

**THEME** Innovation and creative pedagogy



Loyd R Fyffe is the Deputy Director of Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

In 2009 there were 13 million bicycles in Beijing. What if all the people in Beijing who own a bicycle choose to swap their bicycle for a car? Half of the world's hospital beds today are filled with people suffering from water related illnesses. Further, it is predicted that in 2015, 605 million people will still be without an improved drinking water source and 2.4 billion people will lack access to improved sanitation facilities [WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme 2010]. How, in the face of a growing world population, will we address these alarming statistics?

The students sitting in our kindergartens, primary and secondary schools potentially hold the solutions to these and other problems besetting the world today or which will beset the world in the future. But they will not necessarily be well equipped unless we inculcate imagination, creativity and innovation in our classrooms.

It is clear that we all are confronted with problems of all magnitudes on a daily basis; the question really is how best to address them? For those of us who like linearity: we need to **imagine** the future (either in the light of a problem or a quest for a better space or place), **creatively** search for solutions to arrive at the imagined goal or destination and finally adopt a new way forward which is the beginning of the evolution of an **innovation**.

It is not difficult to see that it will take a good measure of creativity to avoid pollution overload of our fragile planet or the potential suffering of many more millions of humans due to a lack of clean water and adequate sanitation. But creativity, we are told, is in short supply and especially in and through our classrooms. So often creativity is confined to the art room with bits and pieces available to students through dance, drama and perhaps 'creative writing' sessions.

### Moving from all things familiar

Research shows that humans have a strong preference for all things familiar. Though most people claim to value creativity, novel ideas primarily evoke dislike, disdain, distrust and discomfort. The more original an idea is the greater the potential for discomfort for the author. Since originality necessarily deviates from norms, it has the potential to elicit fear of the unknown, fear of risk-taking and loss, fear of making mistakes, fear of failure. We, as teachers and leaders in Lutheran schools, have a duty to protect our students from these anxieties of uncertainty and disorderly thinking. Undue focus on NAPLAN data and consequently the school's *My School* status does nothing to promote an environment where risk-taking and creative spirits flourish.

Further, intrinsic motivation is central to creativity yet competition, test scores and rewards for high achievement (extrinsic motivation factors) militate against this. Creativity generally thrives in environments that support personal interest, involvement, enjoyment and engagement with challenging tasks. Instead of promoting steady and efficient re-production of existing knowledge, creativity instigates knowledge-production, ie generating original ideas or new ways of seeing things.

### Asking the right questions or finding the right questions?

Inquiry based learning, with its challenge to students to pose questions and then to critically seek answers or solutions, is a mode of learning very much in vogue. Indeed educators rate problem-solving as the most important skill for students. Corporate business executives on the other hand rate problem-solving as about number seven, favouring **problem finding** as the number one attribute in employees and, by association, in school leavers.

Searching for problems, recognising problems, identifying problems which are not clearly obvious are what set viable and flourishing organisations and schools apart from those that flounder or fail.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi reminds us, in relation to corporations, it takes creativity not to be blinded by the trappings of stability, to

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Photo courtesy of Living Faith Lutheran Primary School, Qld

recognise the coming changes, anticipate their consequences and thus reconfigure a new direction. It is no less cogent for Lutheran schools to avoid the trappings of stability; this too will require creativity and imagination.

On a micro level we need to rescue individual students from the trappings of their learning stability. We need to help them thrive not only as they engage with 'stable' existing knowledge but also as they engage with uncertainty and disorderly thinking; the grist of creativity. Indeed creativity is no longer a choice for a select few; it has become an essential quality for all.

### **Imagination, creativity and innovation in the 'classroom'**

Some research, however, indicates that far from cultivating creativity our classrooms are effective stiflers of it. Ken Robinson (2005), chair of the UK government's report on creativity, education and the economy, described research that showed that young people lost their ability to think in 'divergent or non-linear ways', a key component of creativity. Of 1,600 children aged three to five who were tested, 98% showed they could think in divergent ways. By the time they were aged eight to ten, 32% could think divergently. When the same test was applied to 13 to 15 year olds, only 10% could think in this way. And when the test was used with 200,000 25 year olds, only 2% could think divergently.

So, how best to go about helping students be life-long creative producers and problem finders or problem identifiers?

- » We, as teachers, need to explore and practise the concept of creativity.
- » We need to prepare students for their future not our past, remembering that students make up 20% of the present population but 100% of the future.
- » The predominant use of classroom time for the simple transmission of factual information to students must be rejected.
- » Students must be challenged to think critically, to communicate lucidly and to synthesise broadly in order to solve problems.
- » Problem solving which ranges across curriculum content and subject disciplines is critical.
- » We need to value experimentation and use 'mistakes' as learning opportunities.
- » We must value imaginative contributions, creative ideas and celebrate innovative outcomes.
- » We need to ask 'what if...', questions and use the term 'might' (eg What might happen ...?: this gives students permission to imagine).
- » Where possible we need to provide real experiences and real opportunities for observations.

- » We need to give students the opportunity to prepare 'assignments' in creative ways; thus tapping both creativity and learning capabilities.
- » We need to engender curiosity and wonder; we need to make the familiar strange.
- » We need to teach students **how** to be 'creative' as well as nurturing creativity in our schools.

We need to be imaginative, creative and innovative in the whole **process** of education so that we can help all students, not just the 'arty' ones, to develop imagination, creativity and, in turn, innovation. That is to say imagination, creativity and innovation are not separate entities but together form a philosophical approach to doing education.

Finally, if we could teach our students everything that they need to know for their future then we would have little need to teach for creativity. In the meantime every teacher must teach for imagination, creativity and innovation in their students; to do anything less is surely to short-change them and their future.

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# Creativity, continuity, community: Triple C school worship



**Andrew Jaensch is  
Australian Lutheran College's  
Queensland faculty member.**

Wherever God's gift of creativity is employed, God is being worshipped. So proclaims David Mowbray's hymn, 'Come to us, Creative Spirit'.

**Poet, painter, music maker,  
all your treasures bring;  
craftsman, actor, graceful dancer,  
make your offering:  
join your hands in celebration!  
let creation  
shout and sing! (v2)**

Of course, God is being worshipped – consciously or not – in every corner of the curriculum through the creativity which is alive there. But wherever the school or groups within the school gather for intentional acts of worship, there the gift of creativity is also to be fostered and celebrated.

This creativity is a reflection of being created in the image of Creative God (Gen 1:26). This is at least as true for children as it is for adults. There is also a trinitarian dimension to this creativity. All three persons of the Trinity are creative. The Father creates all that is in existence, and continues to create through the mind and hands of people including children ('Six mysteries, Six Challenges', Habel, LEA). The Spirit is at play in the school ('Celebrate the Spirit's freedom: see the Holy Spirit play', Malcolm Bartsch, LTJ Vol 4 No 3 December 2010), inspiring creative expression which itself becomes a vehicle for the gospel which creates faith. And Christ himself, the carpenter's son from a Nazareth workshop, through his miraculous signs and inventive use of word both creates faith and stands as a pointer to the glory of humanity as it is expressed in Psalm 8. All this means that worship of God is impoverished when opportunities for creativity are missed.

Not that there is great risk of this in Lutheran schools. Worship done with and by students is often a fine example to the church beyond the school of just how creative worship can be. One of my joys over decades of worship leadership in Lutheran schools has been the creative expression of students and staff

through worship. Countless times I have been moved and humbled by music, drama, writing, and the visual and digital arts being employed in ways which serve the worship of God. Given the range of creative staff in schools along with wonderful resources including the time for creative preparation, it must be a sin to allow worship in schools to become stultified.

