



Westlake Boys High School
Te Kura Tuarua o Ngā Taitamatāne o Ururoto



*A Year in the Centre for
Excellence in Teaching
and Learning*



Introduction

I don't think I'll ever be able to start these introductions without saying that we've had yet another busy year in the Centre for Excellence because it's always busy in there!

The Centre is an inclusive space, dedicated to the professional learning and support of all our staff. On the day-to-day, it is the home of our trainee teachers, the heart of our PCT group mentoring programme, and the meeting place for numerous professional development programmes, focus groups and curriculum discussions.

At the end of last year, we took the time to reflect on the learning and support we were offering, seeking feedback from teachers who had been involved in professional development programmes. We always strive to adapt to the needs of our teachers and the shifting demands of boys' education in New Zealand. This year was no different. In this year's publication, you will be able to hear the voices of those people we have hopefully made a difference to. We pride ourselves on providing evidence-based educational support to our teachers in an empathetic and inclusive way.

As 2024 comes to a close and we look forward to the coming year, we are ready to expand our mentoring team, and embrace educational Action Research on a school level with both our teachers and students. On a recent visit to Wellington College, the NZ branch of the Research Invested Schools initiative was announced and Westlake Boys High School, and the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning specifically, will be a key member in this work. I look forward to sharing our research journey with you next year.

The Centre is here to support staff wherever they may be on their teaching journeys. If you have ideas to share or need help, please come in and speak with us.

We hope you enjoy 'The Twenty-Four.'

Jude, Kelly, Casey, Carla, and Becky.

Thank you to all of the people who have contributed to this year's Centre Publication. I very much look forward to working with you all again in 2025 and beyond. The Centre, and by association this publication, is all about the people – Jude Arbutnot, editor.

Megan Ashford, Ji Su Bae, Carla Boniolo, Casey de Wit, Zachary Easthope, Kelly Easton, James Ellis, David Ferguson, Jack Forsman, Helen Jorgensen, Ivy Li, Sonia Manson, Helena Moore, Becky O'Gram, Ruth Pearson, Andrew Ross-Thompson, Mikayla Scarlet, Isabella Sinnema, Albert Vaka, Robyn Visser, Ana Waters, Kun Yu.



Nurturing Our Young Leaders

While professional development has long been offered to our staff, I recognised that it was equally important to extend these opportunities to our young men.

The Prefect Professional Development programme is designed to foster not only leadership skills but also personal reflection and growth. As we guide our Prefects, we aim to equip them with the tools they need to lead with confidence and integrity, both within our school and in their future endeavours.

The programme takes place in The Centre for Excellence during extended Virtute periods, allowing us to dedicate roughly 35 minutes per session, four times each term, to this meaningful work. These sessions bring together members of our staff and the Board of Trustees to share their expertise and insights on various leadership topics. This diversity of perspectives helps our Prefects gain a well-rounded understanding of what it means to lead effectively.

Our sessions cover essential skills and areas of focus, including effective mentoring, cultural responsiveness, growth coaching, conflict resolution, presentation skills, diversity and inclusion, leadership styles, and leading successful teams. Each session is tailored to address both the practical aspects of leadership and the personal qualities that are vital for building strong relationships and fostering positive change.

It has been incredibly rewarding to witness the growth of our Prefects, not only as individual leaders but also as a supportive and cohesive group. Through their active participation in the programme, they have developed the ability to set and achieve personal goals, while also making valuable contributions to the broader school community. Whether they are mentoring younger students, leading school events, or taking on new responsibilities, our Prefects have shown a remarkable commitment to positive leadership.

As we look forward to another successful year, I am excited to continue building on the programme's successes. With each session, we aim to inspire our young leaders to reach their full potential, equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to make a positive impact on our school and beyond.

Casey de Wit

The Prefect's View

The Professional Leadership Development (PLD) programme this year provided a valuable and unique opportunity for Prefects to enhance leadership skills and personal growth, through a variety of workshops and discussions. In the sessions, topics such as effective communication, growth coaching, conflict resolution, time management and other key life skills, which were essential in helping develop ourselves as prefects. The sessions were also highly interactive. Group activities and discussions allowed us to collaborate with each other, helping us to build trust and stronger relationships.

One of the most interesting aspects of the programme was the focus on growth coaching, and developing methods to effectively interact and motivate peers or junior students alike to guide them to their personal goals and achievements. The skills instilled in us during this particular session provided an engaging and practical experience that allowed prefects to take these skills into real-world situations and scenarios that we may encounter, for example, through Prefect Mentoring, where the skills developed in the workshop can directly be applied.

A personal highlight of the PLD programme this year was the opportunity to meet and hear from key members of the school board, and to learn about them as people, their careers, and the impact they have on our school. Another highlight was the reflection of different leadership styles, and how they help to shape different types of leaders, and methods and factors that should be considered when working with a variety of different strengths within each person.

Overall, the Prefect PD programme was not just about developing leadership techniques but also about personal growth within the 2024 Prefect team. This experience has been instrumental in shaping my confidence and leadership identity, as well as providing the opportunity to learn alongside peers who are also committed to making a positive impact on the school community. The sessions helped us to foster our emotional intelligence, to have resilience, and be self aware, — key qualities that will benefit us beyond our prefect responsibilities.

Jack Forsman

Creating a Culture of Support

Helping New Teachers Thrive in All-Boys Education

Our staff continues to evolve and grow, this year we started with over twenty beginning teachers.

Our group mentoring programme is now well established and this year Jude Arbutnot, Kelly Easton and Casey de Wit continued this work. In term 3, while Jude covered Joe Cachopa's Auckland Secondary Schools Training Programme role while he was on sabbatical, we welcomed our Aspiring Senior Leadership Team (Natalie Marriott, Charlie Meredith, Carla Boniolo and Jim Davis) on to the mentoring team. This is a great opportunity to thank them for supporting our PCTs for the support they offered during that time.

