

Why all the attention on accreditation?



Barry J Kahl is the Director of Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

Why all the attention on accreditation for service in Lutheran schools?

For us and for our Lutheran schools, Jesus is the reason for our existence and the presence of the school. He is its hub, its pivot, its whole being, and we gather around him in worship and service as he gives purpose to our lives. This, then, is Christian Education. A school that espouses Christ is one that practises Christian Education. Such a school has as its motto that Christ is in all things [Colossians 3:11]. Therefore, Christian Education becomes

from God and each person is encouraged to find his or her place in the big picture, to discover the talents that God has provided, and to return those talents to him through a life of service to others. It is the Christian Education program that enables all life to become a celebration of discipleship.

The responsibility for the Christian Education program of the school is one that every staff member holds. Christ is to be in the teachers who walk in the school ground with students and as they work together with those in their care in the school's learning program. Christ is to be in the other staff members who support the life of the school and interact with its entire population. Indeed, Christ is to be in all as they mingle with the extended school community.

Such an awesome responsibility requires an awareness of what it means to live like Christ and be his ambassador. To assist

study of that knowledge about God. It allows the doubter to voice doubt and permits the sceptic to critically question. By so doing the subject, Christian Studies, also provides the believer with the opportunity to witness. Christian Studies is about providing an awareness of God and, therefore, bringing people face to face with Jesus. It is about allowing them to struggle with this knowledge, which might mean struggling with God. It is about dynamic discussion.

Those who facilitate this area of learning need a depth of understanding about God and how people learn. Preparation for the privilege of teaching Christian Studies may occur through the Australian Lutheran College strand in Bachelor of Education programs, or the Graduate Certificate of Religious Education. As an in-service program, *Equip* has been developed to allow teachers of the Christian

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the canopy that covers, the skin that enfolds, and the substance that permeates all that the school does. Christian Education is the big picture and is, in a broad sense, everything the school is. Central to Christian Education is worship and all the activities the school provides that encourage its students, staff and wider community to give expression of their faith. Throughout the entire range of the school's engagements, staff model what Christ means to them and, by God's grace and power, live '...so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed...' [2 Corinthians 4:10]. By all the school does it is voicing that all things come

an understanding for such an opportunity, Lutheran Education Australia provides the accreditation program called *Pathways*, which encourages spiritual awareness, theological understanding and an appreciation of the call to a vocation of service to others.

Under Christian Education's canopy that covers, within its skin that enfolds and throughout the substance that permeates, there is the academic program and one of these key areas of learning is Christian Studies. Christian Studies is learning about God, it is doing theology. Christian Studies is expressly about knowledge and is a rigorous

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Studies subject to experience the same rigour they expect of their students, to have their own encounter with the Word, and enable collective reflection of how to approach such an essential ingredient of the Lutheran school.

Under Christian Education's canopy that covers, within its skin that enfolds and throughout the substance that permeates, there are a lot of things going on. There is the social web of the school and its management structures, as well as the school's recreational and promotional activities. The person entrusted with oversight of the school is the principal, the spiritual head of the school. To assist the principal, and others who lead, to see the total world of the school as God would view it there are leadership development and post-graduate studies which promote an expansive view of what constitutes a Lutheran school.

If all these things are in place we are well on the way to being a truly Lutheran school, but what are the marks one could expect of a Lutheran school? Surely, it is more than ownership by a district of the Lutheran Church of Australia, or a congregation, or an association of Lutheran members. Surely, it is more than having the word 'Lutheran' in the school's name, or as a sub-title. Surely, it is more than having a principal who is a member of the Lutheran Church. We undergo supervision and meet requirements of registration by state or territory authorities, or if we aspire to be an IB school we are put through a rigorous authorisation exercise. So, should we be required to meet certain provisions to be accredited as a Lutheran school, what might be the signs against which a Lutheran school could be assessed?

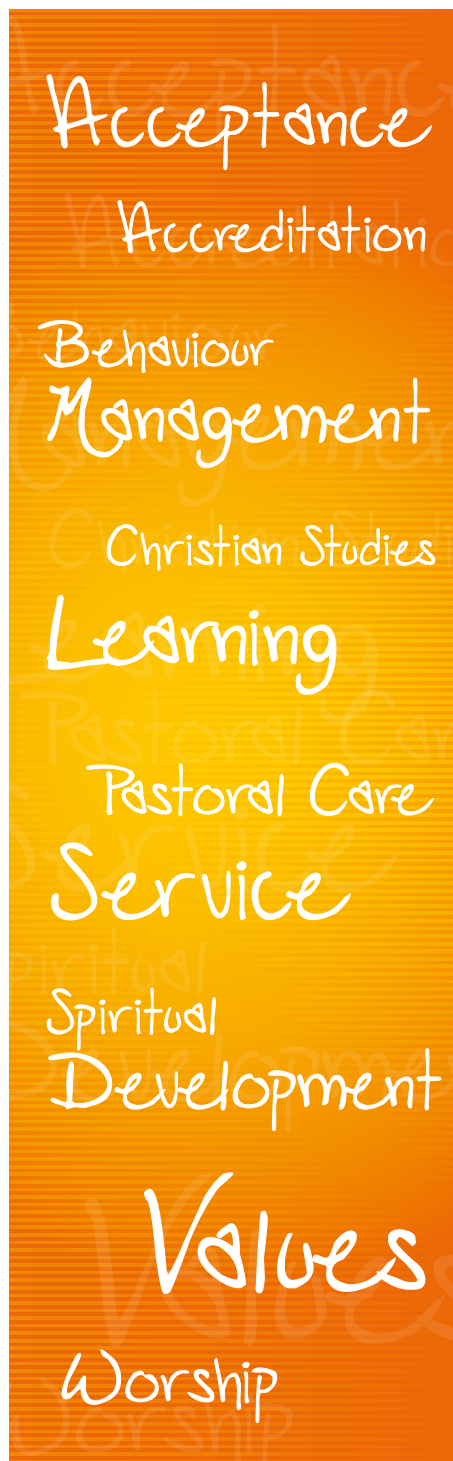
The possible accreditation elements to which a school might aspire could include the following:

- » **Acceptance** of the station of others is patently noticeable.
- » **Accreditation of staff** as required by the Lutheran Church of Australia is given diligent attention.