Creativity though is to be in the service of continuity. This is the second 'C' of 'Triple C worship'. This continuity is first of all continuity with the gospel. In worship Christians celebrate the mystery of the risen Christ (Colossians 1:25-28). The use of creativity in worship therefore is not for its own sake, but in service of this celebration and a pointer to Christ himself. ('Worship in a sea of diversity', John Kleinig, paper for ACLE 3). A key question to ask is whether the creativity on display helps those present to see the risen Jesus or not. The beauty of exquisitely 'performed' liturgical worship can become a distraction from attention to the same Christ who is the heart and object of Christian worship, and this is most likely to occur when it seems to be mostly about performance.

The continuity which creativity in worship is to serve is also continuity with the worship tradition of the church, itself a vehicle for the gospel. Christ himself did not prescribe the form which worship should take, and the Lutheran church rightly distinguishes between the essential and non-essential elements of worship, but the form of the worship is still important.

Michael Mason ('Liturgy and today's youth', Liturgy News, September 2007) reports on the consistent and remarkable appeal of the Saturday evening Mass for cohort after cohort of Catholic school students on their Year 12 retreats. He describes those liturgies as both simple (where worship leaders 'get out of the way and let the symbols do their work') and serious (communicating that 'we're doing something important here'). My own experience with students of all ages, and especially young children, reflects Mason's own.

All this points to the fact that creativity can paradoxically involve returning to the essential structure of the church's worship forms while making use of the opportunities for creativity within them. Worship documents of the LCA, while having primarily congregational worship in mind, highlight many of these opportunities which have application for school worship as well. It's right, then, that the hymn, 'Come to us, Creative Spirit', asks that the Spirit would 'in all artistic vision give integrity'.

Creativity in school worship also means that the worship is to be with and for the whole school community, not just an opportunity for individuals to perform. This is the third 'C' of Triple C worship. The hymn, 'Come to us, Creative Spirit', expresses the hope that, 'within our earthly temple, (both) wise and simple may rejoice'. God's gift of creativity turns out to be a wonderful instrument for designing worship which includes everyone in the school, even those who are not Christians.

When considered and applied together, creativity, continuity and community can serve as important guiding principles for worship in schools. May it be that

***In all places and forever,  
glory be expressed  
to the Son, with God the Father  
and the Spirit blessed.  
In our worship and our living  
keep us striving  
for the best. (v4)***

*Pastor Andrew Jaensch is Australian Lutheran College's Queensland faculty member. He is based in the Australian Catholic University School of Education at Banyo where he teaches Lutheran Strand students. Over a twenty three year period he served as school pastor at Immanuel Lutheran College, Maroochydore, Trinity Lutheran College, Gold Coast, and Peace Lutheran College, Cairns. He and his wife Fiona live at Glenview in the Sunshine Coast hinterland.*



# Sustaining innovation



**Susan Hyde is the Principal of the Australian Science and Mathematics School at Flinders University.**

## Rethinking the way we work together

The 20th century industrial structures of education and learning still persist in our secondary schools: in the design of the curriculum, the way that students are grouped together, the learning environment created by the blocks of classrooms, and the hierarchical and industrial power relations between staff. This situation is creating a crisis of engagement in school learning for many young people. The challenge is therefore to transform secondary schools so that they inspire staff to innovate, incorporating and promoting the new dimensions and opportunities for learning provided by the digital technologies now available to our 21st century learners.

This article explores how and why schools need to rethink the way people traditionally work together. I propose that we need to interrupt the habitual 20th century organisational matrix and structures of schools, and suggest some organisational features that have sustained the innovation of the Australian Science and Mathematics School.

The Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS) is a non-selective senior secondary (Year 10-12) school that specialises in interdisciplinary inquiry based learning in science and mathematics. The school operates in a purpose built facility that features an open and ICT rich learning environment. Its innovation is recognised by the OECD Innovative Learning Environment Project (OECD 2011 ILE case study). Funded by the state government, this public school has a charter to transform science and mathematics education, and thus has a professional learning services arm that is accessed by educators in the state, nation and internationally. Year 10 and 11 students are grouped together for a two year pre-year 12 course called the Central Studies, incorporating the traditional science disciplines, mathematics, various Humanities disciplines and English under the themes of such new sciences as nanotechnology, biodiversity and communication systems.

The innovations of the ASMS, such as

- » the interdisciplinary inquiry curriculum design process

- » differentiation enabled by the multi-age grouping of students
- » the effectiveness of the Tutor Group Program
- » intervention methodology designed to support self-directed learners
- » metacognitive strategies in the curriculum that support students to develop higher order learning and thinking skills
- » team teaching in year 12 subjects and
- » a 24/7 virtual learning environment and online reporting

have all been developed by staff working together. The way that staff work together includes timetabled weekly 100 minute teaching and learning teams comprising an interdisciplinary team of teachers who design the curriculum and assessment, share teaching approaches, develop resources, monitor student progress, develop differentiated learning and assessment activities, moderate assessment, review results and redesign as required.

As the school developed the leadership team articulated the decision forming and taking structure that had evolved using the ideas from the distributed leadership literature. They had developed a representation of the model that attempted to describe the way that staff worked together.

When tested with staff it became obvious that whilst the staff recognised the structure and worked in the groups described in Figure 1, the system of the traditional hierarchical structures that exist in schools was a strong metaphor for decision making. Even though the staff was achieving high levels of collaborative practice in their work together, the mind set about the power relations in the school included a hierarchical model. After all, embedded in the term 'distributed' is the idea that someone or something is distributing the power and, as Fitzgerald & Gunter (2006) explored, this can be felt and understood as a form of managerialism, that is a way of delegating tasks and intensifying teachers' work.

Thus we embarked on discussion with staff about the way that we worked together, the notion of leadership practice as interaction driven by expertise rather than role, built on deep trust and reciprocal support, and resulting in shared power and responsibility. We argued that in our world of global networks, top down leadership and 19th century mechanistic organisational structures are not likely to achieve system and school transformation. New organisational forms and new approaches to leadership are needed.

The way that staff can variously engage with collaboration or collegiality may have something to do with the contradictions of power relations



Figure 1: Distributed Leadership ASMS, 2010

created by the hierarchical leadership structure which aligns the roles and responsibilities of formal leadership positions within the organisation, and the acceptance of the power relations implied by a distributed model of leadership. There are official leadership positions in the school: a principal, deputy principal, assistant principals, coordinators, business manager and so on. Each has different role statements aligned with a pay structure. The school sits in a highly regulated government context that defines roles, responsibility levels, pay structures, selection procedures, line management expectations and workload protections. The department and the union promulgate a hierarchical view of the working conditions in the bureaucracy and schools, and flexibility to share power and responsibility are not high on the agenda.

The literature about school leadership does shed some light on how to create the conditions for shared leadership. Harris (2009) talks about developing an attitude of autonomy and professionalism rather than leadership. In this context, leadership arises from the practice rather than actions. Rather than the leader delegating process or required outcomes, it requires the leader to seriously share the power by developing and connecting the interdependencies between the groups that arise from the interaction of staff. Harris acknowledges the barriers to creating the climate of interaction needed for distributed leadership and cites the development of trust and mutual support as key factors to motivate the practice of leaders across the organisation.

These features can be seen in action from the way that people work together at the ASMS. For instance, the focus to research and articulate the pedagogy that supports the self-directed learner arose from a teacher's action research about students who had trouble connecting to the open and self-directed learning program. Her ideas about improving the transition process were developed into a research agenda about supporting the self-directed learner. The mathematics teaching and learning team began their work to describe the 'intervention methodology', the Tutor Group Program curriculum was enhanced to help students understand the benefits and strategies of self-directed learning, and the self-directed learning skills of students were measured and tracked. These activities arose not from the direction of the leadership team but from the autonomous decisions of staff working together in the various teams that do the work in the school. This work, which will

develop and document one of the ASMS's important innovations – what teachers do to support self-directed learning in science and mathematics – is further developed by cross fertilisation of ideas created by staff working across different teams in the school.

