

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

RETHINKING STUDENT GROWTH BEYOND NUMBERS

In schools we're often caught in the pursuit of quantifying the unquantifiable. As teachers, we strive to measure aspects of student life that inherently resist simple metrics – wellbeing, effort, collaboration, character etc. But the challenge isn't just in the measurement; it's in our approach.

🔍 Moving Away from a Deficit Model 🔍

Often, we inadvertently focus on what's lacking – a deficit model that highlights areas of 'less' rather than growth. This was evident when one of my children's school attempted to report on character traits. As parents, we found it hard to see some traits 'scored' lower than others. It's a natural human tendency to focus on the negatives, but in education, it can unintentionally undermine a student's self-perception and growth.

😞 The Dilemma: What Do We Do With This Data? 😞

Once we have this data, the next big question is: what do we do with it? Can we genuinely make a student happier or instill more effort? A colleague of mine wisely pointed out that for some students, the mere act of getting out of bed and boarding the school bus is a monumental effort. Yet, we demand consistent effort throughout the day, often without considering their unique contexts.

🎓 The Key to Engagement: Belonging 🎓

For students to be engaged, to feel happy and safe, they need to find their niche – their place to 'hang their hat' at school. This is where they feel they truly belong. I've been exploring how academic, co-curricular, sporting, and service data can triangulate a student's school experience. Understanding each student individually, empathising with their journey, can lead to more profound growth.

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Ultimately, it comes down to relationships. Teachers investing time in building relationships that allow for holistic conversations with students can make a world of difference. It's not just about teaching a curriculum; it's about nurturing individual growth and understanding each student's unique story.

As we continue to explore these uncharted waters, let's remember that the heart of education lies in understanding and nurturing the individual journeys of our students.

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