- » **Behaviour management policies** reflect the school as a grace place.
- » **Christian Studies** is esteemed as a Key Learning Area.
- » **Learning** is affected by the Lifelong Qualities for Learning and uses appropriate pedagogy to assist students to discover and develop their talents to the fullest in order to live a life of service to Christ and others.
- » **Nomenclature** clearly defines the school as a Lutheran school and part of a wider network of Lutheran schools.
- » **Pastoral care** of each other amongst staff, students and the extended school community is clearly supported.
- » **Policies** mirror the Christ-centred objectives of the school, and the requisite policies of the Lutheran Church, Lutheran Education Australia and Lutheran systems are known and applied.
- » **Service** is an essential element of learning as a response to the Gospel, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of others, and not for the purpose of promoting the school.
- » **Spiritual development of staff** is given a regular and high priority.
- » **Values**, generically accepted for Lutheran schools, are displayed and receive focus in learning programs and activities.
- » **Visual evidence** of the centrality of the Gospel is openly exhibited through various art forms.
- » **Worship** is meaningfully provided for students, staff and the extended school community.

To how many of these are you able to give a tick in the school where you serve? Where you are in doubt, why not work on it? If you have a perfect record, thank God, but strive to ensure their effectiveness and relevance.

Blessings and God's strength to you as you strive to make, or preserve, a Lutheran school which is true to its claims.



Principals reflect on *Equip* and *Pathways*



Tony Peters is the principal at Tarrington Lutheran School, Tarrington Victoria

Families, students and staff in Lutheran schools now come from a range of cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds. This has affected the way those wanting to teach in a Lutheran school become appropriately qualified. Christian Studies teachers are required to do some theological study, which needs to remain a very high expectation and priority in every Lutheran school. *Equip* is now available to teachers with no formal theological training.

At Tarrington Lutheran School, two teachers, Melanie and Jeff, have recently completed the *Equip* program. Melanie was brought up within the Lutheran tradition, while Jeff had no affiliation with the Lutheran Church until his appointment at this school six years ago. While this would make an interesting comparison, two other aspects are worthy of discussion.

Firstly, both Melanie and Jeff felt that meeting on a regular basis with other teachers in the *Equip* course and the course facilitator was crucial for their professional development as teachers of the Christian faith. They were adamant that coming together to share and support each other, as well as the presence of a facilitator who was passionate, approachable and encouraging, were very important factors for the overall success of the program. Meaningful and purposeful discussions allowed course participants to get to know other Lutheran school teachers and establish networking; to share new teaching techniques and improved methods; and to gain a better knowledge of the curriculum and other resources.

Secondly, the course has 'equipped' Melanie and Jeff with the implementation, instruction and delivery of the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework, an outcome that schools want from *Equip*. Both are more confident in the way they teach Christian Studies, giving students, particularly in upper primary, the opportunity to express their views and ask questions. Jeff states that 'the course has helped me to develop good questions to ask my students and hearing their ideas has helped me in my understanding, too. Our discussions have made us voice our thoughts and therefore scrutinise our own understandings further'. With discussion comes better understanding of where people

are in their belief system and/or their faith journey. Jeff goes on to say, 'The course has given me a stronger understanding of my faith and my students. It has helped me to understand the variations in how students praise and worship God. It has also allowed me to develop my understanding of God's grace and the different perspectives people have on what that actually involves, as well as the mystery of the triune God'.

Equip has had a significant impact on the way Melanie and Jeff plan their Christian Studies lessons. Through interactions with other teachers and the facilitator and appropriate readings and assignments, *Equip* provides teachers with a sound knowledge and understanding of Lutheran theology and good teaching practices. These are crucial elements for Lutheran schools where teachers have the very special opportunity and task to share the good news of our risen Lord who provides hope, peace, joy, love and forgiveness.



Jan Baker is the principal at Good News Lutheran College, Werribee Victoria

Good News Lutheran College is on a journey, moving from a primary school to a P-12 college. My role as principal has been a journey of leading and building the college, ensuring that the very essence and nature of Christ is upheld and permeates all learning areas and relationships. Each year we have increasing numbers of teachers who come from various faith backgrounds and are at different stages in their faith journey. Accreditation becomes a special part of that journey. *Pathways* and *Equip* allow the immediate and progressive training of teaching staff while supporting them on their faith journey.

Last year four teachers celebrated completing *Equip*. At present eight teachers are completing various modules, working together, sharing resources and pedagogy, not only with each other but also with teachers from other Lutheran schools. The units of work developed by teachers incorporate good pedagogy and teaching strategies which affirm the teaching strategies they use in other learning areas. *Equip* is also developing a consistent language across the college, helping



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teachers to be sensitive to the needs of our students from different cultures and religions. Teachers have greater confidence in teaching Christian Studies and, as principal, I have greater confidence in what is being taught in Christian Studies.

All staff participate in the *Pathways* program as part of our monthly spiritual welfare staff meetings. For accredited staff it refreshes their spiritual and theological understanding and for new staff it provides study in a non-threatening way as all staff work together and support each other. Through regular, open discussions and the sharing of stories in the spiritual encounter, teachers become more aware of their spiritual journey. One teacher said that discussing the challenges she faced in her faith journey with other staff has helped her to be more confident talking with students about their faith journey. The theological studies develop a knowledge, language and confidence which can be observed when teachers lead daily staff and class devotions. As staff meet, hear and share stories of God's grace then everything starts to work – mission, ministry, relationships, teaching and learning.

Doing theology in the Lutheran school



Malcolm Bartsch is a former lecturer at Australian Lutheran College

Our God is a God who speaks and acts. This is how God reveals himself to us. We don't have to try to work out for ourselves who God is, how God feels about us, what God has done for us, what God expects of us in return. God has spoken to us in the past and continues to speak, revealing himself to us. We have the written record of God's revelation in the Bible, but God also continues to speak through the preaching and teaching of his word and in various ways we share that word with one another.

God also reveals himself through his actions, many of which are recorded in the Bible. Here we see how God operates in his creation and through history. The clearest and most profound act of God was to become a human

being in Jesus Christ, 'the Word made flesh' (John 1:14). In Jesus Christ we see most clearly God's love and grace in forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

'Doing theology' is our reflection on and response to what God has revealed to us as he speaks and acts in the world and in our lives. Theology is done by all people as they respond to God, and, although we have our own individual experiences of God, we are also part of the whole people of God and so share in doing theology together. Theology is not only for those who study theology in a more academic way. That study is of course important as we try, using the various intellectual tools and gifts God has given to us, to understand more and more of what God has revealed to us. In our Lutheran schools theology is done as we try to make sense of human life in the context of the school, listening carefully to what God has revealed to us.