What is actually happening here is that innovative ideas for development are being generated from the work of various teams and individuals, and in turn these are becoming priorities for school development and school learning. The ASMS innovations in curriculum design, resources for 24/7 learning, opportunities for inquiry learning and exhibitions and the way students are grouped and work together demonstrate that the school itself learns. Whilst distributed leadership may represent a different story about the way that staff can work together, the representation still implies a hierarchy of activity and flow and does not represent the contributive leadership that flows from the ASMS innovation to the wider educational milieu.

Thus we turned to the thinking about mechanistic and organic organisations, and particularly those related to generating the conditions for innovation.

The idea of organic organisations was explored in 1961 by T. Burns and G. M. Staker in their book called the *Management of Innovation*, a study of Scottish electrical firms (Aitken & Hage, 1971). Their research indicated that the organic model was suited to organisations that

need to respond to changing situations and thus need to be more conducive to innovation.

Aitken and Hage replicated their research in health, education and welfare agencies in the Midwest of the USA. They identified features of the organic organisation that existed in those agencies that demonstrated innovation and, in particular, mechanisms that infuse, stimulate, distribute and develop new ideas that contribute to innovation:

- » staff from a variety of disciplines enable the cross fertilisation of ideas from the confrontation of different perspectives in a common problem solving situation
- » mechanisms for introducing new ideas through staff involvement in professional associations and keeping up with recent literature
- » involving staff in programs of other agencies where they have the opportunity to collect ideas and different ways of working
- » internal mechanisms to distribute ideas and proposals, both formal and informal, across and up and down the organisation so that staff from different parts of the organisation can be involved – flow upwards in the organisation is high in innovative organisations
- » the shedding of responsibility – that is, the innovation or idea creation is everybody's responsibility rather than not passing on ideas because it is not their job

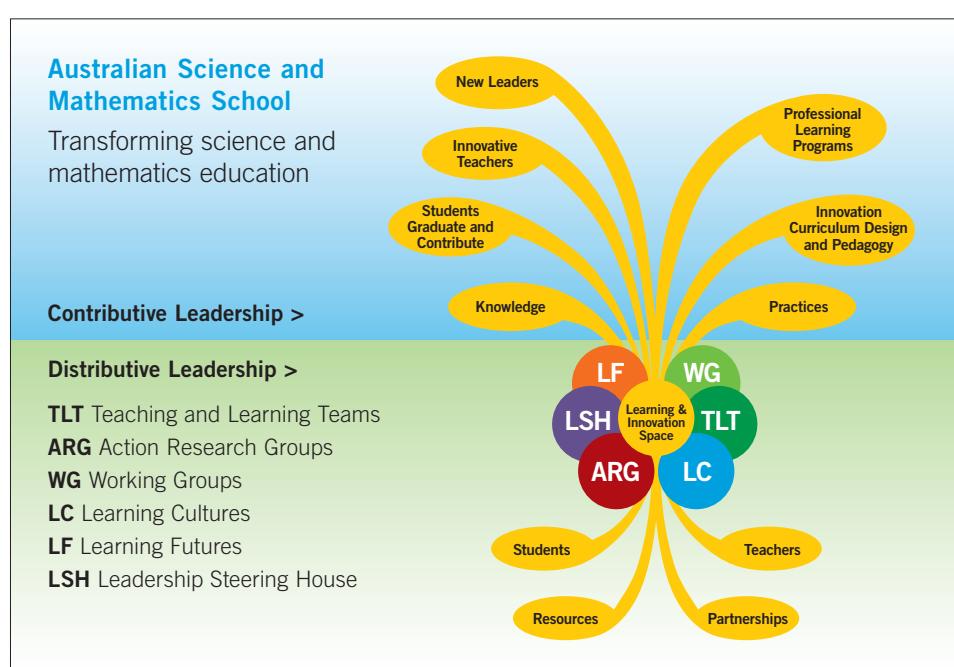


Figure 2: ASMS, the Organic Organisation

- most of the communication in the organisation is about ideas, advice and information rather than instructions and decisions

Gordon Ross's blog (2011) on Mechanistic and Organic Organisations explores how these ideas have been developed through the research about business performance. He concludes that rather than being in opposition the notion of mechanistic and organic in a system is a continuum. Action relates to the nature of the problem/idea, simple, complicated, complex or chaotic. Most times a complex system like a school requires organic action and connections. Sometimes we need to work in a mechanistic way. An organic system needs structural parameters, eg rules, hierarchy, regulations, procedures and process to prevent chaos.

Figure 2 represents an organic model of the way that people work together at the ASMS to learn and innovate. The organisation – the students, staff and the school itself – learns through the collegial work of the teams that surround the learning and innovation space. As a result of this learning the school contributes leadership (contributive leadership) to the wider context of the educational community through the knowledge it creates and shares with others outside of the school.

Through its contributive leadership the ASMS realises its charter to transform science and mathematics education (OECD 2011).

Figure 3 shows how the ideas that are generated by the collegial teamwork flow throughout the organisation and to the wider context beyond the school. The teams are formed because of the work that needs to be done and the learning that is required to support that. Leadership arises from the knowledge and expertise of the individuals rather than their role and position. The work of the teams is interdependent rather than guided by strict roles and functions. This exemplifies the dynamic and flexible way that people work and learn together enabling the organisation to respond to change, resulting in learning and innovation (OECD 2011).

The reality of our secondary schools in these times is that the 19th century industrial structures of education and learning still persist: in the design of the curriculum, the way that students are grouped together, the learning environment created by the rows of classrooms and hierarchical and industrial power relations between staff. This situation is creating a crisis of engagement in school learning for many young people. Lots of them are bored by the drill learning style created by teachers using textbooks, some feel excluded because the

learning is not connected with issues that interest them and some are insulted because their interests and learning capacities are being ignored. Some young people are getting quite cranky and this affects the way that they relate together and with their teachers.

Hedley Beare (2006) identified the areas of school activity needing radical transformation if we were to cater for the 21st century learner. He proposed that we need to rethink the way schools are organised, such as the way we group students together, the way the curriculum is boxed into subject based learning, the workforce available to aid student learning, where, when and how students can learn and their access to the resources. To do this we need new ideas, we need to think differently, we need the courage to take risks, try ideas out and make calculated and bold changes.

Beare advised that we need a new *imaginary* for schooling and learning and to move away from the 19th century idea of the machine-like organisation of the school to a 21st century imaginary that envisages the school as a network based on a living system. If we visualise the organisation (school) as a web of relationships rather than lines of authority and power – as a connected and organic system that learns and adapts – then leadership becomes a matter of maximising synergies and connecting ideas from across the learning network created by its form and activity. This will mean abandoning practices that don't fit and placing innovation at the centre. It means abandoning the machine and structure metaphors that people use to describe the way that schools are organised and how learning occurs. It means creating a culture of trust where good ideas can spread throughout the organisation without referring to whose job it is, where failure is expected and generates learning and solutions.

