

A Lutheran Australian Curriculum



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'How can we maintain our Lutheran 'distinctives' when everyone else is rolling out the same reform at the same time and attending the same PD with us?'

This question from a casual, staff-room conversation, takes us to the heart of what Lutheran education is all about and challenges us to review and reconceptualise Lutheran education with the Australian Curriculum in mind. What exactly are our distinctive characteristics? How do they compare with key messages associated with the Australian Curriculum implementation? How can we keep and grow these *distinctives* whilst delivering a significant, government-mandated reform?

Understanding distinctive characteristics of Lutheran education

We actually have a document—*A Vision for Learners and Learning*—where our Lutheran education ethos is clearly articulated.

As we gather our students into our schools, we recognise that 'each person is a unique creation of God (who is)... loved by God.'

This perspective implies:

- » a warm, caring and pastoral environment where God's love is both implicitly and explicitly demonstrated in a variety of ways
- » choices for learners which feature multiple pathways of learning and differentiation to cater for uniqueness
- » opportunities for collaborative learning to draw upon one another's strengths

In addition, we recognise that 'all useful knowledge and learning is God's gift to people for their (students') wellbeing'. Therefore, we work to:

- » provide a holistic education that recognises the importance of intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional and physical knowledge
- » create learning experiences that feature intellectual rigour and connect to real-life problems and challenges
- » focus on individual learning styles and build self-awareness and reflection
- » arouse students' curiosity and wonderment about breadth of learning possibilities
- » create innovative learning environments that best facilitate learning which values the learners' contributions
- » use diverse strategies that encourage students' discovery, exploration and analysis

This is affirmed in the document *A Charter for Lutheran Education: 6 Challenges; 6 Mysteries*. The first mystery is labelled *learning centred*, where an environment is created in which students grow their 'passion to explore, discover and analyse their world as part of an exciting life journey'. This describes the heart of Lutheran education. And yet there is more! There is another dimension that connects the learners and learning and aligns to a rich and broad view of education.

A vocational focus

This dimension emerges from Lutheran theology and includes the dual concepts of *service* and *community*. Our values are introduced by the statement: 'Living in community' and with God's help the... values of 'love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, service, humility, courage, hope, quality and appreciation' come to life. Therefore, Lutheran education includes multiple opportunities to experience and reflect upon the meaning of community within and beyond the school. It is in community that our values are modelled and lived as together we serve and are served.

Service is considered core in Lutheran education and it is this 'spirit of service (that reflects God's action in our lives)'. Service is developed as both a reflection of and response to God's love for all (*A Vision for Learners and Learning*, 2006; Veith, 1999). This love is best demonstrated to us by Jesus' sacrifice and love. A graphic (Figure 1) that is often shared in Queensland reminds teachers in

Features

- 01 Meg Noack
A Lutheran Australian Curriculum
- 04 Jill Willis
Thinking through some challenges of assessment...
- 06 Dominique Jacqueline
The Australian Curriculum in Christian Studies
- 08 Garry Le Duff, Lynda Seacombe & Lynda MacLeod
Independent schools and the Australian Curriculum
- 16 Stephen Rudolph
My people - boat people



Photo courtesy of Concordia Lutheran College, Toowoomba Qld

Lutheran schools that these core aspects of Lutheran education and our view of learners and learning provide us with a lens to scrutinise and enrich our implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Our values are the beliefs we put into action. And it is these values that permeate how we deliver the Australian Curriculum.

Key messages embedded in the Australian Curriculum

How do Lutheran education's key messages compare with what has been written about the Australian Curriculum?

The *Scope of the Australian Curriculum* states that the intended outcomes for Australian learners is 'a solid foundation in knowledge, understanding skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built'. In Lutheran education our focus is upon providing opportunities for students to 'develop their God-given talents so that they may shape and enrich their world in service to others through actions and relationships'. It is interesting to examine and compare these statements for similar sentiments and to note how the tone appears different. Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) documents provide an approach to education that develops a service-focused, vocational approach to life (Veith, 1999) that includes thoughts and actions supporting others as well as self.

When expanding the idea of 'deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values', the *Scope of the Australian Curriculum* nominates the importance of providing a curriculum that 'will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, Mathematics, Science, Languages, Humanities and the Arts to understand the spiritual moral and aesthetic dimensions of life and open up new ways of thinking'. Lutheran education expands ACARA's stated emphasis upon the spiritual and moral dimensions of life in a multitude of other ways. This is demonstrated by our additional Learning Area, Christian Studies, and by a variety of other aspects of Christian education such as worship and pastoral care, as well as through reflection-time, prayer and other devotional opportunities.

The learning area links: Lutheran schools strive for effective delivery of ACARA's stated learning areas. Other enriching programs and learning areas or subjects are also offered in our schools, together with a range of initiatives that provide foundational skills for vocational education.

The pedagogic possibilities hinted at in the Australian Curriculum provide Lutheran schools with the opportunity to draw upon the sterling work that is currently part of the *Equip* program to provide accreditation for teachers who teach Christian Studies. An emphasis on inquiry, thinking and questioning is central

to implementation of the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework* (CSCF) in classrooms. Hence, *Equip* provides a rich, practical launching pad to better understand the pedagogy embedded in Australian Curriculum Learning Areas.

Strengthening cross-curriculum priorities

The Australian Curriculum details three cross-curriculum priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability. Whilst at times there has been some discussion about the selection of these priorities, it is important to explore additional, enriching approaches that are included around these priorities in Lutheran schools.

When considering how and where to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, it is important to recognise links already forged by the Lutheran church with Indigenous people across Australia and especially in central Australia and in North Queensland. This priority also challenges us to consider how our schools can better explore additional possibilities such as linking with sister Lutheran schools located in communities where there are significant Indigenous populations, as well as forging authentic links with local Indigenous community leaders.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia has also already been enriched by our schools' connections with other Lutheran agencies such as Australian Lutheran World Service and the Board for Mission. These agencies have provided our schools with first-hand connections in various Asian countries as well as resources that reflect real life and life like experiences with our Asian neighbours. International partnerships are a growing feature of Lutheran schools.

In Lutheran schools, the importance of sustainability and care of our planet has added meaning because it can draw upon a Christian understanding of God's diverse gifts that sustain humankind. Challenge 3 of 6 *Challenges: 6 Mysteries* notes the importance of being *planet conscious*. This highlights God's presence in this planet. We are called to live faithfully in God's creation as stewards in the world.

General capabilities linkages

When we consider ACARA's general capabilities, it is important to note strong connections here to LEA's pre-existing *Lifelong Qualities for Learners*. The general capabilities are a student-focussed way of stating aspirations for all learners. They 'define knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that can be developed and applied... to help students to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens'. LEA's *Lifelong Qualities for Learners* explore the qualities required for learners to grow and develop personally while making a contribution to their wider communities.

There are diverse ways Lutheran schools are already building students' capabilities through pastoral care, camping and personal challenge



Dominique Jacqueline leading an *Equip* workshop

events and programs and through cross-generational and international exploration and through service. As part of preparation to implement the Australian Curriculum in Queensland, templates have been designed so that Lutheran school staff can explore the linkages between ACARA's capabilities and LEA's *Lifelong Qualities for Learners*.

In summary, our values and our ethos—and these are our *distinctives*—do matter. Much in Lutheran education aligns and enriches key aspects of the Australian Curriculum. By attending to implementation of the Australian Curriculum with the best reform processes

in mind we will also have the opportunity to enhance and grow significant aspects of what is distinctive about Lutheran education—even drawing upon resources that are already in place! So, during this time, let's maintain our commitment to our Lutheran ethos and values. Let's celebrate the diverse and rich elements we already 'have in place' that align with the intent of the Australian Curriculum and finally let's use the implementation process as opportunity to self-examine and explore new and exciting possibilities with our 21st century learners in mind.

