

## I really don't know how our principal does it! Identifying and equipping the next generation of leaders in Lutheran schools



**Mark Worthing is the Senior Researcher of Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics, ALC**

As many of our readers will recall, a survey was sent out late last year to all teaching staff in Lutheran schools across Australia. With the continued expansion of Lutheran schools the question needed to be asked whether there will be enough future leaders, particularly future principals, coming through the system to meet our projected needs. It was also important to find out whether there was enough interest on the part of current and future leaders to fill positions in rural and remote schools, as well as whether there were enough active Lutherans interested in leadership to fill the role of principal. Questions were also asked about the Leadership Development Program (LDP) and the general attractiveness (or lack thereof) of leadership positions in our schools. In all, 861 (27%) of teaching staff responded to the survey. The numbers gave us a good sampling of the teacher population and one of our best looks into the teachers in our schools.

**Our teachers are overwhelmingly passionate about what they do, committed to the Christian faith and committed to Lutheran schools.**

While much of the data gathered was purely quantitative, there were also a number of

opportunities for respondents to add their own comments. The number of comments was very high, giving us a wealth of qualitative data that is still being assessed. One thing that became immediately clear to the LEA team looking at the data was that our teachers are overwhelmingly passionate about what they do, committed to the Christian faith and committed to Lutheran schools, even though it was recognised that teaching is a challenging vocation. One teacher summed up the view of many when they wrote: 'I LOVE my job – but it's hard!'

### 'I LOVE my job - but it's hard!'

#### Survey response

Some of the things learned from the study:

- » Half of current principals expect to retire in the next seven years
- » 54 principal positions will need to be filled within the next ten years, even if no new schools are started during this time
- » 78% of Lutheran school principals are between the ages of 44 and 63
- » 12% of all teaching staff currently not in leadership positions are interested in applying for leadership positions
- » 30% of those interested in applying for leadership positions (or about 135 current non-leadership staff) are practising Lutherans
- » 71% of respondents would not be willing or able to relocate to a rural or remote region (mostly due to family reasons)
- » 4,579 teachers across Australia identified themselves as Lutheran in the 2011 census

- » 301 principals in the 2011 census identified themselves as Lutheran, which means there are 218 principals in non-LEA schools across Australia who identify as Lutheran, with the majority of these in Queensland and South Australia
- » 92% of serving principals support the concept of the principal as spiritual head of the school. The remaining 8% are neutral

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- » 83% of serving principals support the policy of principals being active members of an LCA congregation. The remainder are evenly divided between those who are neutral and those not in favour of this policy
- » 78% of non-senior leadership teaching staff support the concept of the principal as spiritual head of the school, with 13% neutral and 9% opposed
- » 68% of non-senior leadership teaching staff support the policy of principals being active members of an LCA congregation, with 20% neutral and 12% opposed
- » 43% of all non-senior leadership teaching staff responding to the survey identified themselves as Lutheran
- » 41% of non-senior leadership teaching staff are open to doing the LDP
- » The major factors hindering current teaching staff from applying to do LDP are (1) lack of time (47%), (2) lack of encouragement by senior leadership to do the program (45%), (3) not enough knowledge about the program (39%)

So what does all this mean? While national and regional leaders of Lutheran schools will need time to work through the many and varied implications of the data, some things are already clear. There are enough future leaders currently within the system to meet projected needs, but this will only be the case if we are able to identify these people and get them into the Leadership Development Program. We also need to more effectively address the concerns of many that the requirements of the role are simply too onerous. Many teachers see what their principal does and wonder how he or she can accomplish all the demands of the role. One teacher put the dilemma very well: 'I had always thought I would one day be a principal in a Lutheran school. However, I don't feel I would have the stamina, knowledge and confidence — or be able to balance work, family and also my commitment to teaching without having major health problems, including stress. I really don't know how our principal does it! She is extremely committed and amazing.'

The challenge faced by Lutheran Education Australia is not so much how to find these few extremely committed and amazing people, but how to train, encourage and support more 'ordinary' teachers to become amazing leaders themselves. This is one of the reasons that the survey has confirmed the importance of the Leadership Development Program. LDP received generally positive comments from

those who had participated in it. Typical was the teacher who said: 'This was a wonderful program which challenged me greatly and increased my confidence, knowledge and skills in leadership,' or another who wrote, 'It was a great experience. I was challenged to develop my understanding of education and leadership in light of theology.' Yet scope for improvement was also recognised, with a smaller number expressing concerns or suggestions, such as one who felt LDP was too 'narrowly focused ... since it did not address the technical/skill aspects of leadership,' or another who found it very rewarding, yet found it meant 'a lot of late nights preparing assignments over the two years.'

**'It was a great experience. I was challenged to develop my understanding of education and leadership in light of theology.'**

*Survey response from an LDP participant*

The number of Lutheran teachers and principals working outside the Lutheran system was also found to be significant. It was pleasing to see such a strong Lutheran presence in other school sectors. Some of these educators may be available to serve within Lutheran schools in future. They would bring with them the experience of other school systems. The challenge, however, would be to identify these people and then to develop a suitable orientation program to Lutheran schools if they were to come directly into leadership positions.

There is clear support across all levels for the principal as spiritual head of the school, but more clarification and support for this role is needed. There was strong support as well for the principal being an active Lutheran. Most who chose to comment on this area supported principals being practising Lutherans because they felt it was necessary for understanding the essence of Lutheran education and also for building links with Lutheran congregations. At the same time, we also found that our schools have some very committed teachers with leadership interests and ability who belong to other denominations and thought is needed as to how to best use their skills.

The challenge of recruiting leadership for schools in rural and remote locations will continue. While no easy solutions to this challenge present themselves, it is clear that LEA will need to develop an intentional strategy of meeting this ongoing need. As few participants in recent LDP cohorts have come from rural and remote schools, one strategy already being looked at is recruiting more potential leadership among teachers already serving in these settings, who have an understanding for and commitment to the unique challenges and opportunities provided by our rural and remote schools.

Finally, we wish to thank all those who took part in the survey, and especially for the many honest and insightful additional comments and suggestions. The views and suggestions of our highly committed and motivated teaching staff are already playing a significant role in shaping decisions about the future direction of our Lutheran school system and its leadership.



LSA LDP graduates 2012

# Growing new leaders



**Shane Paterson is the Assistant Director: Leadership, Lutheran Education Australia**

One of the key challenges contained in the Hughes report *Exploring Future Leadership in Lutheran Schools* (2013), was the need for LEA to be strategic in ensuring sustainability in the leadership capacity of our schools; while focusing on principalship, we would also need to consider sustainable senior leadership.

There is an added layer of complexity in being a leader in a Lutheran school. As schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), the Lutheran school is one agency of the church through which its ministry and mission is carried out to the Australian community (*The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools*, 2001). Consequently those who work in Lutheran schools are 'skilled and registered educators who are able to uphold the teachings of the church' (*Staffing policy for Lutheran Schools* 2006). It is therefore essential (and expected) that the leaders of our schools are cognisant of offering an education where learning and teaching, all human relationships and activities of the school are informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**"It is a great step toward future leadership in Lutheran schools. I recommend it to anyone looking into further leadership".**

LDP participant

Being a leader in a Lutheran school is certainly unique; decisions are made, policies written, strategies are formed using a particular lens – a lens which is based on the Lutheran faith. Principals and leaders in schools use this lens to ensure that the school carries out its mission and is true to its calling.