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## ASMS Contributive Leadership in Action 2012

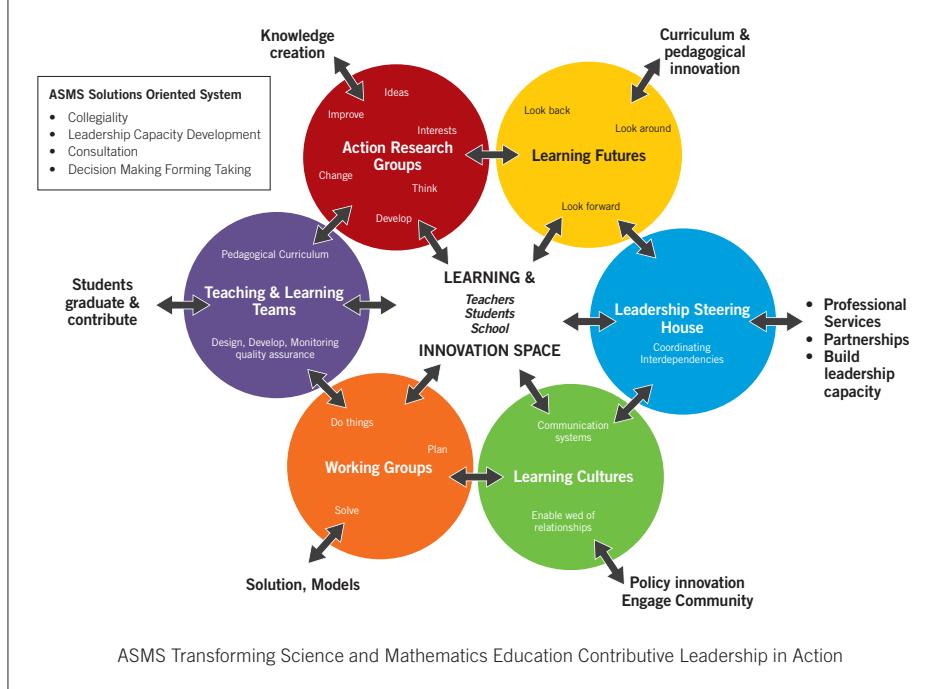


Figure 3: ASMS Contributive Leadership in Action

# Finding the artist inside you



Rachael Jacobs is a lecturer in Creative Arts Education at the Australian Catholic University.

All children are born artists, the problem is to remain an artist as we grow up.

Pablo Picasso

You were once an artist. Yes, you. Perhaps you still are. Deep inside you is the ability to draw, sing, paint, pretend and dance...and enjoy yourself at the same time.

But something happened to you as you grew older. You began to compare yourself to the people around you and seeds of self-doubt crept in. And you thought to yourself, 'Can I really do all of those things?'

Then society's modesty demanded that you publicly put yourself down, rather than rejoice in your abilities. You said out loud, 'I'm not very good.'

You listened to adults who proclaimed that only certain 'talented' people could sing, dance or act. And you thought, 'I'm not one of them.'

They said that 'real' work is not fun. So you concluded that anything you enjoyed must not be real work. You wanted to work like adults did – at chairs and desks – and you thought, 'I'd better stop playing.'

And they told you that there are no study options, no jobs and no future doing what you loved. So you stopped.

The adults said that we only sing in special places, we only dance on special 'dance floors', we only act on a stage, and the paint goes on the paper. You stopped singing and dancing, stopped skipping down the street and stopped playing 'pretend'. You put the paints away, washed your hands of the clay and sat in the chairs they provided. And at the end of 13 years of schooling, they concluded that you had an 'education'.

Welcome to the tragedy of western society. The more developed we've become, the more we've forgotten how to have fun, play, experiment, take risks, feel and experience life. And with that, we've suppressed and weakened our natural abilities to solve problems, think big thoughts, and share our best with others. I lecture in Arts education.

Dance, Drama and Music are my specialist mediums, but there are many forms of creative thinking that offer the opportunity for us to develop our whole person, not just one side of our brains. I advocate for the arts because they offer opportunities for rich learning experiences that develop empathy, aesthetic understanding and an awareness of our place in a world.

The Arts use children's natural language. Children love to dance, sing, play, pretend, paint and draw. Their imaginations are wild and they think and dream in a colourful landscape. The Arts may be the one area where the child is more expert than you!

Let's not squash this creativity. Let's allow it to grow, and, at the same time, grow innovative minds that will be both inspired and equipped to tackle the problems of the 21st century. The solutions to poverty, inequality, climate change, disease and conflict cannot be found on a worksheet and certainly not on a NAPLAN test. To address these problems our students are going to have to think imaginatively and they'll need to know how to work together.

Many people say that artists don't live in the real world, or the Arts don't develop real world skills. But in reality Arts skills are the closest reflection of our world that we have. Our lives are rarely black and white, and right and wrong answers seldom exist. Our lives are nuanced and full of challenges, some of which are exciting and fun, whilst others will shake us to our core. In life ambiguity is rife, and much of the time we have to make our own decisions. Our lives are full of feeling and emotions, and every interaction is rich with tone and context. It is our responsibility to discover who we are

as people. No one can do this for us. The arts prepare us for all of this and more.

Teaching with creativity is not easy and it takes a brave teacher and a brave learner to embark on this journey. However, the most important tool you can use is your own willingness to try something new. In some ways, the Arts require us to un-learn everything we've been told – do look at each other's work; talk loudly in class; don't stay in your seat; take risks and make mistakes; share ideas; don't tell me the right answer, tell me your answer. This can be challenging and displacing for the teacher. But with the right attitude, some boundaries and a clear idea of your objectives, it is possible to achieve the extraordinary. We can produce learning experiences that you and your students will remember for the rest of their lives. There will be laughter and tears and perhaps both at the same time.

That's because at the core of the Arts is a sense of the aesthetic. Many philosophers and great thinkers have spent much time debating the definition of this word, but for now, know that its meaning has its foundations in feeling and appreciation. Let's remind ourselves that the opposite of aesthetic is anaesthetic. Let's not anaesthetise our students. That would be a failure for which we cannot be responsible.

*Rachael Jacobs is a lecturer in Creative Arts Education at the Australian Catholic University. She is a dancer and musician and has her own cultural dance company in Brisbane. Rachael is currently completing a PhD on assessment in arts education and has just released her first book, called 'Nice Arts!'.*



# Action research for professional learning

Teaching is an exciting and diverse vocation. As advocates of life-long learning teachers aim to instil a love of learning in the students we teach. In the busyness of our lives one of the many challenges is to engage in meaningful learning ourselves to ensure we remain innovative and creative in our pedagogy.

Early in 2012 the principal laid down a challenge to the staff of St Michael's: we were to undertake an action research project. With some excitement and much trepidation we were introduced to the process by Ruth Zimmerman from Australian Lutheran College.

Each teacher was to come up with a question designed to improve their everyday practice in literacy and numeracy. Funding was provided through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs

Program (LNSLN) grant for each teacher to have two days release with additional personal research time. With the focus of our task set, we reflected on current practices and began delving into the literature related to our question, seeking evidence and examples of best practice from around the world.

With this knowledge teachers went on to collect data from students or trial strategies within their classrooms to deepen their understanding of the chosen question. Analysis then took place of the data collected, conclusions were drawn, implications were considered, and practices changed or ratified.

Throughout the process we met in small groups during staff meeting times for the sharing of ideas, support and clarification. We were required to complete a paper and present our research to the staff in term 4. In line with the PYP philosophy to which St Michael's is

committed, we had a celebration of the learning. This celebration of the innovative ideas and creative learning provided professional development for all staff from the diverse experts within our school.

As authors of this piece we appreciated the opportunity for research and believe that the process provided focus and purpose for our professional learning. It provided time to reflect and engage in professional dialogue around our learning journeys. It also facilitated innovative thinking and learning, highlighting the skills and knowledge of colleagues and affirmed our strengths as a collaborative staff. The learning was rich because of the variety of questions that were asked by staff and therefore the diversity of experts that developed. It challenged us by formally putting us in a learning situation enabling us to empathise with our students.