Students (today and into the future) contribute to communities by being:

- » self-directed, insightful investigators and learners
- » discerning, resourceful problem-solvers and implementers
- » adept creative producers and contributors
- » open, responsive communicators and facilitators
- » principled resilient leaders and collaborators
- » caring, steadfast supporters and advocates

(LEA's *Lifelong Qualities for Learners*)

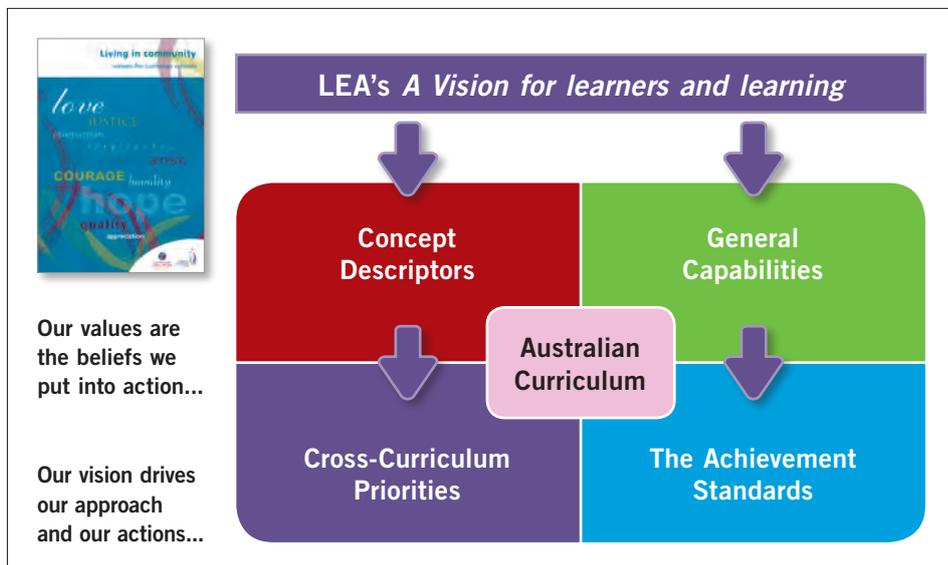


Figure 1

Thinking through some challenges of assessment in the Australian Curriculum



Dr Jill Willis is a lecturer in the School of Learning & Professional Studies, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology.

When I began teaching I knew very little about how to assess. I can remember asking how to give a mark out of twenty to evaluate the year 10 essays that the students had just handed in. Did I take a mark off for every mistake? Did I give a mark for every tick against a good idea? What did the 20 percent represent? I now pity my Head of Department trying to answer my naïve questions.

Now as I teach preservice teachers, a sophisticated understanding of how to assess is an integral part of their training about how to plan curriculum. In the past few weeks I have been listening to final year preservice teachers critique their recent practical experiences in schools. They made strong connections between learner needs, curriculum and assessment. A typical answer started something like this:

When I designed the learning experiences, I started with the learners in my class, their needs and their prior knowledge. I then identified the relevant curriculum from the Australian Curriculum and general capabilities. With my teaching partner we identified which parts of the Achievement Standard would be met, and we asked ourselves 'What would success look like?' From there I mapped backwards, designing learning experiences that supported my students to achieve those success criteria.

It sounds logical and easy, yet using the Achievement Standards in the Australian Curriculum can be challenging for teachers.

The Australian Curriculum was developed through an extensive process of consultation. Australians were, and still are, invited to comment online or in forums, on what should be taught and what is important for our young people to learn. Clear messages were given to the development teams that we wanted clarity, yet also flexibility to make decisions about how to implement the curriculum. This balance between 'informed prescription' and 'informed professionalism' is a characteristic of curriculum programs worldwide that lead

to high quality and high equity outcomes for students. This means that while we may moan a little about having to work out how to implement the Australian Curriculum, it is what we asked for, and what research shows is best for our students.

For Australian teachers this means that we have an obligation to be informed professionals. This article briefly explores some background information we might need to make professional assessment decisions when implementing the Australian Curriculum, and planning assessment to improve student learning.

Being informed about the meaning of Achievement Standards

Within the Australian Curriculum the stated function of Achievement Standards is to 'describe the quality of learning (the depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) expected of students at points in their schooling'. This is challenging for teachers to implement, as it is not prescribed how teachers will judge *quality*, and the consultation process led to some important adjustments. In the process of validating the draft achievement standards, qualitative words such as *consistently* or *well-developed* were removed. While the end of year format of the Achievement Standards was originally described in consultation forums as a C standard, this is no longer the policy. The Achievement Standards are to be used to assess whether students have met the standard by the end of the year. State Curriculum Authorities have been given the responsibility to provide further advice about the federal government reporting requirements to provide parents with A – E report cards twice a year, and to support teachers in their informed professional practices.

A further challenge for teachers is that the information about the purpose and function of the Achievement Standards is not always easy to find in the source documents. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (version 3) describes the Achievement Standards as a progression of knowledge and understanding and subject specific skills. More information is provided in Appendix 2 in the 'Foundation to Year 10 Achievement Standards Validation Report'. Key points include that the achievement standards:

- » describe expected achievement and expected learning

- » are sequenced to provide a framework of growth and development
- » should not be segmented but read holistically
- » are to be used to make judgements about the extent and quality of student achievement

This final point, identifying *extent* and *quality*, has interesting implications for teachers across Australia, as our different traditions of assessment will inform our understanding of what these words mean in practice.

Quality as 'how far' or 'how well'?

Different states have different assessment traditions that may inform how *quality* is understood. One approach has been to represent a typical path of learning for a subject domain in a progress map or learning progression. An example of this approach is the assessment and reporting framework of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Teachers report on progression points that indicate *how far* students have progressed over time. AusVELS is the name of the support materials developed for Victorian Teachers to show the integration between the Australian Curriculum and their current curriculum.

Another assessment approach used is a criteria-based assessment approach that analyses *how well* the student has performed, using qualitative words such as *very high*, *high*, *sound* or *limited* levels of understanding in the valued domains. The Queensland Studies Authority has developed draft Learning Area Standards Descriptors (LASDs) that have unpacked the Achievement Standards into A – E statements of quality as a support tool for teachers when designing criteria based assessment. Early years assessment involves different approaches again, using diagnostic checklists to observe and report in terms of *becoming aware*, *exploring*, *making connections* and *applying*. Teachers use these checklists to plan future learning and development for each child and as a communication point with parents.

Different assessment approaches can reflect beliefs about learning as either a predictable developmental progression, or as situated understandings demonstrated in performance, yet the achievement standard language of *extent* and *quality* challenges us to reconcile both understandings. One advantage of



national assessment standards is that we can arrive at the same success criteria from different perspectives. We can also learn across state and territory boundaries, especially since similar quality assessment principles underpin assessment approaches and materials are available on websites.

Quality assessment aligns with teaching, informs students of expectations and is used as a basis for further teaching and reporting. Informed professionalism is supported by a whole school approach, underpinned by clarity about how the chosen assessment approaches have validity for the purpose. One of the most significant purposes is to encourage students to continue to learn.

Assessment principles can empower learners

How we use Achievement Standards as we implement the Australian Curriculum will communicate what learning we value, and send messages to our students about their identities as learners. Thinking back to my conversations with preservice teachers in the past few weeks, I heard a number of them talk about how students were partners in assessment:

I shared the success criteria and exemplars with students often. Through using self-assessment and feedback, I was able to adjust my teaching and I noticed that the students really improved.