While there are a number of ways that leaders can be formed, encouraged or developed, LEA recognised the need to form leaders for its schools who can support and uphold the ethos of a Lutheran school. Over a decade ago this realisation led to the forming of a partnership between LEA, Australian Lutheran College (ALC) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in providing a course for the intentional development of leaders.

Through this partnership a focused leadership training program was established, which incorporates strategies recognised as essential in good leadership development: formal study, mentoring, practical experience and profiling. These strategies are infused with a distinctly Lutheran flavour as participants are encouraged to view and practise leadership through a uniquely Lutheran lens.

**"A wonderful program that encourages deep reflection about what it means to be a leader in a Lutheran school".**

LDP participant

The program has a broad focus on what constitutes leadership in a Lutheran school. It is not intended to focus on particular disciplines or areas (eg. curriculum), but on what leadership is for the individual: how it is practised, what makes someone a leader, what are the worldview / values / ethics used in leading?

## Leadership Development Program

Initially launched in 2000 as the Millennial Principals Project (MPP), the Leadership Development Program (as it is now known) has been offered four times over the last decade: 2001/2, 2005/6, 2010/11 and 2013/14.

The stated aims of this program are:

- » greater understanding of the nature of leadership and administration of Lutheran schools
- » reflection on the participants' own abilities and how God might be calling them to serve in the context of the Lutheran school
- » achievement of necessary skills and understandings to be an effective leader in the Lutheran school
- » greater level of confidence in leadership capacity

At the successful conclusion of a two year tertiary commitment, participants graduate with a Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Leadership (ACU). Participants may then choose to complete a Masters degree.

Since the inception of LDP:

- » 166 participants have successfully completed the program. 36 participants are currently enrolled in the 2013/14 cohort

- » of the 86 principals in Lutheran schools 33 are graduates of the program
- » 20 graduates have been appointed to the role of deputy principal, while 17 have become a head of a sub-school
- » graduates have taken on positions at ALC and at regional offices
- » of the 166 graduates there is an approximate 50 / 50 split in gender

The structure of LDP is viewed as one of its main strengths and this includes a strong formal study component, a national leadership conference, mentoring, regional conferences and networking.

## The future

It is apparent that the LDP is supporting aspirant and emerging leaders in our system, nurturing and training them so they are empowered to take on leadership roles.

**"I have found the mentoring, the theological focus and the collegiality with fellow participants to be a real blessing. I have appreciated the work that has gone into delivering the intensive courses and the rich levels of feedback".**

LDP participant

It is expected that the next round of LDP will begin in 2015. Speak to your principal if you are interested in developing your leadership skills further and perhaps wish to be considered as a participant in the program. Information on the 2015/2016 round will be advertised in future issues of LEA News, on the LEA website and through regional newsletters.

**Further information is available from your regional or national office.**

## My LDP journey



**Nathan Shrowder is the Head of Middle School at Good News Lutheran College, Werribee, Vic**

If I were to come up with one phrase to describe the Leadership Development Program (LDP) it would have to be 'a journey'. This seems to be the most suitable description for me. Let me explain.

LDP has had a huge impact on my life and on my vocation. I am currently in my second year as the Head of Middle School at Good News Lutheran College, Tarneit, Victoria, and I can honestly say that if it weren't for my involvement in the LDP I would not have considered taking on this role.

When I look back on those two years of study, the one aspect of the course that comes to mind instantly is the number of opportunities I had to reflect on who I am personally, spiritually and professionally. The journey I went on individually throughout this time was amazing.

I can't pinpoint any one subject that stood out more than others but I think it is the networking and conversations that occurred with fellow LDP participants that helped build confidence and develop a real strength in Christian leadership. These deep, and sometimes controversial conversations helped me focus on my values, my leadership style and my strengths. I learnt so much from the wonderful people with whom I spent two years studying.

With a young family at the time, my big concern going into LDP was how I would manage my time and the added workload of assignments. I found very early on that this wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be and through the fantastic support of my family, and also the leadership team at Endeavour College, I was able to maintain a sense of balance throughout the course. I appreciate all the support and guidance that was given to me during that time.

The underlying concept of our gospel centered education in Lutheran schools was an integral part of the course and this definitely filtered through all our discussions and assignments.

This cornerstone of our Lutheran education system is so important and LDP really strengthens your understanding of this.

While I referred to LDP as 'a journey', by no means am I indicating that this journey finished at the end of the two years. I made the decision to continue one more year of study after LDP in order to finish my Masters in Educational Leadership. While I was in the right frame of mind and willing to take this study further I made the most of it and don't regret it at all. It was a combination of the skills and knowledge gained throughout the LDP and Masters, and the strong belief that teaching is not just a job but rather a vocation, that led me to uproot my family and move interstate to take on my current role. This was the biggest decision we had ever made and so far it has worked out very well for us. My journey started with LDP and now continues with my new role as Head of Middle School. I am forever learning and reflecting on my own leadership and hopefully this will never stop. Without LDP I would not be where I am today and I encourage others interested in any form of leadership in their school to get involved in this course.

## Millennial Principals Project: it lives on



**Jane Mueller is the Principal of Living Faith Lutheran Primary School, Murrumba Downs, Qld**

In 2002 I was still very much wet behind the ears. As a classroom teacher at St Paul Lutheran School in Blair Athol, holding the leadership positions of ICT coordinator and staff coordinator, I was naïve to the concept of leadership. To me, leadership was just an administrative thing you did when you got better at whatever you were already doing. Like I said, naïve.

Early that year my then principal encouraged me to apply for the Millennial Principals Project. Together with about 100 other Lutheran educators across Australia, I took part in the Board for Lutheran School's deliberate process of building leadership capacity. I still remember the first workshop – Patrick Duignan talking about authentic leadership, stewardship and organisational culture. Authe-what? Ste-what? Orga-what? My eyes were abruptly opened to 'real' leadership. I was enthused,

inspired and uplifted by some tremendous maestros – not only through the formal study and mentoring components of the project, but also through casual chats over morning tea with my Adelaide MPP counterparts.

But MPP took me even deeper. I had long known Jesus as my loving saviour, as a teacher, a healer and a friend. But, through MPP, I acknowledged for the first time Jesus as a leader. A servant leader. A servant leader I suddenly aspired to be like.

MPP set me on a journey. Without warning, leadership took on an entirely new dimension for me and I found myself desperate to seek God's will in whatever capacity of service that might be. I learned the truth of Ephesians 3:20: that God was working in more ways than I could have ever dreamed of asking of him. I found myself called to leadership. I felt God's hand moulding and guiding me as he planted various grace-filled people in my life to help grow me. My focus shifted from inwards to outwards. A sense of humility set in. I moved away from my naïve view of leadership as administration, to a perspective based almost entirely on Matthew 22:37-39. I think Cal

Pierce got it right when he wrote, 'God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called.'

My MPP experience has translated beautifully into the leadership roles I've served in since that time. In fact, because of the solid grounding I received through MPP, I'm sometimes kept awake at night with a yearning to continually refine my leadership skills. That's a good thing...I think!

This brings me to today. What a blessing it is to be involved in a system that invests in its existing and potential leaders! I now have a strong desire to see future leaders emerge. Just as my principal set me on a path back in 2002 and continues to encourage me today, I am motivated to encourage the next generation of leaders to explore their potential with gusto through the Leadership Development Program. The benefits to the participants are immeasurable as they experience the joy that comes from learning and serving with passion. The benefits to our Lutheran schools are even greater as we nurture a culture of grace and love through principled leaders who know they are sustained by our awesome God, who goes before them into each new day.