## Two research examples...



**Emily Dougherty** is a year 7 teacher at St Michael's Lutheran Primary School with seven years teaching experience from reception to year 7 in SA and NT.

### Teaching the digital generation

Last year I became keenly aware of how much teaching is changing in the digital age. Some of this was associated with moving from teaching in junior primary to having a year 7 class, but I believe that most of it was because of working in a 1:1 classroom, where all students had continual access to individual tablets. I became intrigued with the level of student engagement and the many possibilities on a daily basis. The question for me became, 'How do I make the most of this technology?'

I came to realise that I needed to understand better the students I was teaching and the skills that they would need for the future before I could provide them with the necessary opportunities in the classroom. My main reading focus revolved around the digital generation and 21st century skills. Throughout the reading process I continually trialled ideas and digital programs in the classroom and reflected on their effectiveness for that group of learners. I used a variety of collaborative,

communication, presentation and learning programs as a way to engage students, such as Wall Wisher, Edmodo, Glogster, Community Clips, Google Sketch-up and podcasts.

I learned that this generation of learners want to be the creators and actors rather than the audience. This prompted me to adapt my teaching and learning experiences and assessment tasks to enable the students to take more control of not only their learning, but also the mode in which they shared their understanding. This meant that the focus shifted from students seeking information from me alone and moved to students learning from each other.

*The object of teaching a child is to enable the child to get along without the teacher. We need to educate our children for their future, not our past.*

Arthur C Clarke



**Evie Stevens** is a year 2 teacher at St Michael's Lutheran Primary School with 15 years teaching from Kindergarten to year 9 in primary schools and colleges in SA and WA.

### Emotional wellbeing

Moving from a leadership position back into the classroom allowed me to continue to explore the mental and emotional needs of students within the classroom. Throughout the prior six years I had been confronted with numerous students who were literally crying out for help, disrupting their classes and the learning of other students and themselves. I asked how I could relate these experiences to my role as a classroom teacher, and what the role of the teacher was in the emotional development of students.

Through research and professional relationships outside of education, I was introduced to 'Marte Meo – On One's Own Strength'. The focus of my investigation was not on the child, but on what I do as a teacher and the interactions that I have with the students. Aarts (2006) has broken down everyday interactions between teacher and student to little moments in time. This rang true with me as mindfulness (being in the



Throughout the process we met in small groups during staff meetings...

moment) was another technique that I had researched and witnessed benefits for both students and adults.

Using a school readiness skills checklist developed by Aarts for teachers, focusing on interactions and supportive communication skills, I set about putting them into practice in my classroom. Throughout the research period I learnt much about myself, and was continually reminded about the importance of language and its use in providing emotional wellbeing for students. Clear structure and predictability in my interactions enabled students to cooperate and feel secure in their actions, and I could help students explore and manage their interactions through the ongoing naming of actions and feelings that the students were demonstrating through behaviours.

These skills are ones that we often use as teachers, but can often get lost in the busyness and bustle of completing the day to day teaching requirements. However, since I see my role as helping students to develop emotionally I need to help students regulate their emotions. To do this I need to name my actions to decrease student anxiety and increase cooperation. By naming the students' emotional displays, I can help them register what they are feeling which then helps them know how to regulate those feelings with support.

### Conclusions from the research

*I will continue to use a variation of R5 in my classroom. I found the writing and reflecting portion to be time-consuming. I also didn't have time to later read all of their reflections. I will modify the process to R4: Read and Relax, Reflect and Rap. D Hall*

*This has been a valuable exercise as I have extended my knowledge of the ways my students are learning and developing in their number sense. I can now be more conscious of this in my planning and differentiate more carefully. The possibilities are certainly endless!*  
J Schultz

### Some thoughts six months on

The year 6AB class worked with the Writers' Workshop program last year to improve student enjoyment and the quality of students' writing. We found there were many aspects of the program which were beneficial so we will be running the program again this year. We will make some modifications to the program this year based on some of the findings from our action research project.

*I am continuing to work with (a child who had an in-utero stroke), hoping to continue to help her build new neurological pathways. From my research I understand that she needs explicit explanation of expectations, to be*

*shown what to do and then have opportunities to practise, to move from the known to the unknown and to aim for accuracy, automaticity and consistency. This is a slow process, but progress is being made.* J Clark

### Some of the questions and topics covered

- » Writers' workshop
- » Digital generation
- » Circle time and literacy
- » Multimedia and PE
- » Emotional wellbeing and writing
- » Assessment of creativity
- » Inferencing
- » The 'R5' reading strategy
- » Teaching grammar in a class with diverse needs
- » Learning intentions in Mathematics
- » Explicit teaching of self-editing skills
- » Differentiated strategies for teaching number
- » Individual student study

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

### Of paradoxes and paint palettes

As Christians, we might well argue, we have come to terms with paradox. It just seems so reasonable to experience salvation completely and absolutely through God's act of grace through Jesus Christ, and yet feel compelled to 'act'. Our natural response to his 'no strings attached' grace is to love others unconditionally – to serve, to give, to feed and clothe and provide for others. In an odd way, this apparent paradox brings abundant richness to our faith and us.

In our learning we might also identify richness in paradox. Is it a paradox that the best pathway to high NAPLAN scores for a student may well be to ignore teaching for testing and instead put all our energies to developing a love of learning? Is it a paradox to suggest that the best way to learning and retaining science and mathematics concepts may well be to produce a piece of art, or music, or dance?

As a science teacher I can remember long lunch conversations with a teaching colleague as to the merits or otherwise of giving dance equal subject and time status as science or maths or english or, well, other 'proper'

subjects that shaped and contributed to our future society. It was the wrong discussion. I should have been asking myself how I use dance in my science classes to bring understanding and engagement and a love of learning. I am now fairly confident that dance should have been a key element in the rigour of my classes. That is a challenge to me at so many levels – but it isn't about me.

I should also have been asking myself how the natural dancers in my class could connect with science and numbers and equations and 'all that stuff'. Did I assume they couldn't; or could I have taken the Sir Ken Robinson approach of his famous TED Talk and encouraged the dancer? What about the musicians, artists, inventors, nerds, mechanics, sporty-types and, as Steve Jobs put it, *'the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently'*? God's word sometimes seems to be the long story of 'misfits' being lifted up. For us as teachers we may well ask how we lift up everyone in our class or, as Eugene Peterson expresses it in his rewriting of Matthew 5, how do we 'bring out the God-

colours' in every one of the learners we spend time with?

And what if those individual God colours are actually best revealed within a team? As learners at LSA we think that is realistic – because we experience it when we work as a team. We know we understand better; we have new ideas and gain collective wisdom; we are astounded by our collective experience and what each of us can contribute. If we were to sit an exam, we would do better individually after we have worked together as a team. Doesn't seem logical – but that is why at every opportunity we want to come to sites of learning as a team and to work with a team.

'Bringing out the God colours' in others was one of the revolutionary foundations of Christianity. It may well be the revolution of our sites of learning. Maybe a dance in a science class may affect a learner for life. As 'V' in the movie says, 'A revolution without dancing is a revolution not worth having'.

#### Rod Wearn

ICT consultant

Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

### Open doors, open walls at Tanunda

The Tanunda Early Learning Centre has been operating since May 2011. The centre was purpose built to maximise visual, auditory and importantly kinaesthetic learning modalities. The curriculum is based on The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Christian Studies Framework for Lutheran Schools and the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

Exploration, discovery, creativity and sensory engagement are to the fore as the early learners move freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces where specially designed garden and play spaces welcome student interaction. Clearly student choice and development are critical learning drivers but these are not without adult guidance where staff at the ELC holds high expectations for all children that are both appropriate and challenging.