'Doing theology' includes respecting the insights which God has enabled us to develop as we explore God's creation through the

gift of reason. This is reason which leads to 'wisdom', if it begins from the 'fear of the Lord' (Proverbs 9:10), recognising God as the one who created order out of chaos. This is reason which recognises that there is an aspect of mystery and wonder in creation which human beings can enjoy and celebrate but not fully understand. It values the past as well as being challenged by the future. It recognises the interrelatedness of life and the unity of knowledge.

But how does all of this work out practically in the busy, complex, daily life of the Lutheran school? It means taking time to reflect theologically on the important questions of education, and to determine a way forward which respects both theology and education and guides us as we live and work in the school.

For example, 'doing theology' gives us a realistic understanding of the people with whom we interact and with whom we work in the classroom and school community. It is an important corrective to much of the current individualistic, humanistic approach to anthropology.



A crucial starting point for a biblical anthropology is recognising that God has created people for relationship – with himself and with each other. But biblical anthropology must also take sin seriously, since the impact of sin on our relationships with God and each other helps us to understand the basis for interpersonal tensions and broken relationships which occur within the school community. We know the power of forgiveness and can operate with processes of restoration within the school, and we also know the need to maintain a safe, structured and supportive environment for the benefit of those within that environment and to enable successful educational activities to occur. This guides our decision making in practical matters of appropriate behaviour in the school.

Biblical anthropology also values each person as a unique, loved and respected individual created by God in the image of God. Each person has their own blend of strengths and weaknesses, gifts and abilities, needs and wants. Each person therefore is to be cared for in ways that take this into account and which reflect the Christian belief that all people are precious and loved by God. Even though individuals differ greatly and within a school context there will be those whom we may find difficult, frustrating and disruptive at times, we must be careful that personal reactions and judgements do not preclude certain individuals from our caring relationships. All students need affirmation, guidance and attention. This also motivates our reaction to bullying in its various forms.

‘Doing theology’ is also vital for dealing with matters of curriculum in the Lutheran school.

Creation theology teaches that everything has been created by God and that everything was ‘good’, the way God planned it to be. Therefore all of God’s creation is open for exploration in the process of learning and teaching. This means, for example, that insights from the arts, from literature, from science, from philosophy and all other human investigation and research are relevant to the Lutheran school curriculum. While from time to time there may be some areas where the relationship between reason and revelation seems to be in some sort of tension, this does not allow the Lutheran school to simply ignore those matters or rule them out of consideration. Students and staff need support in dealing with them.

In this regard it is important to recognise that different areas of human investigation operate

with their own paradigms, and students will need help in understanding these. However, as they explore creation and try to understand how God has ordered creation so that it operates as he had intended (apart from the impact of sin), students will develop critical awareness in respect to truth and the distinction between ‘provisional truth’ and ‘absolute truth’. If Jesus’ claim to ‘be the truth’ is accepted, then all truth must relate in some way to Jesus Christ and what he has revealed to us.

From this perspective, any exploration which looks for truth is relevant in Lutheran schools. The Lutheran school curriculum is free to explore areas such as the relationship between

care for the environment, social justice, distribution of wealth, and other local and global concerns. The theology of vocation is very relevant here as students are sensitised to the various areas of responsibility in which they can serve others, using their gifts and abilities not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of others.

The challenge of ‘doing theology’ in the Lutheran school means being open to God’s revelation in the practical, everyday situations which happen in the classroom and the school community. It creates a freedom to explore human endeavours to understand reality and to search for the truth within the context of God’s revelation. It challenges us

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science and revelation, also when it considers the origin of the universe. Students have to learn to distinguish between questions of faith which have to do with why anything exists at all and with the purpose of human life, and scientific questions which ask how the world operates in the way it does. There may also need to be careful and sensitive explanations of some of these approaches for parents who may hold differing views. This may also apply in introducing contentious social and moral issues in the curriculum and in selecting texts for study in various subjects.

Creation theology also offers another important insight for ‘doing theology’ in the Lutheran school. God still works within his creation (‘continuing creation’). He has not withdrawn from it but continues to preserve it. God is not like a clockmaker who set the world into motion and allows it to run on by itself. God is present in the world working through human beings as his agents or ‘stewards’. And God is also present in the world in situations of tragedy or disaster, suffering with those who suffer.

This theology provides important insights into the role of human beings as careful and responsible stewards of all that God has created and emphasises that Lutheran schools need to be active in areas such as ecology,

to develop our own educational philosophy consistent with Lutheran theology to guide educational decision making as we bring into conversation with theology the best scholarship in educational theory, philosophy, pedagogics and sociology, our understanding of human beings, and our expertise in various curriculum areas.

‘Doing theology’ is also the way in which we grow in our relationship with God as the Holy Spirit works in us. As we try to make sense of human life within the created world, the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in our faith, leading us to praise and glorify God in worship and through our daily life. Theology is certainly not only an academic study. It is practical, allowing God’s revelation to give direction and purpose to all that happens in a Lutheran school.

Pathways: the experience



Neville Grieger is the Spiritual Development Facilitator for Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

Accreditation – is it something we just have to get done or is it an opportunity to shape attitudes and build strong Christian community? It has been interesting observing the implementation of *Pathways* across our 48 sites in the Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA). The thing that has emerged with crystal clarity is that it starts at the top. Where principals have taken the lead, rolled their sleeves up and planted themselves in the trenches with the people, *Pathways* has been embedded in the school culture as something of high priority and significant value. A positive attitude modeled by school leadership is catching. We see this being strongly reflected in participants who attend the final stage *Pathways: vocational focus* which our office facilitates. Where the school has embraced *Pathways* as something of importance, the participants generally engage with enthusiasm and reflect a certain pride in being part of the Lutheran school system and what we stand for.

Pathways presents a variety of implementation issues for many of our schools. We can

summarise some of the operational challenges as follows:

- » There may perhaps be only one staff member required to do a particular phase of *Pathways* in any one given year.
- » Large schools with ongoing staff turnover need to be continually running both *Pathways: spiritual focus* and *Pathways: theological focus*.
- » Remote and interstate schools struggle to recruit staff with Lutheran and /or strong Christian backgrounds. This invariably means a high proportion of staff being required to undertake *Pathways* units at any one time.
- » Time is precious in schools. Scheduling the necessary space for *Pathways* sessions can be challenging. Competing demands of curriculum development and refinement make it difficult to squeeze in time for *Pathways*, not to mention a program to encourage staff in their spiritual journey. Time release is costly.