Jeremy Richardson, Robyn Visser, Carla Owen, Francoise Grindlay, Sidah Russell, Isabella Sinnema, and Zac Easthope graduated from the PCT programme throughout the year. In addition Stefan Du Preez, Simon Tyndell, Estelle Adams, and Ashim Khan became fully registered new to New Zealand teachers.

Here are some reflections and thoughts from this year's cohort:

Sonia Manson

1st year teacher,
Social Studies

My experience as a PCT at Westlake Boys High School has been exactly what I've needed. Coming from the University of Otago, moving to

Auckland has been a massive life altering change, and the support I receive daily as a PCT cannot be undervalued. My mentors and colleagues have been there to listen to my struggles in the classroom, encourage me in the extra-curricular Performing Arts, and give advice so that I can grow in my practice. Having people who are so willing to help is part of the Westlake experience; you're never left to cope on your own.

One of the biggest surprises I've had as a first-year teacher is the workload. You expect that the job will be difficult, emotionally draining at times, and time consuming, but I truly did not anticipate how much of myself I would be putting into this year. In the second week of term 1, I was approached to be involved in the Production process as an Associate Director of "The Three Musketeers" after my extra-curricular sheet was passed on to the Head of Drama. Had I not said yes to this opportunity, maybe my life would have been less busy, but it would not have held the value that it does now. Being involved in such a large scale extra-curricular event has opened doors to friendships, connections with students from both the boys' and girls' school, and allowed me to pursue my passion of directing. While I find myself tired often, seeing the joy that my students experience on stage is worth every hour put in.



Albert Vaka

1st year teacher,
Social Studies

As a first year provisionally certified teacher at Westlake Boys High School, my experience has been fantastic, though I have to admit, the biggest surprise has been just how tired I feel at the end of each day. I knew teaching would be busy, but I didn't expect the constant juggling act of lesson planning, marking, and prepping resources—especially after hours. It's like my teaching day has a whole bonus round I wasn't aware of!

One of the biggest challenges has been balancing the workload without running on empty. The first term was a steep learning curve, but with some strategic planning, better time management, and a lot of support from my mentor, I've found ways to stay on top of things (and still occasionally get some sleep). Coffee has truly been a good friend this year!

My mentor has been incredible—offering feedback, practical advice, and reminding me to not overthink everything. I've also been lucky to work with such welcoming colleagues who've shared ideas and resources, making me feel like part of a supportive team. I see how hard they all work as teachers each day for their students, and it goes a long way to motivating me to strive to be the best teacher that I can be. A work in progress, is how I like to view myself now.



Zachary Easthope

2nd year teacher, Social Studies

The biggest surprise as a beginning teacher has been how unpredictable the role is. No two days are ever the same; you quickly learn how flexibility and adaptability are crucial skills to possess. Classroom management has been the biggest challenge since joining Westlake this year, trying to find the right balance between being both approachable and assertive. Building strong relationships with the students allows for positive connections to be made while establishing clear expectations. I've tried to connect with students both inside and out of the classroom taking an interest in their extracurricular involvements as well as their academic progress.

I've been fortunate to have Jude as my mentor this year who has been a constant source of guidance and support, she has made my time at Westlake much easier to navigate. The Social Studies department has also been invaluable being a great network of

sharing resources and advice. They do an excellent job of making you feel welcomed and included in the school community.

Teaching often provides lots of enjoyment, but seeing the students engage with content, knowing you've contributed to them finding new interests or helping them grasp difficult concepts is one of the most rewarding aspects of our role.

Next year, I'd like to continue refining my skills inside the classroom, working to create a positive and inclusive environment for our diverse range of learners. Outside of the classroom, I aim to deepen the connections made with the wider school community engaging with colleagues from different departments and parents to foster stronger senses of community and support for the student.



Isabella Sinnema

2nd year teacher, History and Sociology

My biggest surprise as a beginning teacher has been the level of support and professional development offered. I would encourage any beginning teacher to ask thoughtful questions and engage in every opportunity offered, even if you don't find it relevant at the time. You never know when it may be useful.

Having been at an all-girls school last year as a PCT1 and moving to Westlake as a PCT2, I had to adapt some of my teaching practices to better fit the rangatahi in front of me. I also had to adapt to a whole new working environment. I overcame problems by leaning on my colleagues for support and advice and by also asking lots of questions about the processes at Westlake. Their advice has been invaluable throughout the year.

I have enjoyed many things about teaching here at Westlake. One of the things I have enjoyed the most has been the way my students always find a way to make me laugh and keep me on my toes. I have become a better teacher having to constantly adapt to what they throw at me each lesson.

I have taken the time to learn about them throughout the year, not just in the first week of Term 1. I ask questions about what things take up their spare time and most importantly, listen to their answers. I have shared about myself as a person, and a professional. The boys at Westlake thrive on knowing just enough about you to find things in common and it gives you a rewarding foundation for further relationship development.

One of my biggest goals for next year is to more effectively support my students with diverse learning needs within a larger class environment. I look forward to the challenge of further developing my teaching practice to further enhance the successes of all my students.



Helena Moore

1st year teacher, English

As a beginning teacher, one of the biggest surprises has been the incredible amount of planning and flexibility required to meet the diverse needs of students. Although I expected to spend time preparing lessons, I hadn't anticipated just how much adaptation is necessary on a daily basis to cater to different learning styles, student backgrounds, and abilities.

One of the biggest challenges has been managing the balance between teaching, admin, and my personal life. To overcome this, I've established clear boundaries between the two and I receive guidance from my colleagues on how to prioritise all the things on my to-do list. Their advice has helped me prioritise tasks and focus on what truly benefits my students. I have tried to minimise working at home in the evenings or over the weekend as much as possible, only doing so when it is truly necessary (i.e. exam marking).

My relationship with my mentors has been incredibly valuable. They've provided ongoing support, offered constructive feedback on my teaching practice and helped me navigate the emotional demands of the profession. The collaborative and welcoming culture in my department has also been a significant source of encouragement.