Assessment can communicate high expectations for our learners, yet as Gordon Stobart poignantly explains, a focus on testing and levels can lead learners like 11 year old Hannah to report, 'I am so scared I'll do the SATs and I will be a nothing'. I challenge preservice teachers who talk about 'my low level students', to use the inclusive 'person first' protocol and try saying 'students who are still developing at level 4', or 'who need further support'. This simple rearrangement of putting the person first acknowledges that one characteristic does not define a whole person. As teachers we need to be conscious of how we use our assessment language when we talk to students and about student assessment performances.

Conclusion

Since I began teaching, and struggled to make my first assessment decisions, there have been lots of curriculum changes in schools. I would no longer expect to assess an essay using percentages. National statements and profiles, competency based vocational assessment, portfolios, outcomes based assessment and NAPLAN have all had quite different assessment purposes and will have influenced our schooling priorities and practices. Depending on where and when you have been teaching, your own practices will reflect a bricolage of beliefs about assessment. As an education professional, it is worth taking the time to be informed and talk through with

others how assessment practices might best fit the purposes of quality teaching and learning in a new era of Australian Curriculum.

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Push to raise standards proves testing

Aspiring primary school teachers are expected to face questions about animal groupings, energy and literacy processes in Queensland's controversial teacher test.

Read more: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/push-to-raise-standards-proves-testing/story-e6freomx-1226070484980>

Aussie education standards falling, Gonski

The gap between Australia's top and bottom students is growing as national education standards slip, said the author of a review into school funding.

Read more: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/breaking-news/aussie-education-standards-falling-gonski/story-e6freonf-1226362663711>

The Australian Curriculum IN Christian Studies



Dominique Jacqueline is the National Christian Studies Coordinator for Lutheran Education Australia and Education officer – Curriculum for LEQ. She has been involved in teaching and leading Christian Studies for over 25 years and 10 years writing curriculum and professional development materials for CS. She loves mentoring teachers to be confident in teaching CS.

Teachers of Christian Studies have been working with a national curriculum—which both predates and foreshadows components of the Australian Curriculum—since 1998/1999 when LIFE, a P-10 curriculum, was launched in Lutheran schools across Australia. The journey from LIFE to the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework* (CSCF) to *Equip*, the accreditation program for teachers of Christian Studies, tells the story of a reform process that is consultative, collaborative, birthed and bedded in classroom practice, supported with regionally based professional development regularly monitored to maintain the integrity, rigour and quality of teaching and learning in Christian Studies. It is the story of how teachers are being equipped and empowered to create thinking, responsive communities of learners who will engage with the Christian Studies curriculum, informed by Lutheran theology, in authentic, creative ways.

This article proposes that the approach to teaching and learning in Christian Studies, as it is presented in the CSCF and delivered in *Equip*, both supports and enacts the goals of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum, CSCF and *Equip* adopt similar language to describe the key facets of learning whether it be a description of the inquiry process or how the general capabilities are embedded in the different learning areas.

The rationales for the study of English, History and Science echo the statements given for a study of Christian Studies in the rationale of the CSCF (2005, p 5). See Figure 1. The process of historical inquiry develops ‘the ability to ask relevant questions; critically analyse and interpret sources; consider context; respect and explain different perspectives; develop and substantiate interpretations, and communicate effectively’. (Retrieved 27/06/2012 from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/History/Rationale>).

Figure 1

CSCF Rationale & Pedagogy (p 5-6)

Students are mentored:

- » to become articulate, empathic and discerning members of their communities
- » to listen to and identify the issues underlying discussion
- » to enter into open, respectful dialogue with people whose religious, philosophical, ethical views are different
- » to present an informed, well-defended personal position

The processes of inquiry, discussion and reflection underpin the acquisition of those skills.

CSCF Pedagogy (p 7)

Authentic learning that brings new understanding, transforms and challenges students to take action requires a rich learning environment where students:

- » are challenged to think critically and laterally about increasingly complex issues
- » are given a range of strategies to solve problems
- » are engaged in meaningful debate
- » are stimulated to think in new ways
- » interact with a range of people, data and media
- » make coherent links with prior learning and experiences
- » listen and are genuinely listened to
- » share their growing understanding
- » have opportunities to be still and reflect
- » embrace the new and different with thought, creativity and respect
- » respond in a multiplicity of ways
- » make meaningful connections between learning and their experience of the world

The process of scientific inquiry helps students ‘develop critical and creative thinking skills and challenge themselves to identify questions and draw evidence-based conclusions using scientific methods’. (Retrieved 27/06/2012 from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Science/Rationale>).

The study of English ‘helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens. It is through the study

of English that individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate with and build relationships with others and with the world around them’. (Retrieved 27/06/2012 from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Rationale>)

The series of 10 *Equip* Module workshops gives teachers the theory and necessary tools to plan for effective learning and teaching in Christian Studies. Module 2 defines and explores how the process of inquiry can be applied to the context of Christian Studies. Subsequent modules explore the elements of inquiry in greater breadth and depth.

The focus of teaching and learning in Module 3 is a way of being that underpins ALL learning and activity in the Christian Studies classroom. It is a way of being that values and respects all learners, honours the subject matter covered, identifies stereotypes and seeks to overcome fear of the other. It is inclusive of different

Figure 2

Personal and social capability

The capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for and understanding of others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively. (<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/Personal-and-social-capability/Introduction/Introduction>)

Intercultural understanding capability

Intercultural understanding combines personal, interpersonal and social knowledge and skills. It involves students in learning to value and view critically their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum.

Intercultural understanding encourages students to make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to negotiate or mediate difference. It develops students’ abilities to communicate and empathise with others and to analyse intercultural experiences critically. (<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/Intercultural-understanding/Introduction/Introduction>)

beliefs and diverse viewpoints and it is an approach that fosters both individual expression and individual respect for the other and nurtures a community of inquiry. Both the curriculum content of the module (CSCF Christianity in the World strand, key idea 1: *Religious beliefs and ideas shape people's thinking and actions*) and the pedagogical focus (skills of respectful dialogue and inclusivity) provide a platform to address two of the capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, see Figure 2.

The professional reading and numerous guidelines and practical strategies in this module give teachers a starting point to help students work collaboratively, develop empathy and engage in respectful dialogue.

Higher order thinking, educational taxonomies, metacognition, philosophical inquiry, creative thinking, open-mindedness, seeking alternatives, tolerating ambiguity are featured in both the Critical and Creative Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum and the CSCF and *Equip* Modules 3 – 10. *Equip* gives teachers many opportunities to develop strategies to enable students to become critical thinkers.

Module 4 considers the stage of inquiry that will engage students in the learning in such a way that students will be challenged, stimulated, provoked about their existing knowledge and led to ask the questions needed to fuel a meaningful inquiry. Teachers examine the literature on behavioural motivation and emotional engagement. The curriculum content focus is on what it means to be human, drawing on Christian and Lutheran perspectives, students' own understanding of identity and the factors that impact on the development of identity as well as CSCF Christian Living strand, key idea 1: *Christians believe that God creates people to live in relationship with him and each other*. Key to students' personal development is the ability to be both interpreters and evaluators of their culture and the influences on their lives. The skills of critical thinking are applied to the content. Religious educators emphasise the need for critical thinking:

- » Rossiter and Crawford (*Reasons for Living*, 2006, p 405) state that 'the critical evaluation of culture is an integral component of the issue-oriented religious education ... it needs to enter into classroom practice across all year levels...'
- » In his chapter *Toward a Lutheran Epistemology* Christenson (*The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, 2004) advocates a stance that requires each of us to develop our critical abilities and attitudes beginning with an examination of our own assumptions, conclusions and sources as well as being 'critical of all human claims to ultimacy'.