# Learning about leadership through LDP



**Julie Sampson is the Learning Director of Cornerstone College, Mt Barker, SA**

I am currently the Learning Director at Cornerstone College. I was fortunate to undertake the Leadership Development Program (LDP) in 2007/2008 with the encouragement and support of my principal and college. At the time I was the Mathematics Key Learning Area leader but interested in the possibility of taking on further leadership responsibilities in the future.

LDP provided an ideal opportunity to learn more about leadership and Lutheran education. It provided me, a teacher who attends a non-Lutheran church, with a greater understanding of Lutheran theology. I was able to reflect on my faith and consider where my own denominational theology varied from that of the Lutheran church. While there are differences, there are more similarities: the fundamentals of salvation, grace, the trinity, the centrality of the Bible and many other areas are universal and being a non-Lutheran has not inhibited my leadership in a Lutheran school.

In fact, having a variety of faith perspectives, but with a common understanding of Lutheran theology, provides a rich basis from which a leadership team can work. Also the flexibility of assessment topics allowed me to consider Lutheran theology in my area of interest in education, in particular curriculum and learning. For example does the theology of the two kingdoms provide a basis for determining the curriculum of a Lutheran school? And what can the Bible teach us about leadership?

I also enjoyed the workshop approach to the studies. The two lecture/workshop days provided opportunity for deep educational discussion with colleagues. As well as individually reading and preparing materials, there was great benefit in being able to contemplate, discuss and debate educational issues together. Since many people completed all the units, the collegial interaction and relationships developed over the two years provided a network of colleagues in leadership across schools with whom I continue to dialogue professionally regarding leadership and other educational matters.

Following LDP I was fortunate to gain a Senior Leadership Team position as the Learning Director. I think that LDP provided me with

a much deeper understanding of leadership, change management, team development and theology so that I was better prepared to apply for and then undertake the role. While I have continued to grow and develop as a senior leader in the following years, some of the fundamentals in the LDP course are ideas and principles to which I return, particularly when considering implementing new ideas, working with more challenging situations or developing the team of leaders for whom I am now the leader. LDP gave me a greater insight into the benefits of understanding Lutheran theology. New developments, student matters and major decisions made in leadership must be undergirded by who we are and what we believe as educators in Lutheran schools. A foundation in Lutheran theology and an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of educational leadership make it easier for leaders to be unified in these decisions and develop the college's future direction.

After completing LDP I chose to undertake further study and have since completed a Masters in Educational Leadership through Australian Catholic University. This enabled me to continue further studies in Leading Authentic Learning, Shared Leadership and other educational units to complete the full Masters degree.

## The LDP experience for me



**Daniel Weller is the Assistant Principal at Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School, Croydon, Vic**

Almost two years ago I was contemplating the next move in my teaching career. I had progressed through several leadership positions. However, on reflection I felt that I might need some 'polish' on the skills that I believed would make me a meaningful leader. While considering this I was encouraged by work colleagues to investigate the LDP course offered by LEA. After careful consideration I decided to take on the challenge of the post graduate course. Having completed a Masters degree several years earlier I understood the effort and time that would be required while working full time. I enrolled mid-2012 and in 2013 my journey in leadership development began.

*The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think – rather*

*to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with thoughts of other men. (Bill Beattie)*

Over the past year of study I have gained so much from this experience. Not only have I learnt new aspects of authentic leadership but I have also affirmed my current understanding and position on the skills required in leadership roles. LDP has provided an opportunity to reflect on my actions, strengthen the confidence in my ability and connect with other educators who are also going on the same learning journey. This collegiality with fellow teachers has also enabled me to feel connected and supported in the process, all the while providing a valuable link with other educators within the system.

The challenges that I have encountered so far have been varied, including:

- » learning new content that challenges my current understanding
- » researching and creating assessment items that meet university standards

(especially after several years since my last university course)

- » finding the time to complete the course work, considering the complexities of the work place now that I am in an executive leadership role

However, despite these challenges I feel that a strong network of learning has developed which has provided support through the process. These challenges have also enabled me to reflect and sharpen my organisational and time management skills.

I have been asked several times if I would consider continuing the course to complete a Masters degree in educational leadership. Despite recognising how this would help my understanding, knowledge and skills in leadership roles, at present I am focused on finishing the current course and using my new skills and understanding to be an effective leader in my current position. Once I have completed the postgraduate degree I will then consider whether I will continue with further study.

# Being a spiritual leader: not an option – but a blessing



**Malcolm Bartsch is a former lecturer at Australian Lutheran College**

God created humans as spiritual beings [Gen 2:7], people who are able to relate to God and to respond to God's revelation of himself. Human beings seem to have an instinctive awareness of the existence of a supreme being. They have a 'natural knowledge' of God. This is sometimes referred to as a 'God-shaped hole' which every human being seems to have and which can only be filled by God [Acts 17:27-28; Rom 1:19-20]. This spiritual dimension distinguishes human beings from the animals and the rest of creation. St Augustine prayed: 'O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you' [Confessions 1 i].

**"Human beings have a need to experience awe, mystery and a sense of the transcendent".**

Human beings have a need to experience awe, mystery and a sense of the transcendent. They look for ways to experience and express these emotions and feelings. The question is not whether a person has a spirituality, but rather what kind of spirituality they reflect and express. The existence of various religions shows that human beings have a natural tendency towards religious experiences and that they want to live in harmonious relationship with a supreme being, whatever their understanding of the deity may be.

In the context of a Lutheran school there will be a great variation of expressions of spirituality. Individuals articulate this in very different ways based on different presuppositions and approaches to life. Some may say 'I am spiritual, but I am not religious'. Others may exhibit spiritualities based on humanism, secularism, hedonism, altruism or mysticism.

Christians acknowledge that there are various human reactions to God's revelation of his power and wisdom. However, they also believe that only in Jesus Christ do human beings come to know God and live in harmonious relationship with him as a loving and merciful Father [John 14:6].

Lutheran schools therefore promote a Christian spirituality. Their spirituality will be grounded

in Lutheran theology, with its central emphasis on the gospel of salvation by grace through faith because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It will emphasise the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith, nurturing that faith and helping them to live a life of service to others.

However, within the Lutheran school community not all members of that community share a faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour. There is a 'community of faith' within the Lutheran school community and this is crucial for the spiritual life of the school. Here believers gather together as the body of Christ to listen to God's word, to pray, to celebrate the sacraments as appropriate, and to be encouraged and nurtured in their faith. However, for many within the Lutheran school community who do not share in this faith relationship, the school provides their only point of contact with the Christian message through which they are challenged regularly with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is the context in which Lutheran school principals operate. They need to focus on many areas of responsibility as they live out their vocation in a Lutheran school. They see that vocation as working together with God in God's continuing creation in the world and as part of their response in being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Through their vocation they are serving others as God in Jesus Christ has served them.

One area of responsibility to which the principal is called in a Lutheran school is as the spiritual leader of that community. This is not an option. It is an integral part of the vocation of being the principal who provides leadership in all areas of the school and its program, also in the spiritual.

**For what, then, are Lutheran school principals ultimately responsible as the spiritual leader in the Lutheran school? How do they carry out this area of their vocation?**

Central to a Lutheran school is its life of worship, where the school community gathers to be addressed by God through his word whether or not individuals share a faith response to that word through the power of the Holy Spirit. While the school pastor will have a key role in school worship, the active role of the principal in participating in the rhythm of school worship and in leading such worship is essential. Related to this is the privilege of leading prayer in the school community, for nurturing prayer particularly amongst the school leadership team and other staff members and for fostering a community of hope, compassion and welcome in and through the school.