I would like to highlight some ways in which schools have responded to these challenges:

Case study: Navigator College, Port Lincoln SA

Navigator is a new R-12 school now only in its third year of operation with enrolments to year 10 level. The staff is growing rapidly. There

has been a huge requirement for delivery of *Pathways*. Principal Kaye Mathwin-Cox has, however, made this an important priority. I have been involved with Navigator on a number of occasions helping with the delivery of *Pathways* material and during my time working with this school community several things have stood out.

Firstly, Kaye has made certain that *Pathways* is a BIG ROCK – to use a Stephen Covey expression. A program for implementation has been put in place well in advance. The *Pathways* sessions that I have been involved with have been booked in the year before.

Sessions have become a whole school thing – not just teaching staff, but every employee of the school has been involved. Sure, we have dabbled with ‘the script’ slightly, broadly under the question of ‘**What does it mean to be a Lutheran school in the 21st century?**’ but in any case I think that’s the beauty of *Pathways*. It is crying out for us to put our own stamp on it to suit our specific school community situation (more about that later).

Speaking of the principal being in the trenches: when delivering some *Pathways: theological focus* units on one of my visits, that’s where I met Kaye – and didn’t recognise her, because she was disguised as one of the people, ‘sleeves rolled up, hands dirty’, doing herself what she was asking everyone else to do. I was impressed that Kaye made it



Principal Kaye Mathwin-Cox (centre) with staff at Navigator College, Port Lincoln SA



Navigator College staff recognise that ‘...a positive attitude modelled by school leadership is catching...’

a priority to be part of these sessions for the **whole day**. Kaye had no obligation to be there. She would have been through this material many times. I could see that she was up to her eye-balls in the demands of establishing a new school – facilities, staffing, curriculum, enrolments, marketing – but she made it a priority, saw it as an opportunity to make a statement to her staff that this is important. That’s commitment, that’s modeling, that’s spiritual leadership at its best.

Team approach to *Pathways* delivery

We at LSA strongly encourage our schools to take up a team approach to the delivery of *Pathways*. While in our larger schools it is tempting to slip out a quick hand-ball to the resident school pastor, in the long term this is counter-productive to the building of a healthy corporate spiritual culture. Things related to spiritual matters should not be consigned solely to the province of the school pastor. A model that has worked well for a number of our schools is where a team of people are assembled to share the delivery load. We believe that it is critical that the school principal is a member of this team. If three or four senior staff can be responsible for the delivery of one or two units each the entire program can be accounted for. This not only lightens the load for presenting, but gives a change of scenery and perspective for participants and models the fact that accreditation is seen as important by

key people across the whole school. The involvement of lay-people when there is a resident pastor is a critical thing to reinforce the message that spiritual business does not just belong to those with an official religious tag.

By the way, ‘team approach’ might also mean working as clusters. Some of our schools in the LSA that share a similar geographical location have pooled their resources and spread the load of presenting and rotated the venues.

Handling small numbers of participants

One of the operational challenges identified at the beginning of this article is how to manage delivery of *Pathways* when there may be a cohort of only one or two people. To apply some more Stephen Covey thinking, let’s take a glass half-full view of this. Rather than view this as being problematic, if we take a positive view and search for a way that this situation can be used to our advantage, it can be win-win. David Wilksch, principal at Blair Athol in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, was recently confronted with this situation. However, with David’s creative approach to the problem it became a great opportunity not only to deliver *Pathways*, but to build relationships and offer a personalised and on-going staff induction program at the same time. David scheduled a series of one to one meetings with the staff member throughout the course of the year.

Part of the meeting agenda was to explore the contents of a *Pathways: spiritual focus* unit in an informal way, but it was also an intentional opportunity to check how the staff member was going with regard to their adjustment to a new school community.

Some other comments on methodology

- » We believe that *Pathways* does offer us the freedom to adapt the material to suit the various needs of participants.
- » The *Pathways* components are intended to be sequential. We would discourage the practice of alternating *Pathways: spiritual focus* and *Pathways: theological focus*—ie running those every second year. *Pathways: spiritual focus* is designed to provide something of a soft landing as an introduction to what Lutheran schools are about. To throw someone into the deep end of *Pathways: theological focus*, just because it’s the year for that part of the course could potentially be quite counter-productive.

The management of the *Pathways* accreditation program and a commitment to the implementation of it with diligence and enthusiasm is a fundamental requirement of spiritual leadership. The very fabric of who we are and what we stand for as Lutheran schools is at stake.

Pathways: Journeys to better understand our Lutheran ethos



Meg Noack is the Executive Officer – Curriculum for Lutheran Education Queensland

'Each one of us walks our own particular pathway through life... Sometimes we are simply stumbling along, not at all sure just where we are going. Sometimes our path may seem very lonely, but at other times we are moving along with a crowd. Sometimes our path is clear and well-worn, but at other times we struggle to see a path at all...' Therefore, *Pathways* is an apt title of the program that 'provides an opportunity for new teachers in Lutheran schools to focus on and to explore three separate *pathways* which converge to form a clear and well founded direction for teaching in a Lutheran school.'

The three *Pathways* programs for accreditation in Lutheran schools are, *Pathways: spiritual focus*, *Pathways: theological focus* and *Pathways: vocational focus*. Each *Pathways* program is delivered in different ways, either at the school site or by regional presenters. In Queensland, school leaders deliver these programs. Presenters share common stories about the impact of leading and facilitating these programs. So many comments have a positive tone and are shared with passion and enthusiasm. Just recently an LEQ school

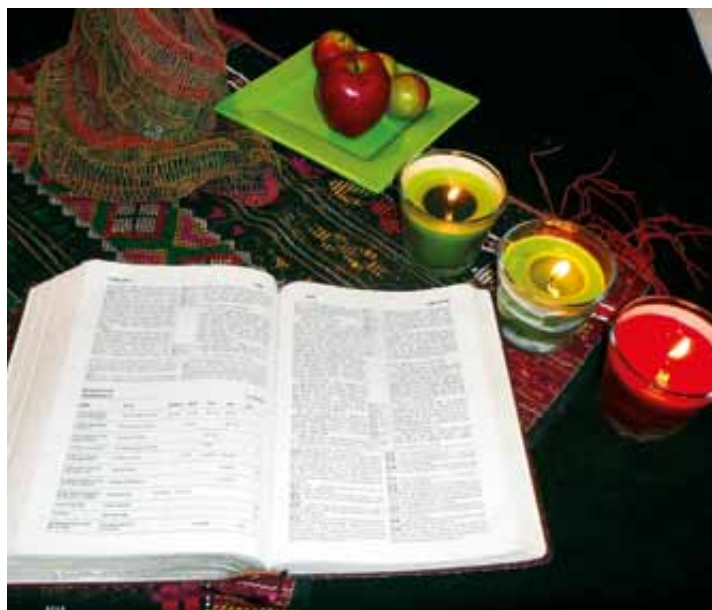
chaplain, referring to his *Pathways: spiritual focus* sessions, said: *Pathways is absolutely freeing... because it allows you to respect what the Spirit is doing in peoples' lives. It is important to listen to and respect their stories and their journeys... I get the chance to explain a Christian perspective within this context! Fantastic!* Another presenter commented on the participants' reverent approach when reading the Psalms which provided *such a strong, symbolic and prayerful ending* to the session.