The most enjoyable part of teaching has been building relationships with my students. Through consistent communication, fostering a positive classroom environment, and taking a genuine interest in their well-being, I've seen students open up and engage more deeply in their learning. Helping students to believe in themselves is my favourite part of my role.

Looking ahead, my goal for next year is to refine my classroom management strategies and further develop differentiated teaching techniques to ensure all students succeed.





Empower. Inspire. Lead.

Professional Development for Aspiring Leaders

This year Kelly and Jude have been sharing the benefits and outcomes of our well established Aspiring Middle Leadership programme to boys' schools in the International Boys School Coalition at Harrow School and Wellington College.

We strongly believe that supporting middle leaders can be the key to a successful school, and while it has been great to spread the word, we have continued to live and breathe our philosophy with this year's cohort: Alexa Jelich, Kun Yu, Robyn Visser, Ji Su Bae, Mikayla Scarlet and Boran Alkhudairi. We also welcomed Helen Jorgensen to the presentation team with Casey, Becky, Kelly and Jude. This year's group were incredibly reflective and bonded so well and it was a privilege to witness their leadership journeys.

Here they share their reflections on the programme:

Integrity is Infectious

"The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office." – Dwight D. Eisenhower



Integrity became my north star during MLP. I felt that integrity encompasses all three of the taxonomy of virtues: leadership, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. My inquiry became 'how do I define leadership in my new 'role' while also supporting and leading my art colleagues who are all at different stages in their careers?'

I am a natural leader who finds joy in bringing people together and craves connection. My focus shifted from climbing the career ladder to being the best version of myself and how MLP could elevate me and co-create the best programme for our boys. It always comes back to the boys for me – to be the best kaiako I can, means I need to take these opportunities.

My main takeaways from this journey:

- **Natalie's coaching:** Small goals are essential, building something great brick by brick.
- **Andrea's mentoring:** Creating your own department and fostering collaboration leads to success.
- **Jude:** View it as a collective effort, growing your team benefits students.

I feel like I'm on my way to completing the first part of my inquiry while also supporting and leading my art colleagues at different career stages. Here's my plan to implement and action:

1. Understand each colleague's strengths, challenges, and career aspirations.
2. Promote collaborative projects to facilitate learning from each other.
3. Pair less experienced teachers with seasoned ones for mentorship.
4. Create a safe environment for trying new methods without fear of judgement.
5. Provide constructive feedback that encourages growth.
6. Maintain an open-door policy for colleagues to share thoughts and concerns.
7. Stay open to new ideas and be flexible in my leadership approach.
8. Lead by example: Show dedication to the team's success and the art department.

My personal ethos is at the centre of everything I do: "Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching."

Alexa Jelich

Collaborative Leading

I initially enrolled in the Aspiring Middle Leadership programme feeling uncertain about my leadership potential. I was eager to explore new avenues for growth and development, and this programme seemed like the perfect opportunity. I was curious to learn from experienced educators and to connect with like-minded colleagues who shared a similar aspiration.

The collaborative learning environment is one of the most rewarding aspects of this programme. It's been inspiring to be surrounded by passionate educators striving to become effective middle leaders. Our discussions and shared experiences have fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual support.

As an introvert, I often prefer to stay within my comfort zone. However, this programme has pushed me to challenge myself and embrace new experiences. Through mentoring, shadowing, and observation, I've had the chance to broaden my perspectives and gain valuable insights into leadership practices. The Open to Learning Conversations have also provided a platform for thoughtful reflection and critical thinking.

This programme has been instrumental in helping me reflect on my leadership strengths and weaknesses. I've gained a deeper understanding of effective leaders' qualities and skills. I'm better equipped to develop a personalised leadership growth plan by identifying improvement areas. I'm excited to apply the knowledge and skills I've acquired to impact my school community positively.

Kun Yu

Bridging the Compassion Gap

For my leadership inquiry, I completed a self-reflection task and looked at my own leadership journey in a non-traditional or formal leadership role.

I started my presentation with explaining how I was not traditionally experienced in leadership and have not always sought out leadership opportunities. However, I identified key personal qualities that I believed would help me thrive in such a role, such as kindness, compassion, and a strong work ethic.

Early in the Aspiring Middle Leadership programme, I recognised "self-flagellation" as a vice, and I reflected on a tendency to be hard on myself. I set a goal to bridge the gap between the compassion I offer others and my own self-compassion.

Supporting new teachers in my department has been a significant aspect of this journey. Drawing from my own experience as a newcomer, I've offered resources, classroom management strategies, and regular check-ins. This mentorship has not only aided new teachers but has also allowed me to look back on my journey with empathy.

Through this, I have gained confidence, realising that mistakes are learning moments, not indicators of failure. By focusing on kindness toward myself and others, I am building the resilience and confidence to lead effectively, both formally and informally.

Robyn Visser



Preparing for the Future

I applied to be in the Aspiring Middle Leadership course because I wanted to prepare myself for future leadership and become a better leader in the classroom. It was a little daunting at first, but I grew to enjoy the discussions and met some new people along the way.

From the course, I learned the value of volunteering to help others as a way to learn about different roles within the school community, as well as the importance of seeking guidance from other leaders. I practised asking thoughtful questions and listening to the leaders around me. This process of engaging with mentors and reflecting on my assumptions has deepened my understanding of leadership as a journey.

Another thing I learned was the value of investing in the people around me. I discovered that true leadership isn't about doing it all alone—it's about building relationships, offering support, and seeking connections that help everyone grow. With these new insights and skills, I feel more prepared than ever to take on future challenges.

Mikayla Scarlet

Better Leader, Better Person

The Middle Leadership Programme has been a valuable experience that helped me to encounter the leader I am, and to find the leadership within my identity as a teacher. Through the exposure and experience of diverse leadership around the school and the fruitful discussions amongst other teachers who shared their knowledge, I feel like I have grown to become not just a better leader, but also a better person at the end of this programme.