The principal is the key person in promoting Bible study and theological growth with the staff and in leading formation of staff,



Being a spiritual leader in a Lutheran school assumes that the principal is an active, confessing Christian

particularly the accreditation of new staff. This formation includes grappling with the way in which theology provides insights into educational theory and practice, and identifying relevant theological perspectives when dealing with decision-making in school administration. It also means appreciating the Lutheran theological perspective as it engages with contemporary life in school and society and fostering awe, wonder and delight in seeing God work in and through his creation.

Principals need to be seen as strong advocates for the Christian Studies program in the school and its central role in the total school curriculum. The identification and appropriate preparation of staff to teach in this critical area and the provision of resources are vital, as is giving priority to Christian Studies in the timetable. Often at the senior school level, the availability of experienced Christian Studies staff needs particular attention.

Pastoral care and counselling of staff and students will be a shared responsibility with the pastor and other staff in the school. Times of suffering, tragedy or distress in the community present particular challenges. The principal may also have to deal with delicate issues in the life and witness of staff so that faith and life are integrated in keeping with the ethos and theological foundation of the school.

**\*As the public face of the school, Lutheran principals need a firm grasp of the public teaching and practice of the LCA, to be committed to it... so that they can lead and promote the role of the school in the ministry and mission of the LCA\*.**

As the public face of the school, Lutheran principals need a firm grasp of the public teaching and practice of the LCA, to be committed to it and be familiar with the structure and working of the church, so that they can lead and promote the role of the school in the ministry and mission of the LCA as they promise to do in their service of installation. School rituals and other functions should clearly show that the school has a strong spiritual and theological core, even if that is not the prime reason why some parents have chosen to enrol their children in the school. Here the principal has an essential role

in the interview process, whether in enrolling students or employing staff, to ensure that core Lutheran theology is communicated.

In carrying out their responsibility as spiritual leaders principals draw on the expertise and experience of others in the school community. Principals may not be experts in all areas, but they have the final responsibility for them all. Just as principals may delegate authority to a financial officer within the school community to act on their behalf in financial matters, so, too, in many areas of spiritual life the school pastor or a congregational pastor acts as their delegate. The pastor is responsible for key areas of the school's spiritual life and is accountable to the principal for this role. Therefore, it is imperative for principals and school pastors to work together in a spirit of cooperation and collegiality for the wellbeing of the school. If the spiritual life of the school is to flourish, goodwill between pastor and principal is essential.

### **How do Lutheran school principals continue to equip themselves for their role as spiritual leaders in the Lutheran school?**

Being a spiritual leader in a Lutheran school assumes that the principal is an active, confessing Christian. Spirituality grows out of a strong sense of identity, of knowing who we are and what we stand for and believe. It means living the life of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit with our head and our hands as well as our heart. Personal spiritual development means that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives in two ways, both internally and externally. Externally the Holy Spirit comes to us in the word of God and the sacraments, through other Christians and through various life experiences. Internally the Holy Spirit works with our spirit [Rom 8:1-30] to shape us from within, to prompt our prayer and praises and help us live the life of faith. Christian spirituality has an active side as well as a contemplative side, all the result of the Holy Spirit's work in us. There is a time to 'be still and know that I am God' [Ps 46:10a], and there is a time to express our spirituality in intense involvement through serving others.

Lutheran principals take seriously their own spiritual growth. They are concerned about their own continuing biblical and theological growth and they strive to be individuals of an exemplary character as models of the Christian life, developing a personal ethical framework which is thoroughly theologically based.



...for many within the Lutheran school...the school provides the only point of contact with the Christian message

They participate regularly in congregational worship. As well as receiving all that God gives in worship through word and sacrament, confession and absolution and nurture in faith, they also share in fellowship with other Christians and participate in the whole range of congregational activities. Here principals can receive ministry from those whom they meet only in the congregational setting: prayer support, encouragement, celebration, strength and insights to carry Christ back into the school through daily living out of their Christian vocation, trying to maintain a balance between their numerous areas of responsibility.

Being a spiritual leader in a Lutheran school is not an option for principals. It is part of their vocation, but it is also a blessing! As they work together with all who make up the school community, principals recognise that all authority for what they do, the wisdom and strength to do it, and the blessings which result, come from the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit. Knowing this, they can with confidence continue in their vocation, working as servants of God in providing an integrated program of excellence, including a strong spiritual focus, in and through their schools.

# Positive psychology in Lutheran schools



**Stuart Traeger is Spiritual Development Leader, Lutheran Schools Association (SA/WA/NT)**



**Mark Worthing is Senior Researcher, Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics, ALC**

Positive psychology is one of the newest branches of psychology. But it is not without its forerunners. In writing of ethics Aristotle said, 'for as it is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes one blessed and happy'. Since then prominent psychologists such as Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow have all contributed to the field. Many of our Lutheran schools would also be familiar with SEARCH Institute's 40 Developmental Assets which help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible.

The contemporary positive psychology movement is generally dated to the 1998 publication of Martin Seligman's book *Learned Optimism*. In his 2011 book *Flourish* Seligman tells the story of his own journey toward positive psychology. Frustrated with responding to and studying only those individuals who were not functioning well, Seligman felt there must be a way to scientifically assess and measure 'happiness' for the purpose of understanding

and promoting psychological health and wellbeing. He identified five measurable component parts that construct a person's wellbeing. These appear under the acronym: PERMA (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement). The positive psychology movement, especially as it is manifest in school based programs, is also associated with the concept of six virtues (Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence) and twenty-four character strengths. The VIA Institute is a leading institution on positive psychology and details on character strengths and other aspects of positive psychology are freely available from their website, <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>.

## Positive psychology - positive education

Positive psychology is a science that can be applied to all kinds of industries and institutions. When applied to schools it is referred to as positive education. Throughout Australia a number of schools from both the government and independent sectors have invested significantly implementing positive education programs. Leaders from many of these schools have come together to form Positive Education Schools Australia (PESA), which was officially launched in February this year. Their mission is 'to foster the implementation and development of positive psychology and its applications in education settings'. Their website ([www.pesa.edu.au](http://www.pesa.edu.au)) lists a number of schools which are very willing to share their resources and experiences of positive education programs.

## Are we speaking the same language?

A Christian cannot spend long around those involved with positive psychology without noticing that there appear to be a lot of familiar themes within this movement. Programs often highlight the importance of hope and striving for goals. Each student must have some purpose or aim and some genuine hope that they can achieve their goals. Christians would agree. After all, doesn't the Apostle Paul admonish us to 'strive (or press) toward the goal of our heavenly calling' (Philippians 3:14)? And when it comes to hope, that is a central theme of Christian faith. Our hope in Christ, our hope of salvation, our hope in the resurrection – we hope and not without reason or foundation. Without hope, we are nothing. Indeed, we would be forgiven for thinking that the positive psychologists, at this point, are speaking our language.

There also appears to be a connection with what it means to grow in maturity of faith. Scripture tells us to 'put off the old self' and to 'put on the new self' (Ephesians 4:22-24), to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ in our relationships with one another (Ephesians 2:5). The church refers to this process as sanctification whereby, having been justified before God, the Holy Spirit continues the work of empowering us to do good works and become more Christlike. Sanctification is not only about doing good works (eg, 1 Corinthians 13), but about good attitudes (Romans 12:2; 1 Timothy 6:6). It is this process of striving to be more Christlike, both in our works and in our attitudes that appears to align very well with positive psychology's goal of improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Within the *Vision for learners and learning in Lutheran schools* ten values are identified. Within its virtues, character strengths and exercises, positive psychology mentions each of these values. Once again, there appears to be a clear and obvious alignment between positive psychology and how Lutheran schools approach sanctification.