- » Peter Vardy (*What it means to be human*, 2003, p 81) points out that Socrates taught by questioning to 'get people to see something, not by lecturing them but by opening windows which may allow them to come to an understanding that they did not have before and which cannot be conveyed in any other way'.

Module 5 focuses on the investigative stage of inquiry examining strategies to gather data and questions to interpret and then evaluate that data. This is embedded in an exploration of the understandings of God that emerge from the biblical text.

Module 8 couples critical thinking with a focus on what it means to live an ethical life. See Figure 3. The focus of the **Ethical behaviour capability** mirrors the content and pedagogy of Module 8 as the following excerpt exemplifies:

As ethics is largely concerned with what we ought to do and how we ought to live, students need to understand how people can inquire collaboratively and come to ethical decisions. They need skills to explore areas of contention, select and justify an ethical position and engage with and understand the experiences

Figure 3

An important focus of the module is to give participants strategies to develop **deep, critical thinking** and **moral reasoning** in Christian Studies that move students:

- » beyond recount, describing, retelling and comprehension
- » from routine exercises to reflection
- » from unconsidered thinking to considered thinking
- » from examining the surface of things to the structure of things
- » from unconscious decisions to conscious decisions

Decision-making is a significant process in ethics and requires a range of levels of thinking. The focus of the module is therefore more on **process** (how to do ethics) than on content (ethical issues). The activities and strategies in the module have been chosen to address some of the following challenges:

- » avoiding discussions that degenerate into moralism and/or legalism, or simplistic Christian responses
- » introducing students to **thoughtful discussions** that take into account ambiguities and differences of approach
- » managing discussions so that the range of possible responses is both acknowledged and addressed

and positions of others. These skills promote students' confidence as decision-makers and foster their ability to act with regard for others.

Module 9 picks up on the area of justice and service. Modules 7 and 9 offer bookends to the inquiry process, a starting point and end point for planning for effective learning. Teachers are given strategies to identify the deep understandings, the key theological truths, the desired learning needed for students' growing engagement with and understanding of the key content and concepts of the Christian story and its application to life today. Module 9 helps teachers explore the range of ways students can demonstrate their learning and ways to offer feedback on the learning. The standards are contained in the learning statements (outcomes) and related knowledge and process indicators.

Monica Bini (July 2009) writes in her paper, *Toward an expression of the spiritual in the secular curriculum, The Melbourne Declaration claims a place for spiritual wellbeing in education for all Australians when it declares that confident and creative individuals have a sense of self-worth, self awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing*. It is important to note that one of the aims of Christian Studies and indeed Lutheran education has always been to nurture individuals who are aware of their humanity and open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and growing in and living according to a cohesive worldview (*A vision for learners and learning*) and this happens in the context of community where students contribute in a range of ways. We can endorse the focus on spirituality and affirm the main themes articulated in Bini's paper but we offer a non-dualist spirituality grounded in biblical and Lutheran theology, a rich context for growth, discussion, reflection, inquiry. *Equip* (Modules 2, 6, 10) supports teachers with literature and strategies for the *spiritual journey*, theirs and students.

This article has only begun to do justice to Christian Studies, *Equip* and the Australian Curriculum. The challenge is:

- » not to overlook what the study of Christian Studies offers the student and continues to offer Lutheran education, spiritually and pedagogically
- » to see *Equip* as an accreditation program that provides rich content, sound theory and pedagogical skills for teachers, that understands the key to curriculum reform and embraces the intent of the Australian Curriculum and
- » to use what is already in place to greater effect

Independent schools & the Australian Curriculum



Garry Le Duff is currently Chief Executive of the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA). His key role is to represent the Independent school sector to government and the community. He also has an advisory role in providing advice to schools on governance and management and the changing policy and legislative context within which schools operate. Garry is currently the nominated representative of the Independent school sector across Australia on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Lynda Secombe and Lynda MacLeod are Assistant Directors Educational Services at AISSA. They coordinate the implementation of the Australian Curriculum for the SA Independent sector.

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum presents independent schools with a unique opportunity to revisit and renew their beliefs about teaching and learning, within each school's overarching continuous improvement approach. It also presents a unique opportunity to undertake curriculum review and to debate issues associated with each learning area.

Education Ministers have agreed jurisdictions achieve substantial implementation of the Phase 1 Australian Curriculum Learning Areas for F-10 by the end of 2013. The School Assistance Amendment Act has been passed by Federal Parliament to amend the existing legislation to accommodate a longer time frame required for the development of the Australian Curriculum. This will enable non government schools to plan for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum as it is approved and published. Across Australia jurisdictions in each state and territory are developing locally contextualised implementation plans and timelines, along with support programs for teachers.

National digital learning resources support implementation and can be accessed by independent schools across Australia through a range of portals including Scootle, OCS, the Learning Exchange, FUSE, TALE and The Learning Place. ACARA is working with Education Services Australia (ESA) to ensure that support materials for teachers and students are connected to the Australian Curriculum.

ACARA has also worked with Early Childhood Australia to support the production of a paper entitled, *Foundations for Learning*, which describes the relationships between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

The development of the Australian Curriculum includes key periods of consultation. Independent schools play an important role in providing feedback and are involved in consultations, trial projects and national forums. The willingness of schools and individual teachers to be involved in the

consultation process for the Australian Curriculum is greatly valued.

Sets of student work samples to illustrate achievement for each Achievement Standard in English, Mathematics, Science and History were published in December 2011. ACARA's plan for work samples in 2012, as communicated to both AEEYSOC at their 30 September meeting and to the MCCECDYA meeting on 14 October 2011, is as follows:

Commencing in 2012, ACARA will undertake a systematic process with teachers from across the nation to develop assessment tasks, to investigate consistency in teacher judgement about levels of achievement and to collect and annotate student work samples to illustrate actual student achievement in relation to each achievement standard. ACARA will work with the states and territories on this activity, which will see comprehensive folio sets of work samples by the end of 2012.

Teachers from independent schools across Australia are participating in this project. They will administer assessment task/s (selected by them from the set identified by the learning area groups or their state/territory based on the agreed design specifications) and collate a designated number of student work samples along with required permissions.

The *Students With Disability: Consultation Report* has been published. The report provides broad directions for the ongoing development of this aspect of ACARA's work. The initial draft Australian Curriculum resource materials will be trialled in schools in July-September. This is a critical part of the national consultation process that will contribute to the re-shaping of the final materials due for publication in late 2012 and assist schools to support students with disability to access their entitlement to the curriculum.

The draft Australian Curriculum materials for students with disability are scheduled to be released online for national public consultation from mid July 2012 to Friday 28 September 2012. Independent schools across Australia are participating in this trial.

ACARA has recognised a range of alternative curriculum frameworks as equivalent to the Australian Curriculum. This recognition process does not replace the school registration process, which continues to be the responsibility of State and Territory registration authorities.

The International Baccalaureate PYP and MYP curriculum frameworks document the organisation of knowledge and skills in a conceptual framework. The ACARA Recognition Committee acknowledges the difference between this approach and that taken for the Australian Curriculum and considers that these IB frameworks allow students to achieve comparable learning outcomes in English, Mathematics, Science and History by the end of Year 10, given the assumption that school programming and delivery of the PYP and MYP will address the Australian Curriculum content. The senior International Baccalaureate Diploma has been recognised as equivalent to the Australian Curriculum.