It was a great experience to be able to encounter the thoughts of other participating teachers who had come from various backgrounds and experiences. The discussions helped me to understand the diverse forms and faces of leadership which become reflective of who we are and our values, therefore learning how to lead and collaborate with other teachers in harmony, was an inspiring experience. Learning new methods of leadership has truly expanded my boundaries in the way we communicate and work in this school environment. The experience has made me more confident, yet more humble as I encountered various experiences and perspectives from other teachers. The Middle Leadership Programme has helped me to begin my leadership journey. It has helped me to think critically about how leadership could be presented positively, providing me with an inquiry and direction to explore further.

This programme is an amazing opportunity, not just for teachers wanting to take on leadership roles but also for teachers who wish to advance their experiences and knowledge of leadership. I am truly grateful to the leaders in the Centre for Excellence for providing this opportunity of development.

Ji Su Bae



Celebrate Language

with Thursday Mornings of Te Reo Māori Learning



Tēnā koutou katoa. He uri o Ngāti
Kahungunu rāua ko Ngāti Porou ahau.
Ko Ruth Pearson tōku ingoa.

I have been so privileged to hold a Within School Lead COL Position this year, with my focus being on developing staff confidence in using Te Reo Māori in the Classroom and beyond. To work towards this goal, I have hosted fortnightly Te Reo Māori workshops in the Centre for Excellence, which has had fantastic attendance.

Each week has seen a different focus, including issuing basic instructions, asking and responding to how someone is and talking about action. My personal highlight was where we focused on ordering coffee in te reo Māori and concluded the workshop with a hikoi down to our beautiful Ururoto Kawhe to practise what we had learned.

I wanted to make sure the workshops were practical and accessible to teaching and non-teaching staff, supported by digital resources on our Staff Team. Hopefully, our staff have now added to their kete with knowledge on how to:

- Ask and respond to the question 'Kei te pēhea koe?'
- Introduce themselves in te reo Māori
- Use small and large numbers

- Describe their whānau
- Describe action
- Order coffee
- Issue basic commands in the classroom/at home
- Form present tense sentences

I also hope they have added to their kete matauranga with new kupu, kiwaha and whakatauki which can be applied to a variety of contexts.

In addition to our focus on the language, the workshops sought to highlight the cultural significance of te reo Māori and foster a deeper understanding of its role in forming Aotearoa's identity. My hopes for the workshops in the future are that we will continue to develop our confidence in using the language and share experiences and successes in using te reo.

It was lovely to meet regularly and korero Māori; learning at each other's sides and supporting one another in our language learning journey. It has been wonderful to witness the supportive community we've grown dedicated to language revitalisation and empowering both ourselves and our ākonga through using more of our indigenous language. I look forward to continuing to see the growth of the use of and confidence in using Te Reo Māori at our beautiful kura.

Karawhiua!

Ruth Pearson

All the Pink

Westlake Staff came together on Friday 7th June, as the team from the Centre for Excellence hosted a Pink Ribbon Morning Tea.

We raised \$1589 on behalf of the Breast Cancer Foundation, to enable them to support research programmes, promote awareness and education for women with breast cancer in New Zealand. Our incredibly generous staff exceeded last year's fundraising total with online and cash donations. It was a lovely event to bring our school community together. A special thank you to David and the Board of Trustees for supporting our annual fundraiser and to Toasted Espresso, for their beautiful pink-themed cupcakes and coffee.





IBSC Conference

Tradition, Leadership and Innovation

The 2024 IBSC Annual Conference was hosted by Harrow School in Harrow on the Hill, London, United Kingdom, July 1-4. There, we explored the theme of Tradition, Leadership, Innovation.

The conference's aim was to motivate boys' educators to develop men for an uncertain future, encouraging boys to feel connected and engaged in their learning and with their community through leading lives of service and leadership.

The conference focused on the ways boys can contribute positively to social and environmental change in an ever-evolving, globalised world. The best schools reflect on their rituals and traditions while refining practices to ensure boys are real-world ready. The IBSC and all its member schools strongly believe that together we can positively impact boys' education and develop connectedness and leadership in each student. This year, Westlake sent a group of five teachers to represent the school. Here are their reflections and experiences.

The chance to gather with boys' school colleagues from all over the world was an amazing experience again, particularly off the back of hosting the annual conference at Westlake in 2023. Harrow School was an impressive place with so much history and they put on a great show. I felt proud to be appointed as Chair of the IBSC at the Harrow conference and I am sad that I won't be able to carry out this role with my new position that I begin next year. The IBSC community is a special one and it is terrific that we have an organisation that advocates for boys and boys' schools globally. Westlake plays an important role in the IBSC landscape and long may that continue.

David Ferguson

After completing my Action Research training, I had the incredible opportunity to attend the IBSC conference at Harrow on the Hill. The conference was a remarkable experience, filled with insightful sessions and captivating speakers. The keynote speakers were particularly entertaining, engaging, and refreshing, offering a blend of reminders and new ideas about teaching boys. Among them, Jaz Ampaw-Farr, Paul Brunson and Nigel Owens stood out as my favourites. Their talks were not only informative but also deeply personal. The workshops provided a fantastic chance to explore the exquisite grounds of Harrow on the Hill and meet new people from all around the world; what a wonderful way to network and share experiences with fellow educators. The diversity of perspectives and the collaborative atmosphere made the week truly enriching.

The IBSC gathering at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, exclusively for IBSC delegates, was such a phenomenal way to spend the last evening of the conference, walking through the gallery and appreciating the unobstructed masterpieces, in such an intimate setting, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will cherish forever. I am immensely grateful to David and Westlake for supporting me with this incredible opportunity. Visiting such a prestigious school and participating in this esteemed conference has been a significant milestone in my professional journey. The insights gained, the connections made, and the experiences shared have all contributed to my growth as an educator. This conference has not only broadened my understanding of teaching boys but also inspired me to implement new strategies and ideas in my own practice. I look forward to applying the knowledge and insights gained from this conference to enhance my teaching and make a positive impact on my students

Helen Jorgensen



Attending the IBSC conference as an outgoing Action Researcher was a true career highlight. After working on my Action Research report for 12 months, it felt surreal to actually present it to a crowd of international colleagues. My research centred on the Year 10 and 11 boys in my debating squad, and I investigated how the implementation of teamwork drills would affect their social connectedness. My findings highlighted the importance of friendship for adolescent boys and my presentation centred on how, as educators of boys, we are in a unique position to create opportunities for boys to form genuine friendships with their peers. I referenced Niobe Way's (2013) concept of 'relational literacy' throughout my presentation and emphasised how boys need to be explicitly taught how to relate to their peers.

