

Called to *prophetic* Action



Priority
P1
STORIES

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Sustaining and growing Marist education for young people in need

The John Berne School is here to help the most vulnerable students who are at risk of not completing school and I personally feel it is a great privilege to be able to help our students find success through education.

The needs of the young people at The John Berne School are many, including: mental health issues, low literacy and numeracy skills and family dysfunction, which can all lead to a number of challenging behaviours.

As Marcellin showed his love, empathy and hope for John Berne the teachers here strive to bring support and love into the lives of our students and to hold their hand as they take steps towards a brighter future. I believe in *'we should give and in giving we receive'*. It is these young people in need, who have been sent to us, that need us at this moment; and we reach out to them and give to them the care, love and nurturing they need at the moment to succeed.

It is often those 'most difficult' students that I invest most of my love, care and time into as it is they that most need someone in their corner backing them, even when they make mistakes. I try to be there to guide them towards small victories that build their confidence and self esteem. Working with a student who, at the age of 14, could not read and had given up on education, teachers, himself and his future is no easy task, as it requires mountains of patience, perseverance, love and faith in their ability when they don't have any.

One such student, after years of failure, had committed to Berne. Despite the odds stacked against him he learned to read and opened up a world of possibilities for himself. It was a long and bumpy journey that heavily relied on the positive relationships the staff at Berne work constantly to build with students, parents and carers.

Developing relationships that are built on trust and respect, with supports for students to make mistakes and learn, is a primary focus of the journey. Sitting down with students and parents who return to say *'hello'* and thank the staff for what they have done for them is very fulfilling.

Having committed staff is essential to The John Berne School and there is not a high turnover of staff as working here is a calling. I believe that God has called each of us to be here, to guide the young people in need, with all of our different gifts and talents.

I have made a commitment to the Marist Association and to the Marist style of Education and will do my best to live out the works of St Marcellin Champagnat. Like Mary was called by God I feel that right now I have been called to work at The John Berne School.

Tanja Dunne