Independent schools are approaching the implementation of the Australian Curriculum within the PYP and MYP frameworks in a variety of ways including:

- » mapping of content for the first four phase one subjects
- » comparing the General Capabilities/ Cross-curriculum Priorities and the Learner Profiles, Trans-disciplinary Skills and PYP Attitudes
- » refining of planning documentation
- » investigating the Language strand of the Australian Curriculum English document to explore the theoretical model that underpins the Language strand and how this translates to classroom practice

Noting that different approaches to learning are involved, and with some qualifications outlined, the ACARA Recognition Committee considers that the Montessori National Curriculum Framework and the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework allow for broadly comparable educational outcomes for the phase one subjects by the end of year 10,



Photo courtesy of Concordia Lutheran College, Toowoomba Qld

although they do not always address all of the content and achievement standards in exactly the same order or detail.

AISSA strategic directions for implementation

The Association of Independent Schools of SA (AISSA) provides a range of support to independent schools within this broader context. The AISSA implementation strategy encompasses support for principals and school leaders to utilise the Australian Curriculum as a vehicle for change and renewal as part of schools' continuous improvement approach. This includes professional learning and in-school advice to schools and teachers.

Support for principals incorporates an ongoing Australian Curriculum leadership program as well as access to in-school support via the Principal Consultants. The Principal Consultants offer independent, confidential advice and assist with decision making and understanding ACARA's curriculum requirements and expectations. They can meet with principals in their school and can maintain regular contact with principals to discuss implementation options and talk through approaches being undertaken within the sector.

The AISSA also has established Network Groups facilitated by Principals for Principals,

with assistance from AISSA. They provide a forum for the confidential discussion of emerging issues and the sharing of strategic approaches to implementation.

In keeping with the online nature of the Australian Curriculum, a Google site has been created to support teachers in independent schools currently involved in the process of reviewing and redeveloping their curriculum documents using the Australian Curriculum Framework F-10 for English, Mathematics, Science and History. This site allows teachers to use the tools and then submit examples of programs, topic plans and examples of units of work for the various subjects and year levels so that efforts, successful processes and ideas can be shared across schools and between teachers.

Professional learning for schools and teachers focuses on learning area-specific support as well as the cross-curriculum priorities, planning, task design, differentiation, assessing with achievement standards and moderation. In addition there are planned professional learning activities on teaching in a multi-age class, and aligning alternative curriculum with the Australian Curriculum. Australian Curriculum hub groups for each of the four phase one subjects are designed to support practitioners with the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and focus on approaches to teaching, entitlement and differentiation. In-school curriculum support

for planning and programming with an achievements-based curriculum is available to schools, as is in-school English and Mathematics support prioritised to rural and small schools.

The development of the Australian Curriculum is an opportunity for Australia to have a world class curriculum. ACARA has engaged educators and the wider community throughout the development stage and it is cognisant and encouraging of the contribution of three schooling sectors in each jurisdiction. Independent schools have contributed considerable expertise to the development of the curriculum through participation in national panels of curriculum leaders and experts as well as participation in a variety of pilot projects. Some independent schools have begun implementing the Australian Curriculum and in South Australia schools are moving from planning and programming with the Australian Curriculum to teaching with the Australian Curriculum. The focus for 2013 will be on the pedagogy required to teach this 21st century curriculum.

We encourage schools to engage in the consultation processes established by ACARA and to develop ongoing dialogue within their schools. This will impact both developments at the national level and the curriculum renewal process within each school to support improved learning outcomes for all students.

Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region

A shared journey

Our challenge is to guide the education of our youth, our future citizens and leaders, into the 21st century. We need to focus on preparing our students for life in an ever-changing and technologically driven world, where flexibility, initiative and creativity become valuable qualities. The Australian Curriculum (AC) offers a bold new education. It is no longer the education that many of us recall. It is complex and challenging. It is exciting.

Integrating such significant changes can prove confronting and personally challenging for staff. The need for collegial support and awareness of diverse personal approaches and change management strategies is paramount for continued growth. Ownership and inclusion of all staff in curriculum development and learning cultivates a shared vision and positive, embedded change.

Aware of designated timelines for the implementation of English, Maths, History and Science by the beginning of 2013, we accessed available resources to assist the development of a model of change that would meet the needs of our school and a strategic plan for the implementation of the AC that acknowledged both the ethos and educational philosophy that is unique to our school.

Having completed a thorough audit of our school context and culture through the implementation of VELs, we commenced an appraisal and whole staff review of our school mission statement and aims, identifying and redefining those features of our education that formed the core of our existence as a Christian school and the qualities that we wanted our

students to possess as they leave our school gates for the last time.

We have prioritised the establishment of a strong staff sense of a *shared journey* and through conversations and independent application tasks we began exploring the structure and language of the AC. The development of a visual image and diagrammatical representation provided an image of progression through the curriculum and the relationship between the components. A chart on display in the staffroom has both assisted the consolidation of understanding and stimulated dialogue between staff.

The concept of cross-curriculum priorities was new to us and we have spent some time exploring the role and integration of these throughout the curriculum and extra-curricular aspects of our school.

We felt it was important for us to explore further the general capabilities and their meaning within our context. Despite the fact that these have received some criticism, we have endeavoured to maintain a positive and professional approach, acknowledging the contributions of all staff and revisiting our shared vision.

The integration of a new curriculum, a new way of thinking and planning, is a gradual process that should move at a pace that is inclusive and acknowledging of all team members. Whilst we are building momentum to tackle the content descriptors and elaborations and begin to align our current content with that of the AC, staff are positive and embracing the change we are making.

Sally Kuchel

Curriculum Coordinator
Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Horsham

Telling the story of learning at Luther College

The Australian Curriculum describes the learning entitlement of students as a foundation for their future learning, growth and active participation in the Australian community. We wanted to tailor this for our unique student cohort. What are the essential attributes needed by a contemporary learner? We wanted to formulate goals that were outcome oriented. A broad range of consultation and discussion saw teachers talking with each other about what attributes we would hope a learner at Luther would leave with. It took a term of team discussions at every year level to come to a common understanding.

The core themes of communication, collaboration, creative thinking, critical thinking, self-management and working ethically, globally and sustainably, were agreed to. And—surprise!—they are very similar to the core competencies of the Australian Curriculum. However, **we as a whole staff decided this**, rather than feeling obliged to follow a directive. Furthermore, these attributes are importantly underpinned by the foundation we have in Christ, as our teacher and guide. This fundamental principle is constantly reiterated. A series of workshops exploring definitions and implications of these core themes was part of a professional development day, with a wide range of resources, ideas and teaching strategies shared across all disciplines. Our aim now is to embed these core themes over time in each subject area.

Following an audit of curriculum mapped to the Australian Curriculum, our Phase



Charting progress at Holy Trinity Lutheran School Horsham



A visual representation of the attribute!



Julianne Hughes, Tony Stacey & John Buruma get creative in a workshop at Luther College on thinking creatively

One subject areas, Math, Science, English and History, were ready to construct, tweak and develop new units of work and learning activities. Faculties have been encouraged to consciously look for opportunities where these attributes might be effectively embedded or included. To facilitate this mapping exercise, we developed a framework for thinking about and discussing unit design to aid the write up of units. Working backwards, the template considers learning outcomes first—what are the most important overall concepts my students should learn from this unit or learning activity? Following an opportunity to explore the six core attributes, the unit framework considers the skills students need to learn the concept. What do students have to do? The content, which has traditionally featured first and foremost in curriculum, is only now considered. The context of learning is identified next. How can the learning be put into a real-world context? Are there opportunities for meaningful integration? Importantly, the use of feedback to provide evidence of learning and authentic assessment is considered, differentiating clearly between formative and summative assessment tasks.