After toiling on my report and presentation for so long, I was proud to present my findings and hoped that I was able to inspire other educators to think more critically about how we encourage our boys to foster friendships with their peers. At the close of the conference, I found out that my report was highlighted by the IBSC as being in the top 8 of all reports produced globally by my cohort. This was a very proud moment, and it was a wonderful way to cap off an incredible experience.

A true highlight of the conference was getting to see my group again (after meeting at the 2023 conference). Our group was made up of teachers from all corners of the globe and we developed a special bond over the course of the Action Research project. Although working individually on our projects, we kept in touch via Whatsapp and Zoom throughout the process. I cherish the connections that I made with my group members and am so grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Action Research experience.

Carla Boniolo



I had the incredible opportunity to attend the International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) Conference in Harrow, London. This experience was both enriching and inspiring; not only did I attend engaging Keynote Presentations and Workshops, but I also had the privilege of presenting a Workshop with Jude, allowing us to share our work in the Centre for Excellence, with colleagues from around the globe.

A personal highlight of the conference was listening to the keynote speeches, which focused on the transformative power of personal storytelling. Each speaker shared their unique journey, illustrating the impact that storytelling can have on education. I found myself reflecting on the importance of incorporating narratives into our teaching practices and the PD that we deliver. These stories not only resonate with students and teachers alike, but also create a deeper connection within our school and wider communities.

Another rewarding aspect of the Conference was the opportunity to network with educators from boys' schools around the world. I had meaningful conversations about best practices, biases we face, and innovative strategies we are implementing in our schools. These interactions reminded me of the global community we are a part of and the shared mission we have in educating young men.

Presenting a Workshop was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating. Jude and I shared our model of Professional Development of Aspiring Middle Leaders aiming to convey strategies that have worked well at Westlake, with the aim of inspiring other schools with our model and applying in their context. Preparing for the workshop pushed us to consider how best to engage our audience and reflect on the work that we do in the Centre for Excellence. The feedback and discussions that followed our session were positive and insightful, proving that collaboration among educators can lead to shared solutions for common challenges.

My time at the IBSC Conference reminded me of the power of connection – both among educators and with our students. I encourage my fellow teachers and students to seek out opportunities for growth and engagement, whether through conferences, workshops, or collaborative projects.

Kelly Easton



To travel to the UK with a group of trusted colleagues to such a prestigious school and be able to connect with so many likeminded educators of boys is an experience I will not forget. Presenting with Kelly was a personal highlight of mine, and I am so grateful that David came to support us in the workshop. I was very proud to be representing the Centre for Excellence and Westlake Boys High School.

I chose the workshops I attended with my own interests at heart, with a clear focus on leadership, school values and educational research. I was left thinking about the importance of educational leadership where everything can be challenged (which makes it difficult) but also needs to be challenged (to make it worthwhile). In a world that is fast becoming very inward looking, it is the role of leadership in education to encourage teachers and students to look more outward. and being role models and having enduring values are key to this. I take these lessons into my new role as Assistant Principal.

I returned to Westlake full of ideas and inspiration. Supporting Action Research for the staff AND the boys is top of my agenda for the year ahead. As an organisation, the IBSC obviously has the teaching and learning of boys at the forefront, but it also prioritises the learning of the teachers of boys. It was wonderful to catch up with IBSC colleagues from 2023 and those who I have worked with in an online space. I look forward to continuing to develop these relationships, and those created at this conference beyond 2024.

Jude Arbuthnot





Boys and Belonging

Facilitating Inclusivity, Diversity and Belonging



When Westlake hosted the 2023 IBSC conference, I was in awe of the calibre of workshops, networking and professional ideas, particularly the concept of Action Research.

The idea that you can meet and support colleagues across the globe, embarking on a journey together seemed, to me, like a very special exercise.

I applied for the 2024-2025 Action Research cohort based on the above topic. I was drawn to this as I have a Pasifika virtute class and whilst I love working with these boys in the mornings, tracking their academic progress and celebrating their achievements, unless “forced” to it seemed like they were unenthused to just chat with each other, and me. It had me wondering whether this was a result of a lack of connectedness or sense of belonging in the class.

I applied and got accepted as one of 44 researchers from across the globe, and we embarked on this 18-month journey together. I was assigned Bryan Dunn as my advisor, whilst the rest of my team included educators from Australia, South Africa, The United States, United Kingdom and Wellington.

The Action Research process started with getting acquainted with the concept ‘what really is Action Research?’ by reading the set text *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher* (Mills, 2018), participating in online modules and online meetings with the team. As the IBSC conference started to draw closer, there were plenty of nerves and excitement for what was to come. I attended the IBSC Action Research training days from the 29th of June – 1st July, ahead of the IBSC conference at Harrow on the Hill, London, UK. The three days were busy and at times overwhelming but the IBSC team and fellow researchers, both incoming and outgoing, were all so positive and supportive you couldn’t help but feel inspired and ready to take on this new challenge.

Going into the training I knew I wanted to work with my Pacific VTPI class but defining the action proved to be a difficult concept for me at first. After many discussions with Bryan, my AR team and my supportive Westlake colleagues Carla, Jude and Kelly, who were present at the conference also, I decided to focus my research on the idea of a student-led, culturally based project that I hope will improve a sense of belonging and engagement, terminology that previous research defines as connectedness. I encouraged my Pasifika class to sort themselves into small groups and devise a lesson or project, based on Pacific identities. The action took place over 5-6 weeks in Term 3 and during this



time the boys started to plan various ideas such as podcasts, demonstrations and student lessons based on Pacific songs, language, food, and history. Literature suggests that participation, positive relationships and cultural respect encourages Pasifika boys' interest and engagement and therefore, I hope, an overall improved sense of belonging.