Other comments by presenters focus upon staffs' initial perceptions about accreditation to teach in a Lutheran school. It seems that, no matter how much initial preparation occurs, compliance is often equated with 'not very engaging'! As one presenter bluntly stated, *It is always tricky when you hear that there are lots of people not happy about having to do this when you turn up*; but inevitably one hears the comment made by one or more participants during the session: *This is NOT what I expected! This is not what I expected at all!* New teachers seem surprised that we want to reflect with them about their own *pathways* to this point. And, as teachers share their own journeys and ask genuine questions about 'what is Lutheran?', this provides many opportunities to discuss the Lutheran Church's perspectives on a range of topics associated with faith, God, our world and relationships. The groups' wisdom and insights draw us all into conversations of great depth.

Finally, on a personal note, I highly value this insightful sharing by participants. I have conducted *Pathways: vocational focus* at an early childhood retreat, at the LEQ secretariat, at whole-of-staff gatherings, at cross-site meetings after school and even facilitated whole day sessions dedicated to *Pathways*. Planning to be a *Pathways* presenter is something that I always surround with prayer. Whilst booklets are collated, discussion and role play cards are laminated and the setting carefully organised, the power of the session relies upon the teacher-participants being willing to share 'from the heart'. When our stories are shared and when God's story is shared, the power of the Spirit amongst us becomes evident. It is a humbling and powerful experience and I thank God for this privilege.



Pathways: vocational focus. An artistic creation 1 ½ metres wide that provided opportunities for many conversations and comments – even by staff of the retreat venue!



The billum and the Cross: *Pathways: vocational focus* – an opportunity to recognise that the burdens of our vocations can be named and left at the foot of the cross. (1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 55:22)

Equipping: a facilitator's tale



Dominique Jacqueline is the National Curriculum Studies Officer for LEA and Curriculum Education Officer for LEQ

I have had the wonderful privilege of being closely involved in the development and writing of Lutheran Education Australia's Christian Studies resources including the *Equip* course over the past 13 years. A greater privilege and honour has been to work alongside teachers as they journey through the *Equip* course. My hope is that each participant will leave each workshop renewed in self confidence, empowered with new strategies and resources, nourished in their spirit, reaffirmed in their vocation as teachers of Christian studies in addition to acquiring accreditation to teach Christian Studies in Lutheran schools.

As a facilitator of the course I face similar challenges that teachers face in the classroom. One compelling challenge is to be inclusive of all participants, to honour the wealth of the collective expertise, to accommodate the diversity of spiritual journeys, the varying levels of biblical and theological knowledge, the particular needs of the different stages of learning from the early years to senior secondary. My sensitivity to any one group, my approach to the questions of any individual in the group, my ability to communicate the key concepts in a way that each participant is empowered to apply it to their classroom context is critical for the effective coverage of the content of the course.

At a recent workshop a participant commented that teaching Christian Studies is draining. Workshops leave me both exhilarated and exhausted. I am engaged in discussing for six hours matters that are at the core of my being – who am I, who is God and how do I relate to God, what do I do with my life, to what degree do I lead an ethical life and what answers do I have for the things that go wrong in life? I am continually making judgement calls as to how much time I allow for discussion, for personal inquiry, for what story I can contribute, what alternate resources will better meet the needs of participants and so on. I also want to connect with each participant, find out their story of teaching Christian Studies and affirm them in their practice, guide them as to the questions they can ask back at their schools and so on.

As with teaching, preparing for an *Equip* workshop requires that I make time to be

familiar with the content, the key concepts and the available resources, prepare the devotion as well as attend to the administrative tasks such as sending letters to participants, advising what they need to bring to the workshop, reminding them of the pre-reading requirements. It is important that I keep broadening and deepening my theological and biblical knowledge so that I can address questions posed with insight. Post workshops journal entries completed in the workshop are read and each participant receives feedback. I also need to read through and give meaningful and relevant feedback on the units of work participants have given me. Thankfully I have administrative support that enables the workshop day to run smoothly from setting up the room, to making sure the urn is on and coffee and tea are available as soon as participants arrive as some will have travelled long distances, to organising morning tea and lunch, to printing certificates handed to participants as evidence of their commitment to accreditation requirements, to cleaning up at the end of the day.

I have been overwhelmed with the positive feedback from the workshops. I know *Equip* is equipping teachers – I see them engaged in animated discussions, asking probing theological questions, pouring over their units of work, expressing a real desire to grow and improve their teaching of Christian Studies. They return to subsequent workshops with stories from their classrooms. They show me how they are reviewing and rewriting units of work. They report how they are applying the pedagogy of Christian Studies to the other

learning areas. They recognise the value of spending time reading the theological notes – something they sometimes forget to do. They love doing theology.

The highlight of conducting *Equip* was the presentation of portfolios by first graduates of the course in Lutheran Education Queensland in 2010. By and large participants shared how they had grown in confidence and their ability to write units of work that allowed students to follow their line of inquiry. One reported that perseverance with a difficult class, applying the strategies learnt in the course resulted in moments of self discovery and change in her students that made her struggle to teach Christian Studies worthwhile. Another shared that the production of the portfolio helped her fine tune her beliefs and approach to teaching in Christian Studies. A head of middle school commented that elements of the *Equip* course should be used to support other learning. Regional principals give *Equip* resounding affirmation as the most cost effective and efficient professional development their teachers attend producing good outcomes.

I know there needs to be ongoing future support to sustain participants as they continue their journey in teaching Christian Studies. I believe that *Equip* has done what it has set out to do: equipped teachers with tools and confidence to do the work they have been called to do as well as nourishing their souls as one participant recently said had been the case for her. Accreditation status is an important but secondary bi-product to the personal development gained from *Equip*.



'I know *Equip* is equipping teachers'

Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

‘Help, we need something in the upper primary school that matches the PM Benchmark system when it reaches capacity at level 30 and we need to develop a sequence of skills that need to be explicitly taught in reading in Years 4 to 6.’

This request began our journey to find a quality diagnostic tool and a solid core of beliefs and understandings about effective reading instruction.