## A Lutheran critique

When Luther began to question the theological assumptions of the medieval church he argued that scholastic theology was wrong because it had too much confidence in what humans of their own accord could achieve. He called this a theology of glory. By contrast, he argued for a theology of the cross, which humbly focused on our need for God in Christ to enlighten us and to set us free. A theology of the cross is about focusing on God and recognising our inability to achieve anything apart from God.



My daily positive experience, Navigator Lutheran College SA



Gratitude Practice, St Andrews College Qld

If Luther were to sit in on a positive psychology presentation we suspect this would be one of his first questions, and rightly so. Positive psychology has a strong focus on the self. What must and can I as the individual do in order to achieve happiness, life satisfaction and wellbeing? The Christian, embracing the many good elements within positive psychology, must be careful that the focus on self (which is not entirely wrong) does not supplant the focus on others and their wellbeing and on God as the ultimate source of our wellbeing.

For example, the positive psychology character strength of forgiveness is defined as: *Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.* [<http://www.viacharacter.org/viainstitute/classification.aspx> April 2014].

Such a definition fails to mention our own need to be forgiven by God (and others), which is the very source of our ability to forgive others.

There is much to affirm in the focus on what we can and must do to achieve wellbeing. Christians are not against taking positive action to improve our situation or our spirit. But we must be careful not to begin to believe that we can do it alone, or that we are the ultimate source of our wellbeing. Neither can we ignore that we may have to deal with a number of negative experiences on the way to wellbeing, just as there is no shortcut to reconciliation with God that avoids the cross. A baptised version of PERMA will regularly point us to the importance of the wellbeing of others, and will not forget that God is the ultimate source of our wellbeing and achievements.

One of the common exercises from positive psychology, the 'What-Went-Well Exercise', also known as 'Three Blessings', involves spending a few minutes each night to journal three things that went well that day. The purpose is to train ourselves to focus on the positives and build satisfaction and happiness, rather than lamenting the negatives which sets us up for anxiety and depression. While such reflections may well refer to the contributions of others in our lives, the core reason for mentioning it is because it contributes to my own wellbeing. A baptised version of the exercise might be to take those three blessings and offer them up as a prayer of thanks to God, acknowledging God as the source of our wellbeing. Alternatively, the question might be reworded as, 'How has God blessed me today and why was that a blessing?' Asked in this way we immediately place the source of our wellbeing back onto God.

### Positive education in Lutheran schools

St Andrews Lutheran College, (Gold Coast, Qld) has been taking intentional steps to embed positive psychology into their program since 2011. Principal Tim Kotzur's interest in positive psychology stems from the links he sees between proactively building student wellbeing and resilience, and improved student learning outcomes. They have developed a four year strategic plan which has seen developments including a mapping of the character strengths with the LEA values and the IB learner profile. Some of the practical outcomes include the year 4 classroom's keeping of gratitude journals, Middle School Science classes incorporating stillness/mindfulness exercises at the start of each lesson, and a year 9 PERMA PE unit.

Similarly, Navigator College (Port Lincoln, SA) began the positive education journey this year. One of their practices involves students in home groups writing about one positive experience they encountered during the school day on a post-it note. This is pinned up in a dedicated space. Some home groups have a positive tree, others have pin up boards in the shape of clouds, eagles or whatever format gives them ownership. The comments on post-it notes range from being happy at school to what has been learned, goals achieved, how lovely the school environment is with the new developments or expressing gratitude to teachers for assistance and encouragement during lessons. This happens three times a week and the positives are discussed at the end of each week. This approach has had a ripple effect throughout the student cohort and the overall atmosphere throughout the school and beyond as one of positiveness, eagerness to learn and joy to be at school.

### Conclusion

There will be those who feel that the positive education approach should be taken on simply as it is, and those who feel that it is in conflict with certain aspects of Christian belief and should be eschewed altogether. These are all valid concerns. Nevertheless, there would be value in seeing what can be learned from positive psychology and the programs produced for schools. The principles of positive psychology would be reinforced and made more suitable within our Lutheran schools if they were incorporated in an intentionally Christian way. The results, happily, may surprise everyone.

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

### Spiritual retreat – a great experience – but not me just yet?

I've often read through various regional publications and listened to colleagues and leaders talk passionately about the benefits of spiritual retreats. I've always agreed that it is an excellent idea and a great opportunity to look after one's wellbeing. I've even been mildly concerned when talk moves to spiritual retreats having run their course and probably not continuing. It might come as a surprise, given my unquestionable support for wellbeing and the place of the retreat, that I've managed for years to justify why now is not quite the right time to attend – but I'll surely attend the next one.

During March I was meandering down my well-trodden pathway of finding all the right reasons to avoid another year of spiritual retreats. It's the week after fete weekend, the last week of term, deadlines are pressing, parent teacher interviews – wouldn't I be irresponsible to leave the school for the best part of three days at such an intense time? I've been a Lutheran my whole life, I know God loves me, forgives me and is always with me. I don't need three days to remember this. While my spiritual life has some room for improvement it's not a disaster. There are more important tasks to be completed.

I'm not sure how (other than God's intervention) but I ended up at the LSA principals' spiritual retreat in April. At one point during the retreat I spent an hour and a half, by myself, without my phone or anything else to read or distract me from being still and listening for God. After the first 10 minutes I was frustrated that God wasn't responding when I had scheduled this free time to be with him. It took another 30 minutes before I

began to realise God was there all the time but maybe I wasn't open to hearing him. Maybe in the routine of all my busyness and important work I had become very good at focusing on my efforts instead of God. At that moment spiritual retreats and my spiritual wellbeing began to take on another whole meaning and significance. Despite the daily routine (on good days) of devotion, prayer and listening for God, the extended time to first and foremost hear and see God in everything was exactly what my wellbeing needed.

I arrived hesitant and unsure but left renewed, refreshed and importantly with a stronger awareness of God in my life. When focusing on wellbeing I'm convinced there is nothing more important than being right with God; and retreats are a unique opportunity to place the most important aspects where they rightfully belong.

#### James Heyne

Principal  
St Mark's Lutheran School  
Mount Barker, SA

### Experiential education

Yirara College in Alice Springs, NT, has a goal of bridging the gap between school life and family and community life. With students coming from across Australia, the boarding school is able to accommodate students from 12 years and older from remote communities and our aim is to make the school as 'user friendly' as possible.

Most of our students come from Outback Australia and all of them arrive with different values, personalities and beliefs about the importance of education to both them and their communities. That is not to say that we

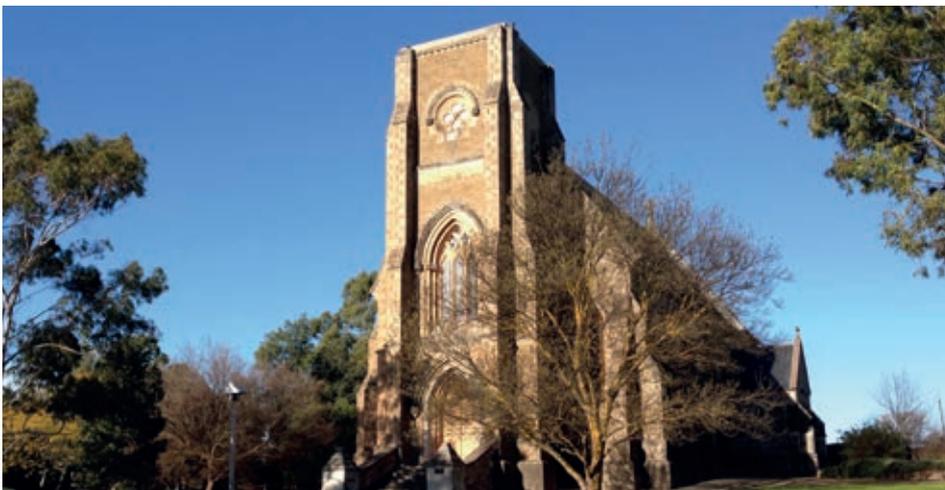
don't respect their culture; we endeavour to enrich and enhance their experiences within their learning.