Some interesting things I have noticed already were that the boys were very kind in participating in this "project" which supports the notion that teacher student relationships are a key driver in everything we do in our practice. I have always been a strong advocate for the importance of establishing respectful reciprocal relationships. The importance of Ako and Tuākana-tēina with students was also emerging. Some boys have started to come out of their shell and converse with the more confident leaders in the class. It was surprising to me that some boys felt ashamed that if they can't speak the language that this was seen as "plastic", an expression they use amongst themselves. This was an interesting reminder that some boys don't feel as confident about their Pacific identity as others and therefore this could be affecting their feelings of belonging in the class. By implementing this student-led project, the boys can collaborate in a safe space where asking questions about their culture is okay. This ultimately encourages a sense of connectedness and engagement in the classroom.

I am now in the process of finalising my action. I have started collecting data based on student observations, interviews and surveys. The boys will present their project or lesson to younger boys in Term 4, and from here they will complete a final reflective survey and interview with me. I am looking for common trends and hope to draw some conclusions about how boys' feelings of belonging and connectedness may have improved. My research has the potential to encourage teachers who work with boys who they are finding difficult to engage. It also has the possibility of continuation in the Pasifika Virtute space as we adopt a regular collaborative approach to their mornings, facilitating inclusivity and connectedness.

Once finalised, I will be looking forward to presenting my findings to staff at Westlake and at the 2025 IBSC conference in Boston. I am proud of what I have achieved to date, and I am grateful to Carla, Conor and Jude who have provided crucial advice and support, thank you. Whilst it can be challenging at times, I feel the skills, collaboration and professional development is an amazing opportunity and would highly recommend it. I know there will be more questions to come but being part of the 2024-2025 Action Research cohort is such a rewarding experience.

Helen Jorgensen

Shared Learning NZ

Educators Gather for Action Research Insights



On the 8th of November, our school had the pleasure of hosting a highly successful Professional Development day focused on Action Research.

This event brought together the New Zealand based IBSC Action Research team who include teachers from Southland Boys, Wellington College, Sacred Heart, and Kings Prep, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and experiences.

The day was full of insightful discussions where colleagues shared their ongoing action research projects. This collaborative environment allowed for the exchange of valuable feedback and innovative ideas, setting a positive tone for the rest of the day.

A highlight of the morning session was the inspiring presentations by Carla and Conor, both graduates of the International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) Action Research programme. They shared their personal journeys, offering

practical advice and encouragement to those new to the process. Their stories not only provided inspiration but also helped to alleviate any apprehensions about undertaking the next steps in our Action Research.

We were also honoured to have Susan Hassall join us during lunch. Her visit was a delightful surprise, and she captivated everyone with her engaging stories on leadership. Her insights added a unique dimension to the day, leaving a lasting impression on all attendees.

The afternoon was dedicated to deeper collaboration. Participants engaged in sharing literature, discussing data collection methods, and brainstorming ideas for future research. This session was particularly productive, as it allowed for the synthesis of diverse perspectives and the development of robust research strategies. The day concluded with an enthusiastic discussion about the upcoming IBSC conference in Boston 2025, where all the attendees will be presenting their findings.

Helen Jorgensen

Women in Senior Leadership

Early this year, Becky O'Gram, Associate Principal, participated in the IBSC Webinar on Women in Senior Leadership as one of three women panelists from boys' schools around the world, joined by a facilitator.

Women working in boys' schools globally tuned in live or watched the recording as they explored the impact of gender on leadership paths and experiences within these environments. Despite the geographical diversity, the panelists shared strikingly similar experiences.

The discussion touched on the expectation for women in leadership to balance both work and home responsibilities and "have it all," highlighting shared experiences of persistence and resilience in facing biases. Encouragingly, while men have traditionally dominated leadership roles in boys' schools, there is a noticeable shift toward greater gender balance, with more women taking on these roles. This provides a more well-rounded

approach for leading boys' schools. A common thread among the panelists was the importance and responsibility of mentors and champions, especially in minority spaces.

These leaders discussed working in male-dominated environments and emphasised the value of emotional intelligence, confidence, and adaptability. The panel encouraged women in boys' schools to be open to taking risks and pursuing growth opportunities, even if they feel uncertain of their readiness. They highlighted the importance of building networks and developing expertise to establish credibility and open pathways to leadership.

The conversation underscored the vital role female leaders play in boys' schools, not only in shaping school culture but also in preparing young men for an inclusive world. Their resilience, dedication, and vision are paving the way for greater diversity and strength in boys' education.





Book Club

Fostering Community Collaboration and Curiosity Among Staff

Now in its second year, our Book Club has continued to flourish, bringing together an enthusiastic group of 55 staff members from a variety of faculties.

What started as a modest initiative has grown into a vibrant community of educators who share a passion for exploring texts that delve into themes of education, often with a particular focus on single-sex education.

With such a wide range of perspectives, each gathering provides a unique opportunity for staff members to exchange ideas, share insights, and deepen their understanding of issues that impact our teaching practices.

The Book Club aims to read at least two texts each year, with meetings held at the end of each reading period to discuss, share, and inquire into specific ideas. These gatherings have become a valued space where staff members can reflect on their reading, exchange best practices, and develop new approaches. This year, we have expanded our range of materials, incorporating both physical books and audio content, such as podcasts. This mix of media has added an exciting dimension to our discussions, catering to different learning preferences and enabling us to explore diverse perspectives on education.

Our reading list has been both varied and thought-provoking. We began the year with *Boys do Cry* and *Boys Don't Try* by Matt Pinkett, which sparked lively discussions about the unique challenges boys face in education and the misconceptions surrounding boys' emotional development. These texts offered valuable insights into how we can better support our students' emotional and academic growth, challenging some of the common stereotypes about boys and education. More recently, we explored *Humans Who Teach* by Shamari Reid, a book that celebrates the human side of teaching and reminds us of the profound impact educators have on their students. This title provided a fresh perspective on what it means to be an educator, inspiring us to consider the deep connections we form with our students and the importance of being mindful, empathetic, and supportive in our roles.

