

Core propositions describing highly effective teachers in Lutheran schools

1. Context

1.1 This paper describes some core propositions for highly effective teachers in Lutheran schools. These propositions are expressed as descriptors of the kind of qualities the Church would wish to see as the distinguishing characteristics of teachers. It has its origin in wide-ranging consultations and is to be regarded as a document in progress that reflects the recognition of the BLEA, Australian Lutheran College and schools that an appropriate template of teacher characteristics is needed for schools in the LCA. Readers will readily see the link between the direction of this paper and the wider educational context – especially the priority being given to teacher quality and, for the LCA, the outcomes of the recent Australian Conference on Lutheran Education.

1.2 Delineating the attributes of highly effective teachers in Lutheran schools has a range of potentially valuable applications in:

- Appointment of staff
- Staff orientation programs
- Design of continuing professional education programs
- Determining professional standards
- Endorsing best practice, rewarding accomplishment and acknowledging the psychological importance of praise for the teacher and the modelling of such affirmation
- Preparation of teachers for Lutheran schools

2. Framework

'Teacher quality' has both generic features which are cross-sector in scope, and school – system – specific dimensions which, inter alia, enable schools to conduct teaching and learning in ways that are congruent with their vision statements.

The following represents a five-point 'map':

- How is teacher spirituality to be understood as it applies to Lutheran schools?
- What are the specific ways in which Christian vocation influences teacher behaviour?
- Which aspects of Lutheran theology are important to the work of the Lutheran teacher?
- How is relational Christianity to be manifest in the work of the Lutheran teacher?
- What are the essential features of the teacher as professional in Lutheran schools?

These questions are based on five intersecting domains:

- Spirituality [growing into Christ]
- Vocation [servant hood in Christ]
- Theology [expressing Christ]
- Relational Christianity [sustaining positive Christian relationships]
- Professional [exercising the craft of the Christian teacher with integrity and effectiveness]

3. Core propositions

3.1 **Proposition One** : a teacher in a Lutheran school will have a Christ-centred spirituality that is characterised by a growing personal faith, an understanding of the Gospel and an integration of faith and living

Behavioural outcomes: the teacher is one who:

- undertakes ongoing biblical and theological study and participates in worship, devotional activities and congregational life.
- appreciates that all interactions are opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work
- demonstrates grace, forgiveness and compassion in interactions with members of the school community and the congregation
- understands the Christian and secular world views and lives the former to influence and permeate the latter

3.2 **Proposition Two:** the teacher in a Lutheran school is called to be a servant of Christ and to serve him through serving others.

Behavioural outcomes : the teacher:

- understands teaching as a vocation from God and views teaching as a Gospel ministry
- understands the educator's role in the mission of the Church and school
- understands servant leadership and its implications for carrying out responsibilities in the school arena
- has a love of, and respect for, all in the school community with special reference to young people
- relates to all pastorally

3.3 **Proposition Three:** a teacher in a Lutheran school has a sound understanding of Lutheran theology, the LCA and its schools.

Behavioural outcomes : the teacher

- Understands Lutheran theology, especially the grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone; and Law and Gospel and their implications for self and relationships
- Has a mature familiarity with the catechism
- Has an awareness of the theological convergence and divergence of Christian churches in their ecumenical association
- Upholds the ethos of the Lutheran school
- Recognises the way in which theology informs critical areas of school life such as administration, discipline, pastoral care, Christian Studies and worship

3.4 **Proposition Four:** a teacher in a Lutheran school is able to develop positive relationships with others.

Behavioural outcomes : the teacher:

- understands the gospel and its influence on daily life and relationships with others
- has positive self-esteem, is emotionally robust and has an awareness of his/her personal gifts and talents
- possesses high levels of communication and negotiation skills
- has a well developed emotional intelligence and is able to read the emotional state of individuals, groups and workplaces and respond appropriately
- has a keen awareness of different cultural groups and belief systems in Australian society
- values people in their uniqueness, having their own gifts and talents, and accepts them as they are
- has a special empathy for, and positive relationship with, young people
- has the capacity to work easily and effectively in teams and a strong sense of community

3.5 **Proposition Five:** a teacher in a Lutheran school is committed to best practice in teaching and highly professional conduct

Behavioural outcomes : the teacher:

- has sound knowledge of learning areas and is passionate about teaching and learning
- sees himself/herself as a collaborative member of a learning community and models learning to students
- uses a range of methodologies that promote active learning and is skilled in important aspects of the craft of teaching
- has the capacity to reflect on practice and to adopt changes that lead to ongoing improvement
- maintains a high level of general knowledge and awareness of social trends, especially those that impact on the lives of learners, and keeps informed through news, films and reading
- possesses a critical awareness of developments in education and has the ability to assess the significance of trends and their impact
- seeks regular professional development opportunities, values professional growth and is responsive to mentoring
- shows management skills of a high order and empowers others through leadership skills

4. Conclusion

It may well be the case that using resources to improve teaching and to strengthen the work of teachers produces more important gains than putting resources into other school-related projects. The core propositions expressed above direct attention to critical aspects of the desired teacher profile in Lutheran schools and provide guidance for teachers themselves, principals, systems and the Church as they are engaged in initial teacher education and continuing professional education programs.