In terms of training and employment one of the areas that we consider is how we can not only contribute to the students' education but also how as a school community we can contribute to each of the rural communities that the students represent.

We have a number of students in traineeships involving retail, administration, broadcasting, conservation and land management, hospital work and at the cattle yards. There are several other areas that we are exploring, such as setting up a bakery at the college to train students and supply bread to the kitchen.

We try to make the school as user friendly as we can and offer a curriculum that is relevant to students' long term goals. The extended curriculum is still in its developmental stage but the radio show and Yirara TV, which reports on college news, sport and weather, are taking us in a direction that is inspiring students. The dream is one day to have this program broadcast to the communities, which will hopefully create employment for our students. This is not the only goal of these programs. We want them to be designed in such a way that they have a focus on both literacy and numeracy.

Viv Prebble is one of the teachers at Yirara who brings with her a background in broadcasting from New Zealand. She has been guiding student learning through their broadcasting skills, which encompass vocal techniques, operating a multi-audio desk, interviewing and producing a radio show for the local Alice Springs community radio



I arrived hesitant and unsure but left renewed



We try to make the school as user friendly as we can

station, 8CCC. We are aiming to develop their inner confidence and self-esteem, as well as developing skills to utilise in their communities.

As with all these programs we hope to create more opportunities that interest and engage our students, so that they may enter into employment or training when they complete their education at Yirara. We want to see the students succeed in life and have all the opportunities that are available and offered to them.

Yirara operates under the auspices of the Finke River Mission, a mission arm of the Lutheran Church of Australia. The Finke River Mission has a long and positive history with the Aboriginal people of Central Australia and that has contributed to the success of the school and the confidence of the parents in choosing Yirara as a safe, Christian environment where their children will be educated.

Literacy and numeracy are the foundations of the curriculum at Yirara, and by offering a variety of activities and skills development opportunities relevant to students, their confidence is built.

We want to raise the bar. We don't just want our students to scrape through, but to believe in themselves and achieve to their highest potential, which will enable them to contribute in a positive way to their communities; and in doing this they will become positive role models for the younger children they come into contact with in their communities.

#### Roger Ashcroft

Principal  
Yirara College  
Alice Springs, NT

### The amazing 175th Lutheran education race – or St Peters Big Day Out

The staff of St Peters Lutheran School in Blackwood downed tools in late January to spend some time delving into Australia's Lutheran school heritage. Given that 2014 is a significant year of celebration in our Lutheran education journey we thought it would be timely to get out and about to learn a little of our history and have some fun together as a staff.

We ventured early to Hahndorf and gathered near the cemetery in front of St Michael's church (after we had enjoyed a coffee from the most excellent and accommodating *3:16 Café*). There we leaned in...and listened...to the whispers of our forebears for what they might say to us about Lutheran education today. We had a bit of a Robin Williams (Mr Keating) moment from *Dead Poets Society* where we were encouraged to 'seize the day' – to seize the opportunity that we have as Lutheran educators to continue the work of those crazy, courageous and heavily-bearded Lutherans. We were reminded that we are very privileged that we can, 175 years on, carry on the work of Jesus' great commission to teach and share the gospel in freedom. Indeed, exactly the reason those on the *Zebra* came to Australia in the first place.

We then divided ourselves up into teams and went out Amazing Race-style to visit some of Lutheran education's 'sacred sites'. Teams were invited to seek knowledge and were given tasks (some silly) to complete as they travelled to significant places such as Lobethal, Klemzig, Piltawodli (where?), ALC, the LSA and Concordia College. We used Twitter (see

#stpeterslutheran) to communicate and share info and also used our phones and tablets to collect pictures, videos and facts. Back at St Michael's about four hours later, somewhat weary, but full of metwurst and fritz, we shared with each other what we'd learned. We spent time in worship, thanking God for blessing our schools through the years and seeking his continued blessing for the year/s ahead. Feeling a little more connected with our schools' story, we contentedly strolled down the road to the Hahndorf Inn where we enjoyed a great evening of fellowship and very large plates of food!

As we reflected on the day we were struck firstly by how little we all knew about the history of Lutheran schools. Thankfully there is so much out there to learn (the little museum at Lobethal is fantastic). I believe we gained a greater sense of our beginnings and were very humbled as we listened and read about the amazing faith and courage of those early pioneers. We were also reminded how instrumental the people like George Fife Angas and Captain Dirk Meinhertz Hahn were in helping the Lutheran migrants move and settle in to a new and strange environment – a very poignant *left and right hand kingdom* moment.

We had an enjoyable day together and have since been encouraged to look more deeply at our own story, as a school, church and individuals. Most importantly reflecting and giving thanks as to how these stories converge with God's story for his people. Happy 175th, Lutheran Ed!

#### Mark Rathjen

Principal  
St Peters Lutheran School  
Blackwood, SA



...we hope to create more opportunities that interest and engage our students...



We had an enjoyable day together

## Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region

### Becoming resource smart

At the beginning of 2014, St Peter's Lutheran School, Dimboola, was visited by representatives of Resource Smart AusiVic, which is a Victorian Government initiative that helps schools benefit from embedding sustainability in everything they do.

Schools enter into a program to help minimize waste, save energy and water, promote biodiversity and reduce greenhouse emissions. There are five modules to complete to achieve a 5-star sustainability rating. The program encourages students to do the ground work of finding out things like how much water the

school currently uses, where it is used and how they can reduce that use. It is incorporated into their classwork with activities, such as using their math skills to work out water usage.

St Peter's Lutheran School currently has a solar system, veggie garden, tanks to collect rain water and a pen of chooks. The junior class raised the chooks and learnt first-hand about life cycles and they feed the food scraps from recess and lunch to the chooks as well. So we are already a few steps closer to completing the modules and achieving a 5-star rating in sustainability.

#### St Peter's Lutheran School, Dimboola



Embedding sustainability in Dimboola

### Pako Festa

At St John's Lutheran School, Geelong, we believe it is important to belong to our local community and represent our school at significant local events.

Pako Festa is the largest free celebration of cultural diversity in Australia! It attracts people from our local and cultural communities, as well as people from further afield. Professional performers, community groups, schools, businesses, street traders and artists are all involved in various activities. The parade is a highlight of the Pako Festa program.

On a mild Saturday morning in February, we had over 70 students and staff participate in the Pako Festa parade. Most of our students were dressed in the national costumes of various countries. Others wore their school uniform with pride. Students waved ribbons and balloons, blew bubbles and handed out flyers. The students made a very colourful impact as they travelled down the parade route, cheered on by parents, friends and former students as well as the large crowd.

We are proud to be involved in this community event which showcases our school and enables our students to experience cultural diversity. St John's participates in this event each year as our school is located so close to the Pakington Street shopping precinct which hosts the Pako Festa.