St Paul’s Lutheran Primary School investigated various professional learning options available and through the investigation a pilot project offered by Independent Schools Queensland was initiated.

Throughout the pilot, teachers and nominated school leaders were supported through a series of professional learning days, school visits and other networking opportunities. School visits provided contextualised, job embedded professional learning opportunities for teachers. They also provided opportunities for the team to provide feedback and develop future plans.

Strong, evidence based principles underpinned the pilot with a heavy emphasis on the work of Fullan, Hill and Crévola. The pilot recognises the importance of instructional goals and infrastructure to support sustainable

change. The expected change being the move away from previous practice **to a situation where teachers become diagnostic practitioners with a solid core of beliefs and understandings about effective reading instruction.** This entailed every year 4–6 student being diagnostically assessed and the subsequent data plotted on a ‘data wall’ in the staffroom. This was done to encourage sharing of responsibility of all students with every teacher and to support professional conversations amongst all staff. As a result the teachers moved towards the capacity to develop personalised programs that matched the instructional needs of students.

Following the Breakthrough principles (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006), three components are at the core of the pilot: personalisation, precision and professional learning (See Figure 1). **The belief that all students can achieve, given time and support, binds all of the components together.** The personalisation component builds on the work of Carol Ann Tomlinson in differentiation, and strives to deliver learning opportunities that are tailored to the students’ needs. Precision refers to the use of assessment to determine the needs of students so that instruction can be specific and targeted. Professional learning for teachers, which is ongoing and grounded in practice, supports teachers in the process of personalising learning so that it is precise to the learning needs of students.

Figure 1 also shows the other vital components that underpin the approach taken in this pilot. These are assessment literacy; school and classroom organisation; classroom teaching; professional learning communities; intervention and assistance and home school and community partnerships. Leadership and coordination at all levels are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the first two layers.

According to Fullan, Hill and Crévola, each of these components must be addressed and performing well for schools to be truly effective.

The leadership team provided impetus in many ways right down to ‘getting their hands dirty’ by being involved in guided reading groups to support the teachers in setting up the classroom program. St Paul’s Lutheran Primary sees this as an opportunity for school transformation that will be a process that will continue beyond the pilot phase.

We welcome the opportunity to share and model current ground breaking practices with other schools.

St Paul’s Lutheran Primary School
Caboolture Qld



St Paul’s Lutheran Primary School ‘...professional learning for teachers ... supports teachers in the process of personalising learning...’

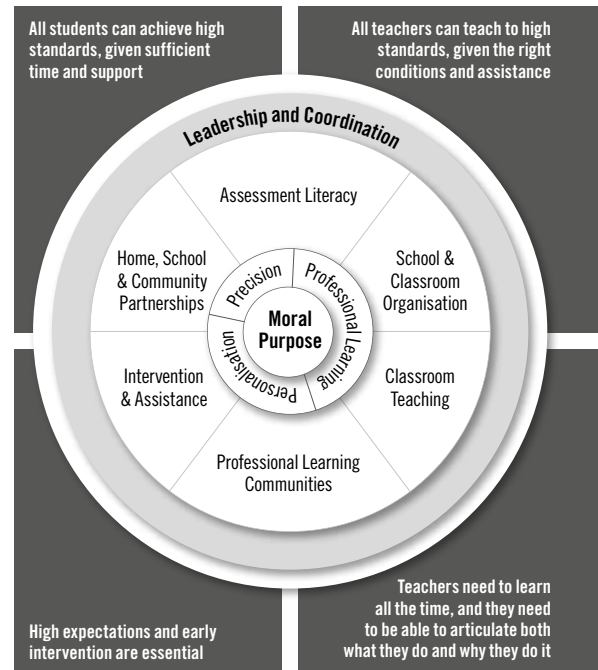


Figure 1: The Breakthrough Framework

By every means possible

As we enter the tenth year of operation of St Stephens Lutheran College, a theme for this year is that *'every student is special, every student can find a place, and every student can make a difference'*.

Behind this theme lies the reality that a significant proportion of new students have come into our college through word of mouth, presented by parents who are struggling with the anguish and frustration of seeing their children in need either socially, emotionally or educationally. What we are perceived to be, then, becomes their hope.

When every enrolment is valued, and parents' expectations are very high, our teaching staff need to contact parents regularly. When issues arise we make responses to complaints and concerns a high priority.

Learning support for students has been a key strength of our college, and staff are regularly sent to seminars to update skills in literacy and numeracy, and managing students with learning difficulties.

Campus wide computer access, though basic in provision, has been a key means to support student learning. Computers donated by local industry have been placed in primary years classrooms to give access to *Mathletics* skill building software and to allow basic computer access.

Because our single computer lab is largely required for senior school subjects we chose to introduce (mobile) pods of netbooks (smaller laptop type computers) which easily access the net through a wireless network. In conjunction with extensive group work, this has enhanced the delivery of our curriculum, allowing us to integrate the use of technology more easily in the classroom and provide a unique service to our students.

We have encouraged students in the senior years to provide their own laptops at school, which has helped to ease the pressure on computer provision. Use of mobile computing has made learning more efficient in many subjects, especially when information is sourced online. Lesson structure then becomes much more student centred and they become more independent learners.

Growing a school has also provided challenges due to uneven class sizes, which has led to the necessity for some multi-age or composite classes, using teacher aides to supplement the work of the classroom teacher. We have worked hard to explain to parents the benefits to ALL students and to understand and allay parents' concerns by means of open dialogue.

By such means we trust that all of our students will become more like what their God created them to be, and in doing so make a difference in the school community in the first instance and then, we would hope, in the world.

It seems simple enough. If you tell students they are specially created to be a special person in the world, who has been offered a personal relationship to God in Jesus, treating them in such a way as to reflect that reality, then we can only hope and pray the Holy Spirit will help them believe that reality also.

St Stephens Lutheran College
Gladstone Qld



St Stephens Lutheran College – learning support for students has been a key strength



St Stephens Lutheran College – 'every student is special, every student can find a place, and every student can make a difference'

Regional news: Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

LSA spotlight on the under 5s

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to a quality early childhood education program. The program is to be delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling with the commitment to be fully implemented by mid 2013. With this in mind it is timely to focus on a couple of early childhood developments in the LSA.

What's in a name?

On January 31 2011 Open Arms Community Child Care Centre, Birdwood, opened its doors and received its very first group of children. Director Tamara Zilm reports that since opening the centre has enjoyed a growing demand for child care places.

