

Australian Conference on Lutheran Education

Title: 'Lutheran Values in Action: an Innovative Approach to Curriculum'

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Introduction

The values that we identify as core for our Lutheran schools help define what we see as the goals of education. They certainly shape the sort of teaching and learning that happens and the way in which community works within the Lutheran school. Values might well be at the core of a good school, but they mean nothing if they cannot be translated into ways and means by which they can be achieved. Having a school community name and define its core values is an important beginning. Having them examine their practices to see how well these values are expressed within the school community follows – and then providing a program to explicitly and implicitly teach and model those same values is where real articulation of theory and practice happens. This presentation concerns the manner in which Lutheran schools can work through the processes of curriculum change to imbed Lutheran values as reflected in the LEA Lifelong Qualities for Learners, and school and Lutheran community core values. A highlight of the change has been the development of the Individual Learner Profile, the means by which to track individual educational growth and development. The *Learning with Purpose* approach can be readily articulated towards any state curriculum framework.

***Learning with Purpose* Workshop**

In this workshop we come from the premise that we can make a difference if we make our Lutheran ethos organic i.e., living, breathing and connected. It is always a challenge, but by grace we can make a real difference through Lutheran schools. This approach is reflected in the National Lutheran Lifelong Qualities Framework that has been developed to overarch and inform the particular curriculum framework being used in a school. This workshop involves participant interaction as the *Learning with Purpose* approach is demonstrated

Through visiting schools it has become apparent that there have been some curriculum structure deficiencies causing inefficient use of staff resources. At the outset we emphasise that this has nothing to do with the superb efforts of dedicated staff in our schools. Some of this may well have had to do with old

approaches to curriculum and learning that does not take into account educational practice based on the multiple intelligences and new approaches to learning. Maybe there are other reasons, but it is timely for review and to consider change in light of new curriculum expectations and change in almost every Australian state system.

The *Learning with Purpose* Program has as its foundation the Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF II) and the Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework- incorporating Lutheran values, Life and Work Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Personal Futures, and Communication Literacies, to provide a foundation for the post-compulsory Year 11-12 VCE/VCAL/VET subjects. The CSF includes the traditional Key Learning Areas (KLA) and as such maintains curriculum breadth. Each KLA within CSF II is made up of levels for student achievement aligned with developmental stages associated with the years of schooling from Prep to Year 10, ie Early Years (levels 1,2,3), Middle Years (levels 4,5,6) and Senior Years (post-compulsory). There are strong synergies between the curriculum frameworks of all states and territories.

Units of work are based on CSF levels and each student should experience both horizontal discrete units, eg Year 7 Mathematics, and vertical discrete units, eg Year 7 and 8 Mathematics where appropriate. There have been interdisciplinary or integrated units developed, but where this happens it is explicit about learning outcomes from each KLA that is being taught and learned. A thematic approach has been being adopted in planning within the units. Themes are a way of organizing big ideas that can group complex areas of study. They provide a focal point but do not seek to limit student inquiry.

A key initiative that has been put into place is an Individual Learner Profile (ILP) that begins as soon as a student enters a school. Diagnostic testing occurs at regular intervals as students progress through the school, and a variety of formative and summative assessment tools are utilized. This approach focuses on students' individual needs and learning progression. The ILP records student success in learning and helps students to own their learning. It aids programming and is used as a basis for a student Curriculum Vitae (key focus of Year 10 program). Through this approach, students develop skills, knowledge and understanding of the KLA's (ie content), the Essential Learning and of themselves.

To assist staff and students, complementary IT software has been written to support the curriculum and the ILP. This is an integrated and linked approach that supports the whole program.

In summary, the *Learning with Purpose* program endeavours to

- cater for individual learning needs of the student
- provide rigorous and challenging learning experiences
- provide the opportunity to develop understanding of self as a learner

- provide a consistent and continuous immersion in Lutheran values through a thematic approach
- connect learning to real life situations through various themes
- ensure all exiting students, via ILP and CV, confidently enter the world of work.