#### St John's Lutheran School, Geelong



Students in the Pako Festa parade

### Premier's VCE Awards

Congratulations to Luther College's Class of 2013 students, Amelia Norton and Mark Presser, and current Year 12 student, Jacinta Oakley, who have been recognised for their outstanding VCE results and academic excellence at the Premier's VCE Awards ceremony held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The Premier's VCE Awards ceremony acknowledges individual achievements by the students and pays tribute to the principals, teachers and parents who play an invaluable role in supporting and encouraging students during their VCE studies.

Amelia, who is now studying Commerce/ Science at Monash University, received her Premier's VCE Award for Psychology, for which she obtained a perfect score of 50. Mark was recognised for his outstanding results in Industry and Enterprise and is currently studying Commerce at the University of Melbourne. Jacinta, a current Year 12 student, received a Premier's VCE Award for Studio Arts, for which she also attained a perfect score of 50.

#### Luther College, Croydon



Mark Presser, Jacinta Oakley and Amelia Norton

### Community service and Christian witness via Meals on Wheels

As part of their service projects, year 6 students from Good Shepherd College, Hamilton, participate in the local community's Meals on Wheels program. The college is rostered fortnightly to deliver meals to local residents. It was also arranged that the college's run involves delivering meals to the Eventide Lutheran Home's residents.

Two students are rostered on and travel with a staff member to deliver the meals. The students determine what meals need to be delivered, have to direct the driver to the recipient's house and deliver the meals.

In the early visits the students are trained in how to chat with the recipients. This can involve how to chat about the weather or an interest of the recipient. As they gain confidence the students manage the delivery, with the staff member being mainly an observer.

As special times of the year approach the students organise cards or Christian tracts to deliver. It is a highlight to see how students can relate to the older recipients and how the older people delight in the students' visit.

#### Good Shepherd College, Hamilton



Good Shepherd College, Hamilton, students participate in Meals on Wheels

## Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

### Sports excellence at St James Lutheran College

At St James Lutheran College, Urraween, we pride ourselves on providing a supportive community atmosphere in which children can grow. All students are valued as individuals and encouraged to develop to the best of their potential, academically, spiritually and in the sporting and cultural arenas. In addition to the core curriculum offered to year 9 and year 10 students, three elective subjects must be chosen each semester. Sports Excellence is one of the nine elective subjects offered.

Sports Excellence has a very strong emphasis on cardio-vascular fitness and strength training. Students who choose this subject must represent the school in interschool sports competitions and participate in all school based carnivals including swimming, cross-country and track and field. Practical units are complemented by theoretical classroom studies. Students are assessed in both their practical performance in sports and activities, in addition to theoretical, authentic assessment and classroom tasks via written tests, reports, peer related teaching and assignments.

The Sports Excellence program aims to develop the physical, technical and tactical skills of each student. The students spend considerable time in development and refinement of the core skills fundamental to the unit being studied. This is achieved through deliberate, purposeful practice and the provision of meaningful feedback from teachers and fitness experts. Students construct physical profiles by completing fitness tests and sport specific skill tests,

allowing the students and the teacher to track their development throughout the units.

The first term of 2014 focused on the muscular system, building strength and the associated benefits. Students attended the local gymnasium where fitness trainers demonstrated a variety of weights exercises and designed individual training programs for students. In addition to these excursions, students attended group weight classes where a qualified instructor led a motivating, choreographed one hour class as an alternative to individual weight training. These practical sessions helped students complete their assessment task that required them to create and justify a four-week strength training program for a client. The remainder of this year focuses on track and field, soccer and the cardiovascular system, incorporating leadership skills, health-enhancing behaviours and goal setting. Next year will develop swimming skills, duathlons, Oz Tag and Cross Fit, whilst building confidence and endurance, and encouraging enjoyment in physical activity.

Sports Excellence is a subject that introduces students to alternative career paths. Their attained knowledge of techniques, healthy living and competence in a range of physical activities enhance students' confidence in striving towards extra-curricular activities and possible further studies in the fitness industry. Sports Excellence also covers theoretical focus areas studied in senior Physical Education, providing these students with thorough background knowledge and an appreciation of physical activity and leading a healthy lifestyle. This class of year 9 and year 10 students looks forward to learning new techniques, sharing personal

achievements, creating authentic assessment tasks and demonstrating their practical and theoretical ability in Sports Excellence. Many parents have commented on their child's enhanced fitness level and motivation to maximize their physical activity engagement.

*Learning to move and enjoying the freedom of movement is a human right (UNESCO, 1999).*

#### Sherrin Carmichael

Health and Physical Education Teacher  
St James Lutheran College  
Urraween, Qld

### eLearning @ St Peters Springfield

The eLearning vision of St Peters Lutheran College, Springfield, is to provide quality technology-rich learning opportunities which are vibrant, relevant and challenging to nurture students to become innovative, informed, discriminative and confident users of information communication and learning technologies so they are prepared to meet the demands of an ever-changing, increasingly connected world.

Apple iPads have significant potential as an intuitive resource that can lead to deep engagement and rich learning and in 2013 all middle school students commenced using iPads as part of the school's evolving BYOD program. All students from years 5-7 bring their iPads to school each day, loaded with apps that are on their year level app list and bringing with them a varied background of knowledge and skills.

We have seen a massive development in the skills of our students over the 15 months the



At St James, Sports Excellence has a very strong emphasis on cardio-vascular fitness and strength training



We have found that some apps have great potential for student learning

program has been running. They are more plugged in than ever and we need to embrace this in the classroom. We are no longer the experts. We have had to repack our bags of tricks as teachers and be constantly on our toes, learning alongside the students. It has been a rollercoaster, but one that has been very rewarding – even though scary at times!

We have found that some apps have great potential for student learning. We have learnt to keep it simple: to do a few things really well, rather than try to use a hundred different apps. We are always looking for new and innovative ways to enhance student learning, for new ways for them to share their ideas and for different ways for students to present their work.

Here is an overview of our top three apps, the ones that we have found to transform the way we do what we do. No doubt these apps won't be new to you, but these are the reasons we keep coming back to them.

1. **Edmodo:** an amazing digital classroom where the students can post ideas and ask questions, access videos and share their learning. It's important to stress that students need to use proper English grammar and structure when communicating in this forum. No BRB or L8TR or U for the word 'you.' We are looking for capital letters, punctuation and proper spelling and they know it. If you've never heard of Edmodo, check it out!
2. **Explain Everything:** a screen casting and interactive whiteboard app that lets you annotate, animate, narrate, import, and export almost anything to and from almost anywhere. We have seen some inspiring things from our students using this app, from those students who may not be able to produce something of that quality if asked to produce a written assignment. This is what we love about the iPads – we're seeing more success from more of our students.
3. **Book Creator:** a versatile and intuitively set-up app that allows students easily to create digital content in a variety of ways. Students have used their iPads and Book Creator to publish eBooks on a variety of topics and in a variety of genres. The uses for Book Creator are endless: How To books, photo books, non-fiction, fantasy, collaborative books...

We've started *App of the Week* in our classrooms where students can share their favourite apps with the rest of the class. These get projected through the Apple TV so

that everyone can see what's going on. The presenter needs to talk for two minutes about why their chosen app is awesome and be able to answer questions about it. Not only are we learning what our students are using their iPads for outside of the classroom, it's also an opportunity for them to speak in front of the class in an informal way and we've seen amazing boosts in confidence in speaking skills.

We are forever learning, just like our students, and we are loving it.

