked as a Guide in the Australian Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo, remaining in China for a further 12 months working for a German HR company. This year Emma commenced a Bachelor of Midwifery at the University of Queensland.

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Staff Connections

Jodie Wilson – Jodie and Andrew (and proud Nanny, Del Edwards) are enjoying daughter Xanthe Maree born on 26 September 2012.

Steve Spence – Steve, Bec, Julian and Jensen welcomed their new son and brother, Jordan, born 18 Jan.

Nicole Moulds – Nicole and Lee celebrated the arrival of their first child, a son, Cooper Lee born on 19 March.

Ben Behan – Frankie Belle was born in Oct 2012, a daughter for Ben and Deb, and a beautiful little sister for Kalliope.

Claire Smith – Claire and Rob are enjoying parenthood, welcoming their first child, Harrison John, born on 4 March.

Nicole Moulds – Nicole and Lee celebrated the arrival of their first child, a son, Cooper Lee born on 19 March.

Ben Behan – Frankie Belle was born in Oct 2012, a daughter for Ben and Deb, and a beautiful little sister for Kalliope.

IMPORTANT DATES

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