



From the Principal

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“You Can Be Whoever You Want To Be,” said the Wizard.

The Wizard of Oz image (below) that adorns the front cover of our 2022 edition of The Leonardian probably says more about the year that was 2022 than is first apparent. Certainly, it is a wonderful visual memoir. Audiences and cast alike revelled in The Wizard of Oz as it joined a torrent of theatrical performances that finally flooded back onto our stage after the long pandemic drought. In fact, the image is symbolic of the welcome flow of productions, concerts, sporting fixtures, and outdoor activities that poured forth, signalling a return to the College’s regular rhythm during the latter part of the year.



Yet dig a little deeper into what that picture represents, for the timeless tale held further meaning this year. As the Tin Man, the Scarecrow and the Lion all discovered during their adventures along the yellow brick road, the attributes each one thought they lacked were in fact inside them all along. The Wizard of Oz did not need to dispense a new heart, a brain, or extra courage. All he needed to do was point out to the three travellers that they already possessed the traits they so desired. The Wizard’s real magic was to convince them of that and then affirm it publicly.

Which is exactly what all of us engaged in education, teachers and parents, should aim to do for each of our young people every day. Growing brains, strengthening hearts, and bolstering confidence is the purposeful work of any good school. As a relative newcomer to St Leonard’s, I have already seen ample evidence that the College excels in each of these ambitions. Our academic programmes are world class and our examination results superb. Compassion, service to others and a heart for social justice beats in every corner of the campus. And from the Leonardian stage to the sports fields of Brighton, and stretching beyond into the wilderness areas of our Outdoor Education ventures, courage abounds.

Just like the Wizard of Oz though, we should aim to do more than simply provide opportunities for children to recognise their innate potential. We must also convince them of their ability, then publicly affirm our faith in them. After 34 years as an educator, I am more convinced than ever that young people will almost inevitably meet the standards that we expect of them, as long as they believe that we truly believe they are capable. That is to say, if a young person thinks that an adult who cares for them sincerely expects that they can achieve something, they almost always do. (Sadly, in my experience the reverse is also true; children who think you have a poor opinion of them will just as readily live up to that expectation as well.)

Hence why the cover photo of this magazine is so apposite, for the pages inside are crammed with proud acknowledgement of the breadth of flair and talent that our students possess. At every year level and in every field of endeavour, this Leonardian is a testament to what happens when you convince children that their brains, their hearts, and their confidence are unlimited. That is true for all our yearbooks, stretching back over the College’s proud history, but especially so in post-pandemic 2022.

During the turbulent tornado of COVID’s arrival two years ago, many of us awoke in Lockdown Land and realised “we weren’t in Kansas anymore”. The pandemic blew us all a long way off track, and the great challenge for all who taught the young people of St Leonard’s College as they returned during 2022 was to get their feet back firmly on the ground. To remind them once more of their inherent potential, and the possibilities to express themselves through the multitude of opportunities on offer in this special place. It has been a privilege to arrive as the storm passed at last, and to begin to play my part in re-establishing the St Leonard’s culture of aspiration and the encouragement of all.

For, just as Dorothy’s reuniting with her Aunt and Uncle brought with it a newfound appreciation of her family ties, so too have students and teachers returned to the College with renewed gratitude for the bonds they share. Ours is a deeply relational community and the time we spent apart from one another in enforced isolation served to remind us all how blessed we are to be together in each other’s company once again. The dislocation of being apart has also been a timely reminder of the enduring need to regularly convince our young people that they are all as clever, kind, and courageous as they need to be.

Now that the final curtain has well and truly closed on the dramas of 2022, perhaps I should leave the final word to Glinda the Good Witch:

“You’ve always had the power my dear, you just had to learn it yourself.”