As it is progressively rolled out, the Australian Curriculum intends to make clear what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling. It is the foundation for high quality teaching to meet the needs of all Australian students. Rather than feel afraid or intimidated by the Australian Curriculum, we have grasped it as an opportunity to develop, grow and gain traction in developing the story of learning at Luther.

Karen Dymke

Director of Learning
Luther College, Croydon

Adapting to the Australian Curriculum at Croydon Hills

At Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School we can easily identify a number of innovations, changes and developments, directly linked to the Australian Curriculum:

- » Science has a much higher profile within the school. All year levels utilise the Primary Connections Science units as a key resource for their Science programs. Primary Connections is aligned with the rationale and aims of the Australian Curriculum: Science, and provides an innovative, inquiry-based program linking the teaching of Science with Literacy. The students experience the satisfaction of scientific discovery whilst their natural curiosity is nurtured.
- » As part of auditing and aligning our existing curriculum with the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics, teachers have taken the opportunity to engage in guided discussion with colleagues at other year levels about topics including, *How students best learn mathematics* and *Catering for individual difference*. They have considered the importance of teaching students to *work mathematically* and to *use the language of mathematics*.
- » Our Integrated Studies curriculum has experienced a timely review and rewrite to incorporate the essential skills and understandings from the Australian Curriculum for History, Science and Geography (Draft). Teachers have developed and written new units of study to engage the learner, taken advantage of personal and previous learning experience and contributed to the development of the skills and understandings needed for future learning. A common planning template has been introduced to facilitate a sequential development of skills and knowledge.

- » Term 3 2012 begins with an internal professional development day. All teaching staff will take a much closer look at the features of the Australian Curriculum: English and its implications for teaching and learning at their respective year levels. The focus will be on the teaching and learning opportunities presented within the new curriculum and the opportunity to make even greater use of literature to support our English program. The English Learning Area Committee, made up of representatives from all year levels, will continue to develop a new school-based curriculum document in line with the Australian Curriculum: English.

2013 will be an exciting year as teachers implement the published Australian Curriculum and continue to make the most of the professional learning opportunities presented to support them as they plan for improved student learning outcomes.

Merril Van Asperen

Director of Learning
Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School,
Croydon Hills

Australian Curriculum – at Mildura

Implementation of the Australian Curriculum is just around the corner and brings mixed feelings for the staff at Trinity Lutheran College. It has been an important time for teachers to reflect upon their current teaching practices and programs and look forward to the exciting challenges the AC will bring in 2013.

TLC audited its current curriculum, reviewed all documentation, and developed a system for saving and filing the Australian Curriculum on our school server. Whole School Unit Plans, Scope and Sequences and Yearly Overviews are being collated to ensure a seamless curriculum from K-10.

Set in a diverse community, rich in history, Mildura has developed its own history resource *The Chaffey Trail*. This resource focuses heavily on the history of our local area and is written in conjunction with the new Australian Curriculum outcomes from K-6. Our school is adapting some of their units to cover our local history more closely throughout our curriculum. History is one of the focuses next year and this resource is a welcome addition to TLC and gives our students a valuable and relevant insight into our local history.

The AC provides staff at TLC, and all teachers across Australia, an opportunity to reflect on practices and to produce a curriculum that not only inspires their students, but themselves.

Sharne Lane

Year 6 teacher
Trinity Lutheran College, Mildura

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

Curriculum challenges at St Michael's

As a curriculum leader, I have watched the development of the Australian Curriculum with great interest and more than a little trepidation. It has been met with mixed feelings by teaching staff, many of whom have worked with a number of other curricula. There are also challenges associated with integrating the Australian Curriculum within the Primary Years Program framework. For St Michael's the process began in 2010 when we took part in the AISSA curriculum mapping project, which compared our current English and Mathematics curriculum with the Australian Curriculum. From this introduction, the following challenges became apparent.

Firstly, as an International Baccalaureate school the majority of our teaching is done in a transdisciplinary manner. The Australian Curriculum is written within defined subject boundaries so we have had to apply them to a transdisciplinary setting by making meaningful connections between the content descriptions of the different subject areas. History and Geography haven't been separate subjects in primary schools for a long time.

Secondly, the staged roll out of the Australian Curriculum is problematic. English, Mathematics, History and Science have been released, but Geography is only in draft form, and Civics and citizenship will not be released for some time. It is difficult to make the transdisciplinary links when only part of the content is available.

Thirdly, topics are set at different year levels from the way we currently have our units of inquiry mapped. We have a unit on ancient civilisations in the junior primary years. The AC requires that this is covered in the upper primary, which means adjustments to our program of inquiry.

We have taken advantage of the professional learning related to the Australian Curriculum. Teachers were involved in the mapping project and the ACARA website trial, and our Science key teacher participated in the AGQTP science project. We have held in-school workshops aimed at familiarising staff with the online delivery of the Australian Curriculum, and we are taking a close look at the General capabilities and Cross-curriculum priorities through the AISSA project *Values Education and the Australian Curriculum*.

This year the school leadership team is taking part in the AISSA leadership program *Using the Australian Curriculum as a vehicle for change*, which has helped us develop an understanding of the theoretical background to the Australian Curriculum. It was at one of these sessions recently that Dr Julia Atkin challenged us to think of ourselves as curriculum architects with an opportunity to design our school's curriculum, rather than project managers with a focus on implementing it. In a PYP school, where much of the curriculum is delivered through units of inquiry, there is an opportunity to design challenging and engaging units of inquiry. While this has meant that some units

have had to be rewritten, there has also been an opportunity to revitalise them. The emphasis on historical and scientific inquiry complements the inquiry approach taken by the school and has given us new ways to think about and view the inquiry process.

We also need to revise the school's curriculum documents. These documents will provide a link between the Australian Curriculum online and something that can be used by teachers and other members of the school community. Traditionally these weighty tomes have taken up space in staff libraries and classrooms. Creating a digital repository that connects the Australian Curriculum online, the school's scope and sequence, unit of inquiry planners and other documents teachers use to organise their classes' learning, is the next stage of the process. This will allow for access to the latest version of the curriculum and ongoing collaborative updating of our school documents.

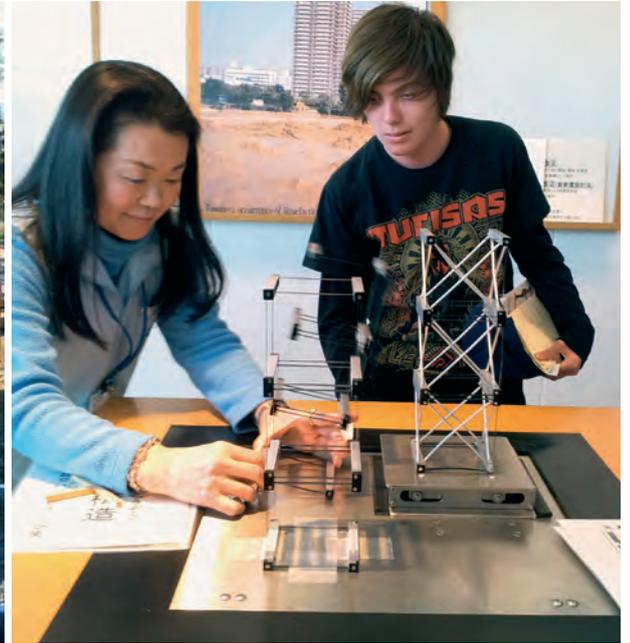
Throughout this process, we have involved the teaching staff as much as possible so that we are not simply imposing yet another curriculum on them. Opportunities for professional learning and development of lead teachers in taking responsibility for implementation within their curriculum area have developed an expectation of pedagogical improvement as a result of our engagement with the Australian Curriculum.