In addition to books, we've delved into several impactful podcasts, such as *Exploring Boys' Education* featuring Susan Hassall, which discussed how to nurture boys to become the men the world needs. We also listened to episodes from *Education Research Reading Room (ERRR)* with Oliver Lovell, which explored explicit instruction and virtuous educational leadership. Other podcasts included *Cult of Pedagogy*, *Model Everything*, and *The Happiness Lab*, which offered diverse perspectives on behavior management, teaching strategies, and fostering resilience in students.

Our Book Club discussions have led to the creation of new resources, opportunities for classroom observations, and a renewed focus on sharing best practices. These sessions foster a collaborative environment, allowing us to learn from one another, improve our teaching, and ultimately benefit our students. We look forward to further growth in our Book Club, as each session not only strengthens our professional community but also rekindles a joy for reading and lifelong learning.

As we continue to explore texts that challenge our thinking and inspire new ideas, we remain committed to creating a space where educators can come together to share, learn, and grow. Through our collective inquiry and commitment to best practices, we are building a stronger, more supportive community of educators, dedicated to making a positive impact in our school.



Another Year of Success for our Trainee Teachers

The Auckland Secondary Schools Teacher Training Programme has continued to help us grow new teachers at Westlake Boys High School this year.

With an intake of nine at the start of the year, and two in the new mid-year intake, we had a range of trainee teachers across the curriculum with a wealth of experience from many other industries. Joe Cachopa has continued to be the Auckland wide co-ordinator of this programme, alongside the amazing Rebecca Kay-Clarke from Northcote College. The trainees across Auckland, and within Westlake, have been very fortunate to have their support and expertise throughout the year.

Throughout the year The Centre for Excellence has continued to support the Auckland wide programme by providing professional development days for mentors at the start and end of the year. For the fourth year in a row, we were also very happy to host a workshop day on Inclusive Education for all 104 trainee teachers.

Next year, Westlake Boys High School will also be a partner school for the Teachers' Institute. 2025 will see the launch of this new school-based initial teacher education (ITE) programme in partnership with 15 secondary schools in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Like the ASSTP, this postgraduate programme will enable teacher trainees to gain teacher registration in a year, while being based day-to-day in one of the schools in the Teachers' Institute community.

We look forward to welcoming and working with trainees in both programmes next year at Westlake Boys High School in the curriculum areas of Maths, Digital Technology, Music, and Commerce.

On the following pages are reflections of some of the class of 2024. Their words really share the strengths of these school-based training programmes and express the benefits of connecting with the students, staff, and values of the school from day one of the year.



Megan Ashford

Trainee in Science and Maths

My biggest surprise as a trainee teacher is how quickly you grow. Each day has brought challenges and the constant need to adapt which has forced me to develop very quickly. Confidence began as a challenge for me, but being surrounded by supportive mentors and the other student teachers has helped me greatly.

I'm very lucky to have a great relationship with my mentors and colleagues across the school. Working with positive and encouraging staff within my departments has been a huge part of what I've enjoyed throughout this programme, and I've never felt like an outsider as a trainee teacher, instead included and welcomed from the beginning.

A key part of the programme I've enjoyed has been designing resources and being able to implement the learning I've done through university. Despite the challenges of learning on the job, I've been able to 'find my style' and being a LAT (Limited Authority to Teach) responsible for my own classes, I've also been able to develop strong relationships with students.

Moving forward, my focus remains on creating an enjoyable learning environment to support each student to achieve their goals. The workshop days provided useful practical strategies to apply theories we have explored through the university and implement into our classroom practice. I enjoyed the Universal Design for Learning and Assessment for Learning workshops in particular, with the skills I learnt since becoming a key part of my teaching practice.



James Ellis

Trainee in Science

I decided to leave a job in Civil Engineering and become a teacher because I wanted purpose and drive in my life. I wanted to help others and feel as though I was contributing to society.

The aspect of teaching I have enjoyed the most is building relationships with my students. It has been amazing to see them learn and develop this year, inside and outside the classroom. I have enjoyed the extra-curricular activities, specifically coaching the school's 2nd XI cricket team.

I wouldn't have been able to progress as a teacher without my mentor teacher, Rain Kim. He has been incredibly supportive and patient, teaching me behaviour management skills and assisting greatly with my general development. The relationships formed with my fellow trainee teachers have been one of the best aspects of this course. We are all going through the same process and facing similar challenges, this created an awesome bond and built relationships that will last for many years.



Ivy Li

Trainee in Maths

Joining the ASTT programme this year is one of the best choices I made last year. I enjoy teaching but the biggest challenge for me is classroom management, especially in junior classes. I came from a very different background: a co-ed school, and the relationships between students and teachers here are quite different. I found it hard to set rules for the class and maintain the standard while not making it too harsh or loose. Luckily, there are mentors, experienced teachers and various professional workshops to support me in this programme.

The workshops in this programme provide hands-on tips and strategies to solve my problems in the class. I also read books about classroom management such as "Running the Room" and learnt skills from academic literature. I gradually built a resourceful teaching kit of managing the classroom over the first three terms from a variety of resources thanks to this programme. Although I still need to have more practice of the skills I learnt, it is my privilege to have an immersive experience in this programme.



Sun Kim

Trainee in Languages and ESOL

The biggest surprise for me was how kind and supportive all the school staff were. From day one, I felt like a valued member of the school community, and everyone was eager to help and care for us by providing opportunities to learn as a teacher trainee.

One of the biggest challenges for me as a trainee teacher was how much information I had to take in about both the school system and university studies simultaneously. I reviewed everything several times and didn't hesitate to ask my mentors any questions that popped up. Their support really helped me navigate these challenges and gain confidence.

