



## Leading the Way

Be proactive. Begin with the end in mind. Put first things first. Think win-win.

These are four of the principles that are part of the globally popular bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by educator Dr Stephen Covey.

In 2010, Oakleigh Grammar began introducing a process called The Leader in Me, based on Covey's principles. The school is just one of four Victorian schools, and the only Victorian Independent school, to have implemented The Leader in Me.

'It's been a key driver for students from Kindergarten to Year 5 taking ownership of their learning,' said Oakleigh Grammar's Leadership Facilitator, Kathy Haramis. 'And that learning may range from doing up their shoelaces themselves to doing their homework promptly, through to public speaking, in front of 100 or more adults and children.'

A religious instructor of the Christian Orthodox faith at Oakleigh Grammar and also a life coach, Mrs Haramis learnt about Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* in 2009, as part of her own personal development. At the same time, the school was going through a period of leadership transition.

'I could see, from a pastoral care perspective, that Covey's principles could really suit the school,' said Mrs Haramis. 'Overseas, the 7 Habits have transformed some schools.'

Mrs Haramis explained that in the classroom, in 'the teachable moment', junior school teachers now explicitly refer to the 7 Habits. 'Teachers give life to the 7 Habits, whether it be an art class or a sports class or teaching literacy and numeracy. They talk to the students about being proactive, about putting first things first, about thinking win-win.'

'We also talk about the Habits during religious instruction,' added Mrs Haramis. 'For example, if I'm teaching students about a saint I'll ask them how they thought the saint's actions were proactive.' In fact, the 7 Habits form the basis of the school's pastoral care program.

Mrs Haramis introduced the Leader in Me process to junior school staff in 2010 and has since led the way in teaching the Leader in Me to 240 junior school students, and parents. The school's motto is now 'Developing leaders one student at a time'.

Oakleigh Grammar is a Greek Orthodox early learning to Year 12 coeducational school with 580 students.

**Challenge:** To build leadership amongst the school's students, staff and parents.

**Action:** Implementing the Leader in Me process.

**Results:** A major transformational change.

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– Mrs Kathy Haramis, Leadership Facilitator



Oakleigh Grammar Principal Mark Robertson joined the school in 2011. He was familiar with Stephen Covey's bestseller and was excited to see the 7 Habits in an educational context. 'I thought, "This is just what we need",' said Mr Robertson. 'Living the 7 Habits can be very powerful. It integrates character development with academic efforts. It's early days yet, but we're seeing signs of improved academic outcomes.'

Independent Schools Victoria SSNP Advisors have supported the introduction of the Leader in Me process through mentoring, funding and assistance in strategic planning.

'The Leader in Me process provides a collective goal and a common language,' said Independent Schools Victoria SSNP Advisor Leonie Abbott. 'In creating leadership development amongst the students, it also helps them work towards a culture of academic excellence.'

The development of leadership qualities was highlighted in August 2012 when the Year 5 students (the final year of Oakleigh Grammar's junior school) led Leadership Day. The students hosted a gathering of 150 of their community, including parents, the Mayor of Monash, the local state MP and school principals from as far afield as St Arnaud and New South Wales.

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Towards the day's end, Year 4 students presented their own play, Snow White and The 7 Habits.

Having proved its value in the junior school, a variation of Leader in Me called Highly Effective Teens is being introduced into Year 6 and incrementally to the end of Year 9.

Parents at Oakleigh Grammar have responded enthusiastically to the Leader in Me process. In June 2012, Mrs Haramis ran an abridged one-day version of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, called *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*.

'The Leader in Me has reinforced how to live an effective life through the 7 Habits,' wrote one parent in her evaluation of the one-day course. 'I now understand how to be on the same wave length as my children.'

'The parents have seen their children progressing in their learning and can see how, as parents, they can really be partners in education,' said Ms Abbott.

The school's parents' association has formally adopted the Leader in Me principles and now runs its meetings along the lines of The 7 Habits.

Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Synergise. Sharpen the saw. These are the final three principles of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

'The 7 Habits come more to life as each day passes at Oakleigh Grammar,' said Mr Robertson. A teacher for 30 years and a principal for seven, he said that The 7 Habits have contributed to 'the biggest transformational change I have seen in the life of a junior school'.