John Dow

Deputy Principal/PYP Coordinator
St. Michael's Lutheran School, Hahndorf



Year 1 students from St Michael's checking out transport systems at Port Adelaide



Students in Melrose Cemetery, collecting data about life expectancy in the nineteenth century In Japan researching earthquake-proof engineering & building design

A springboard for curriculum development

At Immanuel College, the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (MYP) provides the curriculum framework for years 7 – 10, while years 11 and 12 follow the SACE framework. Alongside the national discussions regarding recognition of the MYP, we explored how the Australian Curriculum would align with our delivery of the MYP. We established that the Australian Curriculum would inform the content we covered, while the MYP framework would continue to guide delivery and assessment.

The Faculty Leaders were enthusiastic in their uptake of the Australian Curriculum. Faculties mapped their current curriculum content against the Australian Curriculum, identifying areas of correlation and gaps, and areas we would retain to maintain the integrity of the MYP. The leaders developed implementation plans for their faculties, with all faculties teaching Australian Curriculum at some year levels this year. AISSA Australian Curriculum workshops provided support, and an electronic curriculum management tool was introduced to aid planning and evaluation.

Implementation of the Australian Curriculum has increased teacher collaboration through team planning and team teaching. It has been a catalyst for reviewing our approaches to learning, and has provided the opportunity for staff to take on leadership roles within their year levels.

The **Mathematics** faculty planned a two-phase roll-out of the Australian Curriculum, with years 7 and 8 implemented this year, and years 9

and 10 to follow next year. In line with the Australian Curriculum scope and sequence from year 7 to 10, some topics are now addressed at earlier year levels than previously. A decision was made to add Discrete Mathematics in these year levels, as this is reflected in the Senior Secondary curriculum.

For the **English** faculty, it was the catalyst for greater collaboration, and for establishing common units, text-types and assessment tasks. Staff identified that the Literature Strand had been an historic emphasis in our curriculum, but an increased focus on the other two strands was necessary. This led to the creation of courses to support students' literacy skills and understanding of the development of the English language, as well as a greater focus on grammar. Another priority has been to increase the number of texts with Asian and Indigenous perspectives.

The **Humanities** faculty welcomed the importance placed on History, and the structure provided by the depth studies and scope and sequence. Team meetings now focus more on how to engage with the content and on ways to deliver it, rather than on negotiating the content itself.

The depth study electives have been enhanced by links to the community. For instance, a camp at Melrose provided the opportunity to make connections to the 'Making a nation' theme in relation to nineteenth century settlement in South Australia, and to explore further the cross-curriculum priorities of Sustainability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

In **Science** there was already close alignment between current curriculum and the Australian Curriculum. Sustainability was well represented in the curriculum, and the faculty has worked on equally embedding the other two cross-curriculum priorities.

Science has also established some hands-on ways to engage with these. The Kurna Garden is a tangible way to acknowledge Kurna connections to the local land and to learn about water conservation, ecosystem interrelationships, and the traditional uses of native plants. A science study tour to Japan allows Immanuel students to collaborate with Japanese students, experience the study of science in Asia and appreciate the high value placed on science education globally.

The diverse and multicultural nature of our student body, alongside our Japanese and Chinese language classes, exchanges and study tours, means that we see the inclusion of the **Cross-curriculum priorities** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia as particularly relevant to our community. Our aim is to continue to find ways to embed these priorities and articulate them meaningfully.

Despite considerable curriculum change in the MYP and SACE in recent years, our staff has embraced the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, and seen it as a springboard for reviewing what and how we teach, and how we can better equip our students for their futures.

Janette Lange

Curriculum Coordinator
Immanuel College, Novar Gardens

Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

Challenge and change at Concordia

Embedding the Australian Curriculum at Concordia Lutheran College has meant challenging and changing the way we teach, assess and report whilst maintaining Christ-centred learning and student-focused progression. This has been an exciting time as we have evaluated our curriculum delivery practices and embraced the possibilities and advantages that the Australian Curriculum has had to offer our college.

Our journey across the two Junior College campuses commenced with the delivery of documentation through ACARA for the learning strands of English, Mathematics and Science. Our task was to begin the process of unpacking that documentation and, like any good learner, begin asking questions. What are we familiar with? What is new to us? Our backward mapping process began and we worked collectively with QSA exemplars and created term and whole school overviews.

It then became obvious that we needed a framework to begin engaging with the curriculum documents effectively so the development of new planning templates commenced. Not only did this require teachers to delve into the new world of achievement standards, content descriptors and general capabilities but also consider how the core values of our college, which included developing self-directed, insightful investigators and learners, could be represented and embedded within the key learning areas. Our thinking about curriculum delivery began to expand and inquiry based learning became a prominent component of delivery considerations.

Engaging in innovative ways to manage assessment has been another crucial step. Writing quality assessment pieces that engage students in real life application whilst reflecting student capabilities has been rewarding. The ongoing collection of data and portfolios of evidence has ensured teachers have closely monitored their students and 'filled the gaps' where necessary.

Our former report format did not have the capacity to reflect the teaching and learning that had taken place across our campuses. After careful consideration of what our mandated five point scale would look like we decided on using a *language of progression* to reflect our deeply embedded philosophy of nurturing all children towards the love of learning. This has given us the ability to highlight where children are at on their individual learning journeys within an expected

achievement standard and give a clear indication also of what needs to be taught or learned in the future to meet that standard.

Holding a parent forum to gather feedback on our proposed reporting format as well as taking the opportunity to educate parents on new curriculum requirements has been invaluable. One of the most important messages we had to share was our language of progression in terms of charting student achievement and celebrating the progress made within that achievement standard.

Amidst the overviews, planning documents, assessment rubrics, achievement standards and report templates we have not lost sight of our core business: delivering quality teaching practice within a framework where the gospel of Jesus Christ informs everything we do. We have been deliberate in adequately resourcing staff, honouring their professionalism with time and providing occasions for peer conferencing and moderation.

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum has challenged us as educators. However, by aiming to be the best we can be, we hope to instil in our students that desire to face new challenges with confidence knowing that their learning progress is valued, no matter how big or small their steps along the way may be!

Rhonda Yarrow,
Curriculum Coordinator
Concordia Lutheran College

Preparing to teach the Australian Curriculum

Faith Lutheran College, Plainland, commenced 2012 with five days of professional development for teaching staff focusing on

the delivery of curriculum. Many subject areas had undergone significant curriculum development. Now that we had developed the 'what', we felt it necessary to focus on the 'how'; how we can best deliver this new curriculum.

We felt this was important considering the amount of change in our school today: Australian Curriculum, planning for introduction of year 7 into our college and similar initiatives. We also felt it was important to invest energies into potential learning models or frameworks that would best suit our educational context. This has seen our staff exposed to several models, such as Marzano's Dimensions of Learning, with the hope of aligning this newly planned curriculum with the best possible teaching practice.

Like most schools, we have found the development and implementation of the national curriculum both exciting and sometimes overwhelming. Exciting in terms of introducing a fresh curriculum that will challenge and better prepare our students for the demands of the 21st century world; and overwhelming, particularly in ensuring that the integrity of our new curriculum is upheld when it is delivered in the classroom.

Spending a substantial amount of time and energy focusing on our teaching practice, we are ensuring that we provide our students with a worthwhile and comprehensive curriculum; not only on paper, but also in practice in the classroom.

Take the cross-curriculum priority of *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*, which must be embedded in all learning areas. Our curriculum leaders have been extremely vigilant to ensure this priority is not only suitably addressed in their subjects, but is



Sampling Asian food at Plainland



Engaging with Asia at Plainland

also used to enhance student learning. In this instance, our college successfully applied for the national *Becoming Asia Literate: Grants for Schools* initiative, which allowed our college to fund a number of professional learning opportunities for our teachers: guest speakers at staff meetings, attendance at numerous cultural activities/events, facilitating school based and community groups to broaden teachers' intercultural understanding of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.