But why 'open arms' as the key words in the centre's name? Firstly, the image of open arms conjures up feelings of welcome and a friendly open invitation, and although the centre is the initiative of the local Birdwood Lutheran Congregation, the local steering committee was keen to present the message that the centre would be open to all regardless of religion, race or any other distinctions.

Secondly, the image of children heading into the open arms of a trusted adult, such as running to greet a parent or grandparent, is an image of trust and care. Such an image, backed by loving care, is of critical importance to parents as they leave their 'most treasured possessions', their children, in the care of others. The idea that the staff of the centre will



Open Arms Community Child Care Centre, Birdwood

always have their arms out ready for a hug or a greeting, or ready to offer reassurance, comfort and care when they fall and scrape a knee, or when they just miss mum or dad is an image suitable to convey real Christian care.

Thirdly, from the perspective of the Christian church, the supporting local congregation is keen to reach out into the local community establishing relationships and offering care. And finally, open arms is reminiscent of the ultimate love of Jesus who stretched his arms wide on a cross as a sacrifice for the sins of all.

So...

- » Open arms – to all in the community;
- » Open arms – ready to show real care for the children at the centre;
- » Open arms – to build relationships with families, their children and the wider community;
- » Open arms – sharing Jesus, God's ultimate gift.
- » Open Arms joins Southern Barossa Community Child Care Centre (established 2008) and St Andrew Lutheran Child Care Centre, Nightcliff, NT (established 1974) as the third LSA Child Care Centre.

Early learning centres

St Andrew ELC awash with success

Despite the delays due to a record wet season, including Cyclone Carlos where the suburb of Leanyer received over three metres of rain in the 2010/11 wet season, April 18 will see the St Andrew Early Learning Centre open its doors to 3-5 year old children for the very first time.

The St Andrew community has patiently waited for the dream, first begun sixteen years ago, for an Early Learning Centre to become a reality. Indeed a 1995 edition of *The Lutheran* magazine had a focus on the Lutheran community in the Top End of the Northern Territory and reported that 'St Andrew Lutheran Primary School in Leanyer hopes to provide preschool education one day'.

St Andrew Lutheran Primary School is a small school of four classes and an enrolment in the high 70s. The hope is that the ELC will enable young children to continue on to their first year of primary schooling at St Andrew and help the school to grow. This, coupled with a new suburb to be built in the near vicinity, means that there are exciting times ahead for St Andrew.

Thanks to the Federal Government's Building the Education Revolution initiative an existing building was transformed to house a small kitchen and toilet facility to meet the requirements of an Early Learning Centre.

The commencement of the ELC has resulted from a collaborative effort between St Andrew Lutheran Primary School in Leanyer and

the St Andrew Lutheran Child Care Centre in Nightcliff. This has been a wonderful experience for the broader St Andrew community as different parts of the St Andrew family have come closer together.

St Andrew Early Learning Centre aims to provide an innovative play-based curriculum where children are encouraged to explore and learn about their world. It will also prepare children for the transition into the first year of primary schooling.

Damon Prenzler

Principal

St Andrew Lutheran Primary School
Darwin NT

A new ELC at Immanuel Primary, Novar Gardens ... the journey continues

Just as adults are inspired by an aesthetically pleasing environment in which to learn, live and work, so too are children.

Just as life is often more about the journey than the destination, so too learning is often more about the process than the product.

Just as Christ has given us new life, he also gives new life to all the children in our care, and to their families.

At Immanuel Primary School Early Learning Centre we have the wonderful privilege of working with 3 - 5 year old children and their families before they begin their compulsory schooling journey.

We strive to:

- » structure a learning environment that welcomes, inspires and challenges those who come into it

- » nurture lifelong learners through authentic inquiry-based learning
- » view children as powerful and competent, providing opportunities for each to realise their potential

A talented architect included in our building aesthetically pleasing features inspired by the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The IB Primary Years Program curriculum helps us develop a rigorous, age-appropriate learning program. Our Christ-centeredness reminds us that it is our calling to support each other to be the very best that we can be. Woven together these threads produce a beautiful tapestry of life and learning.

Tania Fragnito

ELC Coordinator
Immanuel Primary School
Novar Gardens SA



Lunch in the light-filled piazza at Immanuel ELC

Lloyd Fyffe writes...

More ELCs

At the beginning of term 2 the new ELC at Tanunda Lutheran School will open its purpose-built ELC building to 25 eager early learning children. The building design and the program have both been prepared with the Reggio Emilia philosophy in mind such that natural environmental colours and raw timber

feature predominately in the building which is flooded with natural light. Outside, a specially designed garden has been created for children to explore and experience.

Meanwhile, Loxton Lutheran School will come on line with its ELC at the beginning of term 3. *Exciting times ahead in early childhood education in the LSA.*



Redeemer Lutheran School was privileged to again host a group of 20 Japanese students

Promoting intercultural understanding

Recently, Redeemer Lutheran School at Nuriootpa was privileged to again host a group of 20 Japanese students and three teachers from Yasuda Elementary School in Hiroshima, as part of the Australian Institute of Intercultural Understanding cultural home stay program.

During their visit to Redeemer the Japanese visitors participated in English lessons, as well as spending three afternoons rotating around different classes interacting with the Redeemer students and participating in the classroom learning experiences. They also spent a day on an excursion to Gorge Wildlife Park and Melba's Chocolate Factory.

Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region



Luther College students tutor Karen kids with their homework

WASP in action: Luther College's Wednesday Afternoon Service Program

Last year Carol Oswald, a parent of a Luther student and member of Croydon Hills Baptist Church, brought to the attention of the Ministry Centre the plight of Karen refugee children.

By way of explanation, the Karen people live mostly in the hills bordering the eastern region and Irrawaddy delta of Burma, primarily in Karen State. They are the second largest ethnic group, numbering about three million of Burma's population of 54 million people. The Karen, who are mainly Christian or Buddhist, have fought for independence from Burma since 1949. As many as one million Karen have been displaced due to persecution by the military government. A large group of them are now located in the Croydon area. They are very worried for their people back in the refugee camps who are understandably eager to get UN status and approvals to come to Australia.

School developments

St John's Lutheran Primary School, Jindera New South Wales

Students and staff are enjoying the new, bright and inviting library, part of the BER project at St John's.

Luther College, Croydon Victoria

The college community celebrated the official opening of its new Middle School on February 13. Former principal, Adrian Wiles, unveiled the plaque.

Victory Lutheran College – full-time college pastor installed

In 2009 staff at Victory Lutheran College in Wodonga recognised the vast opportunities for mission and ministry within the school families.