One of the real assets of the ELC is the creative use of the school's Bush Block. Recently the ELC received a grant from the Natural Resources Management Program to revegetate the area with native plants, some of which will become 'bush tucker' and some attract bird life. A natural shelter – a base for children's learning – will be constructed, as well as a fire pit, bird hide and water course

along with sculptures and mosaics created by the children. The learning opportunities in the Bush Block are enormous and encompass all areas of learning – numeracy, literacy, science, social, dramatic play, music and movement, art, ICT and Christian studies.

Tanunda ELC staff are strongly committed to developing creative and innovative pedagogies that connect natural spaces without walls to authentic learning experiences. This innovative mindset has given opportunities for the children to engage with authentic experiences that go beyond what is possible in the more traditional classroom setting.



Exploration, discovery, creativity and sensory engagement are to the fore



Staff at Tanunda ELC are strongly committed to developing creative and innovative pedagogies

The search for creative and innovative pedagogies involves the staff in continuous action research. Such commitment to early learning has necessitated an open door to the steady stream of educators from other schools and systems keen to learn from the exciting early learning experiences offered at Tanunda ELC.

#### Marie Hage

ELC Director

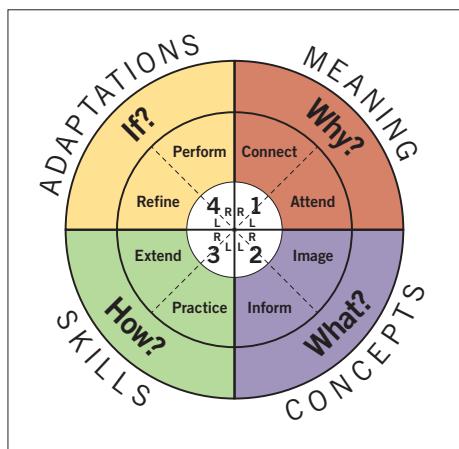
Tanunda Lutheran School  
Tanunda, SA

#### Tori Weiss

Christian Studies Officer  
Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

## Creative pedagogies

Teaching staff at Good Shepherd Lutheran College participated in a two day 4MAT workshop where learners are posed four questions as they move through the cycle: Why? What? How? and If?



The 4Mat Model – A Cycle of Learning  
(taken from [www.4mat4learning.com.au/](http://www.4mat4learning.com.au/))

### MYP mathematics

*Unit title: Space to move  
Inquiry question: What relationships are used to give space meaning?  
Topic: Measurement*

The initial questions posed were: *Why is an understanding of space important? Is space limitless? If so, can and do we limit it? What do we use to put limits in place?* From brainstorming, viewing YouTube clips and making collages our group understood WHY we needed to understand the concept of space, and the role measurement played. The WHAT phase of the cycle involved experiences

involving Toblerone boxes, Sunnyboy iceblocks, Cheezel packs and oranges as we explored the concepts of perimeter, area, surface area and volume. The HOW phase extended the students by posing a problem to be solved in the form of a mathematical investigation. The IF question involved student reflections to refine their overall understandings of the concept covered.

### NTCET music – year 11 (stage 1)

*Unit title: Through the eyes of a child  
Inquiry questions: How does music help children to learn and develop their imagination?  
Topic: Children's music*

Students explored WHY imagination is central to an understanding of children's music by revisiting their childhoods and discussing favourite television shows, listening to a selection of contrasting children's music and visual representations. In the WHAT phase, students looked at what experts had to say about children's music and education. Don Campbell's *The Mozart Effect for Children* became a key reference point, which led to an analysis of musical elements and their use. The class analysed Schumann's *Kinderszenen* and completed a comparative analysis task of the music listened to at the beginning of the unit, helping to inform students and allow them to practise the skills and knowledge acquired. Moving into the HOW phase, two assessment tasks were completed. The composition task required students to create their own children's song and creatively apply elements and techniques studied. The performance task allowed students to organise and present a workshop for a junior primary music class. Both tasks led into the IF stage of the cycle where students refined their learning and performed in a new context.

The use of the 4MAT framework across the college has reminded us of the importance of creatively engaging and challenging our students through planning for a variety of different learning opportunities within a unit of work to engage all students and extend them in their learning.

### Rachel Boyce

Head of Middle School  
Good Shepherd Lutheran College  
Howard Springs NT

### Caroline Barker

MYP Coordinator  
Good Shepherd Lutheran College  
Howard Springs NT



Good Shepherd Students building a tetrahedron as part of a team-building activity

## Embracing the new paradigm – flipped classroom at Vineyard Lutheran School

I first learned of the flipped classroom strategy from a colleague whilst attending an *Equip* training course late in 2012 and I was immediately intrigued and excited about the possibilities this strategy opened up, both for myself as an educator and for my students.

Essentially, the strategy involves recording an aspect of your lesson and then making that available for your students to view online. The students (and more often than not their parents) then have the opportunity to view this media either at home on their family computer or roaming on their iPad. It allows them flexibility

as to when and where they view the information and how they respond to that information. It puts the student at the centre of their own learning experience and as such deviates from old school pedagogy where the teachers view themselves as the 'information keepers'.

Not only have I witnessed students becoming more engaged in their own learning process; my own lessons have become much more student centred. Children arrive in class with their own questions about the material, and so I am much more able to address the unique learning needs of each child. Although I am relatively new to the process, I can already see endless possibilities for the strategy into the future. Ideally, I would like to 'frontload' many more lessons before

we even address them in class so that class activities are increasingly more streamlined to the individual needs of the student.

Our trial of this strategy at Vineyard Lutheran School has been overwhelmingly positive. Like many other smaller schools, we do not have the resources of our larger cousins. However, by being innovative and using technology in meaningful ways, we feel we can offer high quality, 'anywhere, anytime' learning experiences for our students.

### Brendan Ackland

Year 4/5 class teacher  
Vineyard Lutheran School  
Clare, SA

## Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region

### Geelong Lutheran College building dedication

*'I dedicate these buildings for the purpose of education and bless them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.'* At 2:30 pm on Sunday 28th April Pastor Tom Pietsch dedicated the latest building projects at Geelong Lutheran College (GLC). This concludes for the moment an intensive period of building during the last few years and delivers exciting learning spaces that allow us to provide significant facilities for our senior secondary students. At the same time we also dedicated the middle school classrooms and science room (stage 2 completed in 2010) and the materials technology and systems rooms (stage 4A completed in 2012).

Stage 5A is placed to the south of our original school building (stage 1) and begins the formation of a central large courtyard area that will become a significant feature of the College as it grows. Stage 5A comprises food technology, a dining room, physics/biology room, general learning spaces, tutorial rooms, a drama/music space, instrumental rooms and a staff work area.



At just over 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, this building has made a significant impact on the physical presence of the college. The project has taken nine months to complete from the middle of last year and was split into two phases to ensure that the food technology and physics/biology rooms were ready for the first day of school this year. Brand Architects designed the buildings and the result is a stimulating and flexible learning environment that is a pleasure to showcase to prospective and existing families.

It requires an enormous commitment of time, energy and financial resources to establish a credible educational player in a competitive region like that of Geelong in the 21st century and our journey to date has been exciting, challenging, frustrating and rewarding. The new Armstrong Creek community we are situated in is rapidly growing and GLC is hoping to be well and truly established by the time other schools already planned for the area are built and opened. A project of



this magnitude, especially in a new school environment, requires a great deal of input from a team of people. The GLC community is grateful to a number of individuals and organisations who have assisted us in establishing these buildings – from concept to visioning, design, construction, financing and equipping – and finally, and most importantly, to those who will enter to teach and learn for many years to come.