The funds also allowed us to map and develop units of work which emphasised this particular priority. It started with year 8, where all subjects were required to include at least one unit that focused on an Asian country or issue which impacts upon Australia. Engagement varied from subject to subject. In Mathematics it is as simple as using Asian demographic data when studying statistics. In English, students complete a report on a current Australasian issue, which requires them to investigate the impact of this issue across borders. These are only brief examples. However, they are key steps towards broadening our students' understanding and engagement with Asia.

Our perspective is that schools wanting to avoid tokenism in developing and delivering their new curriculums need to dedicate at least the same amount of time and energy in the **teaching practice** of the Australian Curriculum, as they do to writing and developing their curriculums.

Our college does not yet profess to have all the answers when addressing the many demands of the Australian Curriculum. However, we feel confident that by committing similar energies towards the **teaching** of this new national curriculum, not just the development of it, we

will be able to best achieve our core business – facilitating meaningful learning for our students.

Tyson Kenny

Director of Teaching & Learning
Faith Lutheran College, Plainland

Assessment language for learners in the Middle School

As part of a review of our approach to education in the Middle Years at St Andrews, we have used the Australian Curriculum planning process to realign our approach to assessment. We have drawn on ideas from Black and William's Assessment for Learning, the QSRLS Beyond the Middle report as well as the practices which commonly appear in the literature around middle years education.

Generally, we have tried to ensure that there is an emphasis on formative assessment and quality feedback. Students can then begin to develop an awareness of assessment as a process that helps them improve their understanding and consequently their levels of achievement, rather than being something that happens to them that they don't really comprehend.

Many tasks now have a section for students to set and review their learning goals and teachers are encouraged to comment on the students' progress towards these. We are trialing a goal-setting record sheet to go inside the student folios so they can review it each time they get a marked task returned.

The assessment tasks that are emerging have task-specific descriptors, which are drawn from the Queensland Studies Authority's Learning Area Standards Descriptors draft framework but written in student-friendly language. The descriptors focus more on what the student has been able to achieve, rather than on what they haven't.

Increasingly, students are given opportunities in class to assess exemplars using the standards descriptors before they start their own task, so that they have a better idea of the requirements and the quality expected. They can also use these to peer or self assess drafts or even final assessments.

In an effort to differentiate our assessment tasks more clearly, we have started writing a *must*, *should* and *could* description of the task requirements. The idea is that the *must* description is for those learners who want to ensure that they have at least met the requirements to a satisfactory level. This is also a really useful descriptor for the students who have additional educational needs. The *should* description is for the majority of learners and has additional requirements for the task in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The *could* task description is designed to challenge the most able students in the class.

It has been really encouraging to find that most students are using these descriptors to help them aim higher, rather than using the *must* as a way of avoiding doing anything but the bare minimum. These descriptions are also giving teachers a chance to really think about what they want to see in the students' work. Having put the expectations into words, the teachers also find it easier to give an accurate grade to each task, especially if they do some moderation before they mark the whole set.

We still have a way to go but we hope we're moving towards a program in which both students and teachers have a better understanding of what assessment is all about.

Stephen Huth

Head of Middle School
St Andrews Lutheran College

My people—boat people



Stephen Rudolph is the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia

Earlier this year, I visited St John's Lutheran Primary School, Portland Victoria, for the installation of their new principal, Mick Emmett, and the re-dedication of the entire St John's staff and council. This was my first visit to Portland for approximately forty years; my last visit was during the early 1970s when my parents and I visited my Grandpa Schwarz. Pastor Benno Schwarz had retired to Portland and during our 1970s visit and after lunch one day, he began singing the Christian song *Jesus Bids Us Shine (... you in your small corner and I in mine)*. For a teenager, this was a challenging moment. To sing a Sunday school song was not an easy task for an adolescent, but I stumbled through the verses and quietly sang the chorus line, which remains embedded in my mind. Bless you, Grandpa!

Now some forty years on, I was in Portland again. My memory of Grandpa's faith, strength and confidence gave me a great desire to drive past 65 Bancroft Street to see his final retirement residence. It also took me to his and Grandma Emma Schwarz's graveside at the South Portland Cemetery. I had not been able to attend Grandpa's funeral. Grandma Emma Schwarz (née Hoffmann) passed away in the 1950s and I did attend her funeral, but was only three weeks old. Grandpa died in 1976 and I was teaching in Queensland and could not attend his funeral. Now I wanted to pay my respects to them both.

A search of the South Portland Cemetery soon found the Lutheran section, with our German names—Mibus, Nuske, Peuchen, Schultz, Uebergang, Schwarz.

I stood at the grave of my mother's parents, Benno and Emma, and pondered their lives and service to the Lutheran Church.

Benno had met Emma in Springfield Illinois USA, whilst studying to become a Lutheran pastor. She was a young American Lutheran nurse and they met at church one Sunday morning. That was in 1904 and by 1908, upon completion of Benno's study and ordination, they married and he accepted a call to serve at Denial Bay, South Australia, a tiny place 13 km west of Ceduna in South Australia. They were dropped off on the beach in 1909 after many weeks on a boat from the USA to India and then to Australia. I have looked up Denial Bay on Google Maps. Benno and Emma's faith must have been strong!

In pondering my past, I even ventured to the following websites to find out more about my forbears:

- » www.familyhistorysa.info, and www.coraweb.com.au/shipindex.htm
Check them out, you may get a pleasant surprise.

I have discovered that *my people* were *boat people*. My four grandparents all came to Australia on boats. John and Jane Tepper and their three children arrived at Port Adelaide on the ship *Gellert* in 1847. Johann and Anna Schwarz and their two children arrived at Port Adelaide in the barque *Alfred* in 1848. Gottfried and Anna Rudolph and their three children arrived at Port Adelaide on the barque *Alfred* in 1852. Finally my grandmother, Emma Hoffmann, arrived at Denial Bay, with her new husband Rev Benno Schwarz, as Mrs Schwarz, in 1909. The name of the boat is still unknown, but this fills the picture of my family history that all of my people arrived in Australia on boats.

I wonder, if they had arrived in Australia in recent years by boat, whether their reception and story would have been the same. Aren't people meant to arrive in planes these days? Weren't *my people* trying to start a new life, a new calling, a new adventure, a new beginning? Are there boat people arriving, or trying to arrive, in Australia today, who are also trying to do these things? To start anew? Many also arrive in planes. The media call these new arrivals 'refugees'. Do they dream similar dreams to my forbears? How can I support them in their life struggle and journey? How can our Lutheran schools support them, learn from them, care for them?

In our Lutheran schools we want to welcome all people into our safe, caring and learning communities. New enrolment arrivals are celebrated and welcomed into the Christian care of our schools. This is surely the example to our nation we want our Lutheran schools to be—places of acceptance, support and encouragement, places where our students, staff and families hear about our Saviour, Jesus. Service learning programs have developed, and will continue to develop, to enable greater gospel learning and support for school worship, Christian Studies lessons, daily school life and our students and staff as well as for people new to Australia.

I encourage you all in your daily Christian service endeavours – you are making a difference in people's lives – thank you and God bless you.

Please check the websites in this article or find your own. How did your people arrive? Does it matter? Or is it more important that we learn from our forbears' stories and play our own part in leading our schools and their people in caring for and understanding others.

May God grant us the strength and courage our forbears had, to ensure we open our communities and minds to love one another, as our Saviour Jesus does.

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