

Service learning in Lutheran schools

Snapshot! Service learning stories from our schools Grace Lutheran College Rothwell and Caboolture Qld

Background

Grace Lutheran College is located on two campuses at Rothwell, and Caboolture, Qld. This 'snapshot' tells the story of how the school is looking at embedding service learning more into the curriculum and culture of the school community.

Context

The Principal and Dean of Christian Living, Spirituality and Service were asked to consider the following questions.

Where has the school been in the past with its service learning journey and what has worked well?

- The college mission statement is often referred to in the college and states clearly that the mission of the college is to help 'prepare young people for a life of faith and service so that God may be glorified in the world.'
- The school community is service focused, especially through fundraising but this is not currently linked with curriculum in most instances.
- Some service in the past has been linked to Christian Studies, but individual student projects have proved difficult to monitor.
- To some extent some examples of service learning have happened without this label and without some of the scaffolding which goes with this approach.
- Some service projects have also occurred as part of Pastoral Care Program, for example all students in year 10 are involved in Random Acts of Kindness.
- The school has had a strong focus on Watoto which involves parents, students and staff.
- 'Interact' has been part of the school's culture for many years.
- There has been encouragement for individuals or groups who have a passion for service or fundraising to take the initiative and implement their action after approval by the administration team.
- Culture of senior students voluntarily serving others through formalised academic tutoring

Where is the school at now? Shift from service to service learning

- Appointment of position of Dean of Christian Living, Spirituality and Service to help to integrate these elements of school life.
- Professional Development offered to Christian Studies and other interested staff. A whole school meeting planned for term 2 that will also include teachers from partner Lutheran primary schools
- Some staff attending external service learning Professional Development
- Gathering data on existing projects
- Principal focusing on the principles of a curriculum of giving in whole school addresses
- Principal and Dean's visit to Indonesia (Grace has students from Indonesia attend the school and are considering a more intentional service learning partnership)
- Service learning committee has been established
- Trying to make links to curriculum with new and existing service and justice initiatives eg close the gap

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- Introducing new Christian Studies units into year 7 and 9
- Trying to link business ventures in Business Studies into this model
- Having conversations to raise awareness of the difference between service learning and charity

Where do you see service learning going in the future and how do you plan to do this?

Refining, embedding and monitoring

- Building a core group of teachers and support staff who are committed to the process and who will trial the approach
- Continued delivery of whole school professional development workshops and spiritual retreats that allow staff to understand and reflect upon the links between faith and action; mercy and justice; service and learning
- Middle school service learning units which seek to meet the requirements of a number of curriculum areas and the Australian Curriculum priorities
- Considering projects in senior school that have already been developed in Christian Studies
- Supporting some keen teachers in diverse departments eg language, music and food science in their attempts to use this pedagogy
- Developing local, national/Indigenous and International projects eg consideration of a combined congregation and local Lutheran schools' trip to North Queensland Aboriginal communities
- Building the approach into the leadership development of young people (pastoral care program)