

I've stolen a lot from this school. Before anyone calls the cops, I promise it isn't anything of real value. But if the science department is down a few glue sticks, it's not me. They just appear in my pencil case.

I've been pickpocketing something much less physical.

My most significant moment happened in one of my termly chats with the wellbeing staff about my holidays, and somewhere during my rant about how people in the airport act like it's their first day on planet earth, (just keep walking please) she stopped my tangent and said, "You sound exactly like your friends. I've never seen one person somehow act like four." I didn't dwell on it for the rest of the day, yet a year on from now I still find myself thinking about that comment.

When I arrived here in Year 9, I certainly didn't talk like them or share the same mannerisms as them, I didn't even know them at all. But somewhere over these past three years, without any of us realizing, we have picked up little parts of the way each of us thinks, speaks, acts and just goes about daily life.

And that got me thinking about all the other little skills and hobbies I've picked up from the people around me within these red brick walls. I've started saying "bro and get in" far more than is probably necessary because of friend, developed a completely unnecessary obsession with collecting footy cards because of two others, with a certain someone pulling both the Diaco's brothers, and now have an odd obsession with terrible tv shows, namely one yee haw version of the summer I turned pretty. I've started listening to incredibly depressing music or EDM when solving calculus problems and through that I can confirm that Maybelline Sky High is in fact waterproof. I'm sure there are also other habits I've stolen that I'm simply not self-aware enough to have noticed yet.

That one small offhand comment from my teacher made me realize just how significant that is.

We spend so much of our time at school thinking about what we'll achieve: our grades, our teams, our performances, and our leadership positions. But some of the most significant things we leave this school with aren't achievements at all. They're people and their personalities, their values and traditions. They're pieces of glass, different colors and shapes, that make up the mosaic that is us.

And I'm sure I've left pieces of myself with others too, without ever knowing it. That's what makes our school community so significant. We shape each other, without even realizing it. And when we eventually leave, I don't think we'll just remember every assignment or every timetable. We'll remember the jokes, the laughter and the songs. And if I'm lucky enough to be able to spend my last year here as school captain, I'd love to help make a school where everyone gets the chance to leave with a few more pieces worth taking with them. Because, after everything this school has given me, being able to give something back would mean a lot.

I arrived at Melbourne Girls Grammar in Year 9 as one person. Three years later, I'm made up of pieces of so many people I've met along the way. So perhaps I should apologize for stealing. But honestly, I'm very glad I did. Thank you