### Lakeside Lutheran College announcement

Lutheran Education South Eastern Region and Lakeside Lutheran College Council are very excited about the news that Julian Denholm has been appointed as the new principal for Lakeside at Pakenham. Julian has had a wonderful career as a leader in Lutheran schools. He is currently principal of Good Shepherd Lutheran College – the largest independent school in Darwin – and prior to this was principal of Concordia College in Adelaide. Julian's service in Western Australia was also significant as the foundation principal of Living Waters Lutheran College at Warnbro just south of Perth. The college council warmly

welcome Julian's appointment which will build on the dedicated service of foundation principal Peter Miller. Julian will take up his new position from the beginning of the 2014 school year.

We are thankful that Julian and his wife Maria have once again taken up the huge challenge of crossing state borders to continue their dedicated service to Lutheran education in Australia in yet another new context. Julian's appointment is certainly wonderful news for the Lakeside community and we wish Julian and his family every blessing as he completes his service at Good Shepherd Lutheran College and prepares for a new and exciting role at Lakeside.

### Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Horsham

Congratulations to Holy Trinity Lutheran School on the progress they are making toward the establishment of a middle school. The project now has approval from the Council of Lutheran Education and District Church Council (Vic/Tas). The development has created much excitement in Horsham and the surrounding districts as the news of the expansion made front page news in the local paper. While there

are more formalities to negotiate the school has an extremely positive outlook as enquiries for middle schooling flood in. Congratulations go to principal, Jeff Gork, and the team for their excellent work in bringing the concept closer to fruition.

### Seeking new principals

Both Nhill Lutheran School and Sunshine Christian School have commenced the task of searching for new principals. We encourage aspiring primary school leaders to watch out for the position advertisements that will be posted on the teachers.on.net website during the course of this term.

#### Paul Weinert

Director, LESER

## Good News Lutheran College, Tarneit

### Extract from *The Age* newspaper:

'Some really amazing blogging is being done in Victorian schools and often the best work is being done by younger students,' says James Farmer, the former Deakin University education technology lecturer who left academic life in 2005 to establish Edublogs, his blog-hosting website, as a global operation.

Mr Farmer now has 20 staff in a dozen countries, and his site hosts the blogs of a million school teachers and their students, along with just as many academics and thousands of universities, government departments and school districts on almost every continent. For all that, he says, 'Around the world the Victorian Education Department is our biggest client and has created its Global2 webpage as a free Edublogs campus site, with thousands of teachers and their students as bloggers.'

There might be the million or so teacher bloggers around the world but it sometimes seems like a club where each blogger knows who all the others are. So it was that Mrs Morris knew an expatriate American blogger, Janet Abercrombie, whose blog is called the Expat Educator.

'One thing I have learnt from Kathleen is the idea of a scaffold of different responsibilities a person has with writing a blog,' Ms Abercrombie says.

'Students need to learn they should write a post without putting too much personal information in it. I found my students would show what they planned to write to a couple of friends to comment on and that way they weren't including too much personal information.'

After teaching at an international school in Hong Kong since 2001, Ms Abercrombie met an Australian there who is now her husband. They came to Melbourne this year, where she was appointed head of the junior school at the Good News Lutheran College in Tarneit, in Melbourne's west.

'After I started my own education blog, I became more involved with social media through Twitter and blogging and I realised the conversation I was having about the way students learnt could grow beyond just one school. I started my own blog and began using blogging in the classroom as a means to publish students' work,' she says.

In a guest column for the Edublogs website, Ms Abercrombie raises the question of why teachers might want to blog. She says it's easy for newcomers to be overwhelmed by the idea of blogging, especially if they are unclear about its purpose.

'Is the blog for you or for students and parents? Will it be written as a medium for reflection, a newsletter, or a source of advice for other educators? When you clarify the purpose behind your blog, you begin thinking differently about your practice,' she writes.

'You mentally note classroom events for future reflection. You make schedules for student blog posts. You discover ways in which your students' blogs will demonstrate knowledge of curricular objectives. You notice other bloggers, relate to the struggles of others and no longer feel alone in your classroom.'

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/editorial/global-village-of-students-teachers-and-families-20130419-2i56i.html>

# Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

## ICT in extension: moving towards a paperless classroom

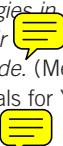
There are 50 students from year 1 to 6 in the extension program, with groups withdrawn from classrooms weekly for a 45 minute session. Students are learning how to plan an inquiry for themselves, linked to the content descriptions within one subject area in the Australian Curriculum and the Critical Creative Thinking Skills in the General Capabilities. Students refer to the Australian Curriculum on the web to help plan their inquiries. All resources such as graphic organisers, inquiry and assessment templates are distributed through My Big Campus. Once students have planned and written their own assessment, they undertake their inquiry independently and use iPads to research, store and organise information and then present the results to their peers for peer and self-assessment. Feedback is provided from peers and teachers using an online proforma accessed through iPads.

### Rebecca McConnell

Curriculum Coordinator  
Living Faith Lutheran Primary School  
Murrumba Downs, Qld

## Developing digital proficiency: our journey in 21st century learning

*Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology. In this digital age young people need to be highly skilled in the use of ICT. While schools already employ these technologies in learning, there is a need to increase their effectiveness significantly over the next decade. (Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2008)*



Living Faith has taken some exciting steps forward in our journey as 21st century learners and educators. In 2012 we launched a 1:1 iPad program in year 5 and 6 and are now filtering the use of this technology through the school community. This year a bank of iPads is available for classroom teachers to borrow, each loaded with collaborative and creative apps such as *SyncSpace*, *Popplet*, *Screen Chomp* and *Puppet Pals 2*. Prep students access their own set of iPads complete with 'Clumsy' cases. Teachers are shown innovative apps and best practice with iPads each week at our staff meetings. Banks of Ultrabooks – quick to start and easy to deploy – are also available for use.

Year 5 and 6 students have now begun using their iPads to link to the 'My Big Campus' Learning Management System. Teachers use this to organise and share digital content with students and provide instant feedback on assignments and responses to quizzes and inquiry questions.

In order to prepare for the advent of the technology syllabus, each teacher has identified a skill to develop and each is supported throughout the year as they work to improve their own abilities.

### David Folker

ICT Facilitator  
Living Faith Lutheran Primary School  
Murrumba Downs, Qld

## iPads in the 21st century music classroom

*The great thing about the iPad is that it's so creative. Its user interface does not impede progress. Let's create a digital orchestra to showcase the benefits of cutting edge technology within the music classroom (Neil Johnston; [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W9z-nrTQD4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W9z-nrTQD4)).*

In February 2012 Living Faith became part of a ground breaking program, the first outside of England, to work with Neil Johnston. Neil created a ten week program for primary school students designed around chords, melodies, pentatonic scales and accompaniments, with teamwork, cooperation, communication, listening and performance skills built into the pedagogy.

Each week we worked on building skills by using Garage Band before creating our own small songs (with a melody and lyrics!). This then gave students the skills to play, perform and record Neil's song, 'You Make Me So Electric'. We made contact with Neil via Skype and YouTube messages.

This was the best teaching experience I've ever had. It was something that the children were interested in, something we could learn and grow from together. Don't be afraid of the technology, give it a go. You will never look back and your students will thank you.

### Belinda Dolan

Music Teacher  
Living Faith Lutheran Primary School  
Murrumba Downs, Qld

## Good News Lutheran School gifted education

As we are approaching the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the program for gifted students at Good News, it seems appropriate to look back at where we have come from and what we have achieved.

From its very humble beginning as one small withdrawal group of high needs year 7 maths students (both those needing extra support and those needing an advanced curriculum), the program has grown and spread across the school. This year 85 children across years



Living Faith has taken some exciting steps forward



Living Faith students created a digital orchestra

2 to 7 participate in daily maths or English extension classes, or both.