St John's Jindera inviting library



Adrian Wiles opens Luther College Middle School

There is also great concern for the many still hiding from the ruling junta in Burma.

Together with a small group from Croydon Hills including several Karen people, Carol and Greg Oswald visited the huge camps located just inside the border of Thailand with Burma. The group saw firsthand the suffering of these people. Carol shared her experience with the Luther WASP students and asked whether Luther students would help the Karen kids with homework after school. What has now developed is a growing program of almost 20 Luther students tutoring and helping 35 Karen kids (both primary and lower secondary) with their homework each Wednesday afternoon after school. A further 20 WASP students are involved in other service opportunities in local primary schools and soup kitchens.

At first the Karen kids were very shy but now they arrive and quickly greet their new Luther friends, often with a big hug! It is so heart-warming! The tutoring itself is also wonderful

to watch, with our kids leaning over these little ones, explaining things, laughing, acting out new words, playing spelling games, chasey and hide-n-seek.

What of the future? More Karen kids (and their parents) wish to come to these afternoon sessions. With our Luther students showing heart for this service, Carol has been able to gradually extend the invitation to more of the Karen people. The practical experience of helping refugees has given our students a much more realistic insight into what Christian service and duty is all about. As Jesus says in Matthew 25:

*I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.
And the people to whom Jesus speaks will say,
'Lord, when?'*

*And the Lord will say, 'I tell you the truth!...
Whenever you did one of these things to
Someone overlooked or ignored,
That was me—you did it to me!'
A challenge for all of us.*

David Paech

Christian Education Coordinator
Luther College Vic

As a growing P-12 college, with an enrolment of 550 in 2011, the school was concerned that a greater pastoral presence was needed.

Previously Pastor Joe Kummerow, Pastor of Wodonga Lutheran parish, had sole responsibility for congregation and school ministry. However, with growing staff and student numbers the parish supported a motion by the college to seek approval for a

two pastor parish to help service the growing faith community.

After approval by the College of Presidents, the parish called Pastor Tim Jarick who accepted the call just prior to Christmas 2010. Pastor Tim was installed on 13th February, 2011 at St John's Lutheran Church, Wodonga and now works full-time in the college. Pastor Joe now focuses the majority of his time on congregational ministry; however both Pastors Tim and Joe are involved in the wider ministries of the parish so that they continue to have a presence throughout congregations and college.

Pastor Tim is involved in the ministry of the staff, students and parents. In his first two months at the college Pastor Tim has already been involved in leading worship services, including twice weekly chapel services, visiting students in hospital, support for families who are grieving, support for staff through challenging times, classroom visits and talks, Christian Studies support and plans for the ongoing development of Bible song in the parish.

We give thanks for the blessing of Pastor Tim and Pastor Joe as they minister to our college, knowing that the Holy Spirit guides them as they work with our students, parents and staff.

Good News Lutheran College, Werribee Victoria

In 2011 Good News Lutheran School, Werribee, became Good News Lutheran College, the name change signalling the transition of a primary school into secondary education, to be a P-12 college in 2016. As part of the transition into secondary education, a new logo was launched and some uniform changes were made. Two classes of year 7 students began their secondary schooling at Good News this year. The congregation of St Phillips, together with the college share an exciting and challenging future, as together they reach out into the community.



Victory pastor installation

Participants reflect on *Equip*



Ann Dickinson is a teacher at St John's Lutheran Primary School, Portland Victoria

Equip – a ten module course over two years – to enable me to teach Christian Studies (CS) in the classroom. When told I was to undertake this course my immediate thoughts were:

- » a flight to Melbourne with Trish, a colleague – a rare treat
- » studying, on top of everyday classroom and school demands – an onerous task

The reality – I was an 'experienced' teacher who was not accredited to teach Christian Studies. I knew I was tentative about teaching CS: lack of experience, lack of knowledge, lack of confidence.

From the first module of *Equip* I was required to complete, I realised I was participating with

teachers from a huge range of backgrounds – teaching experience, passion, ethnicity, religious affiliation. But over two years, as Trish and I attended the *Equip* modules in Melbourne, I found that I was better able to understand and enunciate my thoughts, feelings and beliefs regarding Christianity and in particular the Lutheran Church of Australia

Each module in the *Equip* course built on the previous module. Specific readings challenged my ideas and broadened my knowledge and understanding. Focusing on planning units of work for CS helped me see what the big picture was, what I really wanted my students to learn and understand.

In particular, the *Equip* course really opened my eyes to the fact that as teachers we need to be inclusive – encourage those students whose only interaction with the Bible is in my classroom; try to ensure that all students feel their ideas and questions are valued; show by example that it is what we do and say (rather than Bible texts we can quote verbatim) that is important.



St John's Portland students

I would highly recommend the *Equip* course to all teachers, not just those who need accreditation, as it provides many opportunities for open discussion, allows us to share our ideas and teaching successes and reinvigorates the teaching of Christian Studies. It also encourages personal development and understanding.



Mel McDonald is a teacher at Victory Lutheran College, Wodonga Victoria

An *Equip* participant view ...

There are many areas we teachers need to work on to ensure our teaching practices continue to develop. One of those areas in Christian Studies is the need to create an inclusive classroom catering to the varied backgrounds and beliefs of our students. Prior to *Equip*, I did not really consider the dialogue I used when teaching Christian Studies. Although I tried to make the environment open and supportive, I did not really cater for

the diversity of my students and their own understandings about God and the Church. I assumed that they and I held the same Christian beliefs and so I used terminology such as 'we' and 'us' incorrectly. Through my readings in *Equip* I have made a conscious effort to include respectful dialogue.

The best part of *Equip* was the sharing – an opportunity for classroom teachers to 'show off' some of the things they do with their classes. Caught up in the busy day to day life that is school we do not always take the time to appreciate what others are doing or to share and reflect on our own achievements. Most modules required us to bring along a unit of work and relevant work samples to share. Through discussions with others, we were not only encouraged in what we were doing but were rewarded with a wide range of new

and alternative teaching ideas. It was great to see the high calibre of teaching and assessment approaches being used in Christian Studies classrooms and to be able to 'pinch' some of these.

Many of the activities that we completed required us to use different songs, pieces of art, magazine articles, YouTube clips or picture books. We were able to see their relevance, and the relevance of similar resources, in our units. A lot of time was spent familiarising ourselves with the theological notes and curriculum documents which will assist and enhance future planning.

I am grateful for having taken part in this journey and for getting to know others along the way. Already I have made changes to the way I teach Christian Studies.

A full list of references for the articles in this issue is available from the LEA office.