**Carly Monro, Sarah Johnson and Barbara Hokin**  
Middle School Pastoral Care Teachers  
St Peters Lutheran College  
Springfield, Qld

### Voices on the Coast: a youth literature festival

It was 1996 when two Immanuel Lutheran College teachers decided that a youth literature festival was essential for the Sunshine Coast. *Voices on the Coast* was born, attracting 23 schools in the first year to the one day festival, held on the college grounds with ten visiting authors. Within two years the festival had outgrown the college and a partnership was formed with the then newly established University of the Sunshine Coast.

Eighteen years later, *Voices on the Coast* has flourished, maintaining an important partnership between the college and the university and attracting over 5000 students from 76 schools across the Sunshine Coast and hinterland. Some students travel between 200-500 kilometres from Tin Can Bay, Kingaroy, Brisbane and, in 2013, from St George, to listen to and workshop with 26 authors, illustrators, poets and performers.

The festival is now held over four days, two at the university with students from year 5 to year 12, the third day visiting local Sunshine Coast Council library branches and then with a literary breakfast on the final day. Aspiring authors and illustrators of all ages are attracted to the range of over 125 talks and workshops focusing on bringing published authors and illustrators directly in contact with students and adults.

The longevity of the festival is a result of the ongoing support from schools across the region and the eagerness of students to attend each year. Immanuel Lutheran College students play an integral role in the festival as they introduce each presenter, provide media assistance inside the university lecture theatres, guide visiting students and teachers to venues and are also involved in providing hospitality services and music during the



The aim of the festival is to create and foster a lifelong love of literature

Festival Launch. Over 150 diverse Australian authors and illustrators have presented at the festival including the ever popular Andy Griffiths, Leigh Hobbs, Mem Fox, Morris Gleitzman and Jackie French.

The aim of the festival is to create and foster a lifelong love of literature, which can be a challenge in this electronic age. Many parents comment that the only time their child reads is when they have seen an author at *Voices*. Additionally, young people can gain publishing industry knowledge at the festival when they attend the Queensland Writers Centre workshops detailing how to become a published author.

There have been a number of success stories throughout the festival, including Immanuel Lutheran College old scholar Benjamin Law, now a published author; and journalist Briony Stewart, a 20 year old creative writing student, who submitted her first novel to the 2006 *Voices on the Coast* writing competition, winning and going on to publish four further books with University of Queensland Press.

*Voices on the Coast* is a whole community event, encompassing students from the region, engaging and celebrating the God-given gifts and talents of authors and illustrators from across Australia and empowering many aspiring authors and illustrators along the way.

Reading and writing is still very much alive on the Sunshine Coast.

#### Kelly Dunham

Convenor, Voices on the Coast  
Immanuel Lutheran College  
Buderim, Qld

## Lutheran education across Australia: 175 years of service



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

My late mother, Ena, was born in Kingaroy, Queensland. The Kingaroy hospital today is the 'new' one, built in 1944. The old timber hospital where Mum was born was built in 1914. Her father, Pastor Benno Schwarz, was the Lutheran pastor at Kumbia, a small town near Kingaroy. He, his American wife, Emma, and their four children had moved to Kumbia after serving at Ceduna and Denial Bay, South Australia. Three more children, including Ena, were born in Kingaroy.

In the mid-1920s, Pastor Schwarz accepted a call to Warracknabeal, Victoria, where Ena spent her school years. Sadly, the Depression years meant earning money took precedence over education and, now with eight children in the family, Ena and her sister Mildred took up employment at the Warracknabeal Telephone Exchange. For two bright teenage girls this may not have been the most challenging job, but it helped the Schwarz family survive in very difficult years.

By the late 1930s WWII had begun and, with the German surname Schwarz, Ena and Mildred were advised that their employment would cease as they were a potential security risk to Australia and Great Britain. Both young women were devastated. This experience brought back sad memories to the Schwarz family when, during WWI, Pastor Schwarz's German sermons were seized and he was kept in lock-up until they had been translated into English. While he and the sermons were cleared of any wrong, it left the family hurt and confused. Benno Schwarz's grandfather had arrived in Port Adelaide in 1848 on the ship *Alfred*. The Schwarz family settled in Nain in the Barossa Valley and had contributed to Australian society for 70 years. They saw themselves as loyal Australian citizens.

Now some twenty years after WWI, Pastor Schwarz, whose sermons had been delivered in English since the Great War, and his family had another setback. Before Ena died in 2010, she spoke of the resolve she and Mildred had as they moved to Melbourne in search of work and new freedoms.

Now it is 2014, 100 years since the outbreak of WWI, and Australian Lutheran schools are celebrating 175 years of service to the Australian community. In 1839 our forebears commenced the Lutheran school journey at Piltawodli Lutheran School, Adelaide SA (1839-1845); Klemzig Lutheran School, Adelaide SA (1839-1846); Glen Osmond Lutheran School, Adelaide SA (1839-1855); St Michael's Lutheran School, Hahndorf SA (1839-1917, 1946- ); German Station Lutheran School, Nundah Qld (1839-1843). During the remainder of the 19th century the Lutheran church continued to establish Lutheran schools, focusing on the Christian nurture of their children, instruction in Lutheran teachings and preservation of the German Lutheran culture.

As my grandfather and mother both faced significant challenges during the two world wars, so WWI brought arguably the greatest challenge ever to Lutheran schools in our church's history. In the early war years, by acts of state parliaments in South Australia and Queensland, Lutheran schools in each of these two states were compulsorily closed. Forty nine schools were shut down in South Australia and three in Queensland (Greenwood, Ropeley, and Hatton Vale). In Queensland it took three decades until after WWII to reopen any Lutheran schools (St Peters began in 1945 and Concordia in 1946). In South Australia Immanuel and Concordia which both had seminaries were the only Lutheran schools allowed to continue – all other 49 schools were closed. Some never reopened (\*).

Fortunately, many communities had enormous courage and determination to restart their schools after WW I and in South Australia St Michael's Hahndorf, Lobethal, Spring Head,

Tanunda, Lyndoch and Eudunda are still operating in 2014.

Lutheran schools in Victoria and New South Wales were not closed during WW1 although it was a close call in Victoria. As a result, today Tarrington Lutheran School (Vic) is the oldest continuously operating Lutheran school, having offered a Christian education to its community since 1853. The second oldest continuously operating Lutheran school is St John's Lutheran School, Jindera (NSW). Its doors have been open since 1868.

In this 175th anniversary year for Lutheran schools I wish to acknowledge the strength of faith and conviction of all Lutheran school communities: those which are no longer in existence but operated in a social and cultural context far different from today; those which reopened often suffering social and political pressures we will never understand; and those schools which have opened in more recent years and operate in a very different Australian society.

Thank you to all who lead, serve and take on the challenges of providing a quality Lutheran education to 40,000 students across Australia. Your faith, determination and professionalism continue to bear the signs of 175 years of learning, service and history.

I expect our forebears would be delighted and proud to witness the great things apparent in today's Lutheran schools across Australia.

I expect my mother and grandfather would also share a smile with us.

God bless us as we serve together.

(\* *Martin Luther School (site of Bethlehem Congregation, Flinders Street, Adelaide), Palmer, Springton, Bethany, Rosedale (Rosenthal), Ebenezer, Keyneton, Nain/Greenock, Eden Valley, Moculta, Monarto, Sedan, Mannum, Murbko, Peters Hill, Bethel, Balaklava, Emu Downs, Point Pass, Emmaus, Neale's Flat (x2), Dutton, Robertstown, Australia Plains, Stonefield (Steinfeld), Lower Bright, Allen's Creek, St Kitts, Crystal Brook, Kapunda (x2), Bower, South Kilkerran, New Residence, Nott's Well and Killaipaninna.*