The program was initially a response to concerns about lower than expected student results in external tests and competitions. We were aware that we had a significant number of very capable children, yet our cleverest students were achieving only average scores in maths and English competitions.

The decision was made to withdraw a small number of advanced ability year 7 maths students for three of their five weekly maths classes, challenging them with a compacted year 7 curriculum and the opportunity to investigate interests and solve problems that required an understanding of advanced concepts.

The children selected for the program embraced the challenge and as well as coping with a demanding regimen of problem solving activities, very quickly developed a number of outside school projects, from investigating the basics of trigonometry to studying the maths of fruit.

For some years before we had tried to provide for our gifted students by employing a visiting specialist who attempted, on her one day per week, to run writing workshops for multi-age classes, to work with individual high needs students and to support teachers who were working at differentiating tasks for the advanced students in their classes.

Once we launched our own in house program, providing services for our gifted children using our own teaching staff, it quickly became evident that a higher level of expertise was required than just 'seat of the pants' enthusiasm. The teacher working with the gifted students and the deputy principal were both encouraged and supported to complete the Certificate of Gifted Education through GERRIC, at the University of New South Wales.

The course provided us with information and research on which to base our decision making. It was also important in establishing our credibility with parents when discussing issues relating to gifted students.

The impact of our initial three hour per week maths withdrawal group was felt across the school. While we were pleased to see the expected improvement in competition results (from two high distinctions the year before, to nine after one year of extension maths) we were even more impressed with the impact that removing the gifted students had on the year 7 mainstream maths class. By removing the 'big frogs' from the little pond, it seemed that we had left the way clear for a new level of 'biggish frogs' to emerge. The standard of maths across the whole year level rose. By sharing improved maths results at assembly, we were also able to promote academic achievement as something 'cool' and to be celebrated. We cheer for maths distinctions and high distinctions in the same way as we cheer winners of sports events!

The success of extension maths in year 7 led to the establishment of similar classes across the school from year 3 to year 7, and shortly after the development of a similar set of classes in English. Students in extension groups in years 4/5 and years 6/7 work in mixed age classes, ensuring that those who need a slightly slower pace are not too stressed and those who are ready to move on to a higher level will find some like minded peers within the class.

While the focus has remained on maths and English, students gifted in other areas have the opportunity to participate in workshops to foster their skills in science, ICT and art, and some students are mentored as they work on individual programs in order to meet their

particular needs – ICT in particular. Needless to say, our music, PE and LOTE teachers continue their outstanding work in supporting and extending students gifted in those particular disciplines.

The AC requirement for differentiation in all subjects has seen our gifted program develop into a partnership between classroom teachers and the specialists who teach the English and maths withdrawal groups. Children gifted in both English and maths now spend up to ten hours per week in these extension groups, returning to their own mainstream classes for all other subjects.

We have found that withdrawing students for specific subjects has allowed gifted children to interact with others of their own ability, thus achieving better comparative understanding of their personal intellect as well as enjoying mental challenge and stimulation. At the same time, the students are still part of their own home class, enjoying friendships with students outside their own small withdrawal group.

Every child is a precious gift of God and each has been uniquely blessed with individual strengths and talents. Our responsibility is to support each individual to ensure that he or she will be able to say with the servant in the parable (Matthew 25: 20-21):

*'Master, you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'*

*'His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

#### **Inta Gertners**

Gifted and Talented Coordinator  
Good News Lutheran School  
Middle Park, Qld



Living Faith students use iPads to research, store and organise information



Good News Lutheran School students

# Faith, encouragement, service



**Stephen Rudolph is the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia**

In recent weeks Lutheran Education Australia has been advised of the passing of two influential Lutheran educators – Mr Kevin Oster and Mr Max Eichler. Both Kevin and Max worked in several Lutheran schools with careers distinguished by faithful and courageous service; that they continued in their Christian faith to the end of their life's journey is a great joy and witness.

Their respective careers are summarised as follows:

#### **Kevin Oster**

- » Graduate: Concordia Seminary (SA) 1945
- » Principal and teacher: Kunden Lutheran School, Carlsruhe (SA) 1946-1952
- » Teacher: Concordia Memorial College, Toowoomba (Qld) 1953-1959
- » Principal: St Michael's Lutheran School, Hahndorf (SA) 1960-1962
- » Principal: Tarrington Lutheran School (Vic) 1963-1969
- » Principal: St John's Lutheran School, Geelong (Vic) 1970-1977
- » Principal: Concordia Primary School, Toowoomba (Qld) 1978-1981
- » Director for Lutheran Schools SA/NT: 1982-1992

#### **Max Eichler**

- » Graduate: Concordia College (SA) 1953
- » Principal and teacher: Kunden Lutheran School, Carlsruhe (SA) 1954-1958
- » Principal and teacher: Warrayne Lutheran School (Vic) 1959-1966
- » Principal and teacher: Yalata Lutheran School (SA) 1967-1969

- » Principal and teacher: St John's Lutheran School, Jindera (NSW) 1970-1974
- » Teacher and Deputy Principal: St John's Lutheran School, Geelong (Vic) 1975-1993

Kunden, which closed in 1959, is located 127 Km north of Adelaide, near the township of Saddleworth, Manoora and Waterloo. Warrayne (closed in 1976) is approximately 13 Km east of Hamilton, Victoria, also within similar proximity to Tabor and Tarrington, well known Lutheran settlements in Western Victoria.

Both Kevin and Max taught a young Barry Kahl at Kunden Lutheran School. Barry has recently reflected on their powerful influence on him as a young person which saw him also dedicate his career to serving Lutheran schools.

While Kunden and Warrayne Lutheran schools, and Kevin Oster and Max Eichler, are no longer with us, there are now 86 Lutheran schools and 59 Lutheran early learning centres across Australia which daily share God's love through Jesus Christ to nearly 45,000 young people of today's generation.

Richard Rohr, founder of *The Center for Action and Contemplation* and author of several books writes: 'Every generation has to be converted anew, and the Gospel has to ever be preached in new contexts and cultures in ways that are good news to that time and people.'

The generation of students in Lutheran schools today live in a very different world from the one students would have experienced at Kunden or Warrayne. The influence of today's media, technology and communications in Australia is immense. For most of us, teachers and students alike, to lose your mobile phone would be a personal challenge bordering on a catastrophe!

In recent days, LEA has received requests for assistance from two secondary school students. These students are enrolled in the senior subject Study of Religion and have chosen to research the topics of abortion

and capital punishment. They are seeking discussion and information to questions similar to the following:

- » Has the Lutheran church's view on abortion ever changed?
- » When does the Lutheran church believe the human person/life begins?
- » Why is abortion such a controversial ethical issue? Can the mother not decide, based on her own morals and ethical choices, on what she is considering doing?
- » What is the Lutheran view on capital punishment today?
- » Has this view changed over time?
- » What Scriptures or church policies support this position?

Dr Mark Worthing (Senior Researcher, Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics) and I have spent some time discussing these important matters and preparing an LEA / ALITE response. We want to support these students with their thinking and for them to know we take their questions and faith journeys seriously. We also want to encourage these young people to continue to ponder on their lives' challenges and questions.

In your role in Lutheran schools today I am sure you will also be given opportunities to listen and support many young people. Just as the late Kevin Oster and Max Eichler positively encouraged the children in their care, LEA wishes to acknowledge your daily service and teaching as you seek to support the children in your care.

May God give you the faith, patience and courage to bring Christ to today's generation of young people through your actions, words, listening and encouragement.

Serving the Lord together

**Stephen Rudolph**  
Executive Director  
Lutheran Education Australia

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