I have built great relationships with my mentors during this programme. I feel lucky to have such supportive, experienced, and passionate support. I have always felt comfortable asking questions about teaching and learning, and they have encouraged me to explore and grow as a trainee teacher in many ways.

What I enjoy most about teaching is being a crucial part of my students' learning journeys. It's really fulfilling to help them discover their strengths and potential, not just in terms of the subject matter. Watching them grow and change positively through interactions makes me feel like I'm making a real difference in their lives.



Ana Waters

Trainee in Commerce

When I made the decision to become a teacher, I was both excited and apprehensive. As a career changer in my late 40s the thought of going back to university was daunting. However, being a part of the ASSTP has been an amazing experience and one that I have really enjoyed.

Being a part of the ASSTP has allowed me to be fully immersed in the teaching experience, which means I feel a lot more prepared for when I am teaching in my own classroom next year. It has also given me the support I have needed to succeed in my studies at university. It has been great to talk to other participants about their challenges and know that I am not alone.

The ASSTP workshops are fantastic. It is a great opportunity to see how other schools operate and I have enjoyed listening to other teachers present their ideas. I always try to take away at least one key learning from the workshops and implement it into my lesson plans for classes. The workshops have also reinforced the importance of trying new things and that, as a teacher, we need to be flexible and adapt according to how well our students are responding to the learning in class.



Uniting Minds

Shaping Futures

Wellington College Research Centre

– October 25th, 2024

This conference brought together educators from around New Zealand to share innovative ideas and initiatives that enrich the learning experiences and lives of ākonga in our schools. The eight workshops were originally presented at the International Boys' Schools Coalition Annual Conference in London, and this allowed these ideas to be shared with a wider audience in Aotearoa.

Keynote speaker Chris Lendrum, General Manager of Professional Rugby at New Zealand Rugby, gave the keynote address. Chris who is an 'old boy' of Wellington College, shared insights about organisational vision and values, building strategy and why it is necessary, and building teams that are aligned and composed of the 'right' people.

Kelly Easton and Jude Arbuthnot were delighted to be invited to share their workshop 'Leading from the Middle' at the conference.



Their presentation about the Aspiring Middle Leadership Programme that runs in the Centre for Excellence was well received, with many other schools thinking about how they can develop and support their leaders.

For the remaining workshops, Kelly and Jude made sure to attend all between them, to engage with and learn from educators of boys from across New Zealand. It was also a great opportunity to connect with other leaders of boys' schools and next year we aim to develop these networks with research and professional development opportunities. The biggest takeaway was the authentic move by boys' schools towards collaboration rather than competition. Every person who attended had their students at the heart of what they do and why they do it. It is clear that we can be stronger together.

Artificial Intelligence

at Our School

Leading the Way in Innovation

The rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are both exciting and daunting, transforming the landscape of technology and education.

Our school is committed to supporting this transformative journey by investing time, resources, and having new roles dedicated to AI innovation. This commitment is exemplified by the creation of two pivotal positions: AI Innovation Leader, which I (Casey) hold, and AI Curriculum Specialist, which is held by Molly. While our roles are distinct, we work closely together. Our journey began with the development and implementation of an AI policy to guide the responsible and ethical use of AI within our school.

A key part of our strategy has been educating students on the ethical and responsible use of AI. Through Virtute resources, we provided all students with a foundational understanding of AI's implications and ethical considerations. We also updated our

assessment criteria to reflect the responsible use of AI in academic work, ensuring that our students understand both the opportunities and responsibilities that come with using AI.

In Year 10, two specialised courses offer a deeper dive into AI. The 10 Media and Society course focuses specifically on the ethical and responsible aspects of AI usage, encouraging students to critically evaluate the impact of AI on society. Meanwhile, 10 Digital Technologies offers students a hands-on opportunity to explore how AI works. They also get the chance to code and design their own AI tools, giving them a practical insight into the technology that is shaping their future.

Looking ahead, our next step is to launch a pilot programme to assess the impact of AI on learning outcomes. This initiative will provide valuable insights into how AI can enhance educational experiences and support student growth.





Supporting Staff

Professional Development A Commitment to Excellence

Our school has always placed a high priority on supporting the professional development of our staff, investing time and resources into both internal and external opportunities for growth.

This commitment reflects our belief that ongoing development enables our educators to excel in their roles and deliver the highest quality education to our students. It is a passion of mine to see our staff thrive, and I am dedicated to ensuring that they have the resources and support they need to be their best.

Internal professional development is designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of our staff. We offer optional “Bite Size PD” sessions on an as-needed basis, allowing staff to engage in targeted training when a particular skill or topic is relevant to their practice. In addition, twice each term, we hold comprehensive professional development sessions for the entire staff. These two-hour sessions are thoughtfully planned to address key areas of development and enhance our collective teaching practice.

This year, our internal professional development topics have included a range of significant themes. We explored Mātauranga Māori, which provided staff with valuable insights into indigenous knowledge and its relevance in the classroom. We also delved into the rapidly evolving field of Artificial Intelligence, equipping staff with the skills and understanding needed to integrate this technology into their teaching. Other sessions focused on cross-curricular discussions about effective teaching tools and classroom management.

In addition to our internal programmes, we also invite guest speakers to share their expertise and broaden our perspectives. This year, we benefited from pre-recorded professional development sessions from the International Boys’ Schools Coalition (IBSC), featuring Michael Reichart on the topic of engaging boys in learning. We also welcomed author Andrew Reiner, who discussed his book *Better Boys, Better Men*, offering insights into modern masculinity and the role of education in shaping positive identities. Dr. Sarah Watson provided us with a deeper understanding of ADHD, helping staff develop strategies for supporting students with diverse learning needs.

These professional development opportunities not only enhance our skills as educators but also strengthen our sense of community and shared purpose. By continuously engaging in learning and reflection, we are better equipped to meet the challenges of teaching in an ever-changing world. I look forward to another year of growth and discovery, as we continue to invest in our staff and strive for excellence in all that we do.

Casey de Wit



Westlake Boys High School
Te Kura Tuarua o Ngā Taitamaŋane o Ururoto