

# Student leaders offer practical advice

Quizzing current students about their school can yield valuable insights, writes **Joanne Brookfield**.

While families can expect to hear from school principals and staff at Open Days, student voices are increasingly playing a role. From guiding tours, speaking on panels and mingling with visitors, students are offering their honest reflections on school life as they answer questions and inspire the next cohort.

School captains Nicole and Grace did not attend an Open Day prior to enrolling at Lauriston Girls School, as Nicole was enrolled at the school as a baby and Grace moved from overseas just before starting at the school.

They've made up for that now, however, as they have both regularly contributed their time and insights at several Open Days.

For Grace, her own background was a big motivator to give back to the school community in this way.

"I wanted to properly show those families that were somewhat like mine – either international ones or families making a significant change – what our school had to offer," she says.

"I like to think that by doing this, I'm helping the families like mine have an easier path to their decision," she continues.

Nicole is similarly motivated, and her own involvement has allowed her to see how important Open Days are



**Lauriston school captains Nicole and Grace say visiting families are keen to get a sense of the school's culture and how students are supported academically and emotionally.**

for families who might be unfamiliar with the school.

"It's given me a new appreciation for how those early impressions can shape a family's decision," she says, and it's why she views being involved in Lauriston's Open Days as a "genuine privilege". Being trusted to speak on behalf of the school is something she takes seriously.

"Representing the school has strengthened my sense of purpose and belonging, while also helping me grow in confidence and responsibility," Nicole reflects. Her ability to speak several languages has also helped her

connect with international parents and grandparents on the day.

"One standout moment was taking Greek grandparents on a school tour last year," she recalls. "Being able to speak to them in Greek immediately put them at ease, and I could see how much it meant to them to feel understood and included."

The captains say that common themes emerge in their conversations with prospective parents and their supporters: many families want to understand the culture of the school and how students are supported both academically and emotionally. Parents

are often curious about wellbeing structures, teaching styles and academic pathways, while students tend to focus more on friendships, co-curricular opportunities, and what everyday school life is really like.

The most common question, however, is about the difference between the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) pathways and "how the two programs compare in terms of structure, assessment style and subject balance, and which pathway might better suit a student's learning style," notes Grace.

Asking questions is the best way to make the most of the day, she suggests, and can help alleviate any nerves prospective students might have. "I can remember how terrified I felt arriving at a new school," she says.

Reading all the information and getting curious will help, especially in the areas of your own special interests. "Ask questions or even speak to the student tour guides as they're much closer to the [prospective student's] demographic," she says.

Nicole says the point of Open Day is to "centre human connection" so both student representatives and prospective families can have a positive experience.

"While facilities and results matter, it's often student voices and genuine interactions that leave the strongest impression," she says. "Being able to contribute to that experience has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my time at school."



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