

Talking about God to Generation Z



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A conversation starter...

I sat across the table from her listening to the story of how she found a 'church' in which her baby could be christened. She is not a church goer and would not call herself a follower of Jesus. She is totally immersed in her culture yet with a strong desire to hold on to the traditions of her family and past. She wanted her child to wear the christening gown she wore. She shared about how insulted she was at being rejected by the denomination of her roots. She had been interviewed and found wanting as she tells it. She had been asked 'what makes you a good person?' and her reply 'I am a good citizen'. She then asked me 'do you pray to God or Jesus'? The concept of salvation is foreign to her and she did not understand the word 'redemption'. She did not know about the Holy Spirit and her knowledge of the Bible is minimal. Hers is a secular theology responding to a shallow and erroneous view of Christianity. Yet she confessed to praying each night to those significant others in her life who have died and to God, sharing with them her concerns and asking them to bless all her family and friends. In her search she found a person who accepted her as she was, listened to her,

prayed for her, befriended her and christened her baby.

I went home knowing that I had been in foreign territory, the cultural divide between us enormous. I was humbled by the different and yet authentic spirituality of this young woman. I thought before I can talk about God I need first to pause, listen, learn, reflect, critique, respect, love and be filled with a genuine desire to connect to others. I can read about Generation Z and what is shaping them as people but do I really care about them? How do I show respect for them, how willing am I to learn about how they see the world? What can I learn from them and their chief concerns and questions to which talk about God will have relevance and authenticity?

And how well do I know what has shaped me and how am I still being shaped? Do I know the God I want to talk about? How do I describe my relationship with God? How, when and where am I growing in this relationship? What are my questions and concerns? Am I willing for my beliefs, life, values to be exposed, questioned and be at the heart of my talk about God? What has shaped the reading of the biblical text for me, do I use it in judgment of others, in fear or do I read and hear its message of love and share that story?

Mark McCrindle (2010) makes two statements regarding Generation Z:

Generation Z are differentiated from any generation by three factors: age and life stage (ontological factors), times and

technology (sociological factors), and events and experiences (historical factors) ...

They are today's emerging generation who resemble children of any era past, yet they personify our future.

Walking arm in arm along South Bank, Brisbane my grandson of eleven, my daughter and I – three different generations – each shared an aspect of what we wanted to change in ourselves. The summary comment by the eleven year old was, 'it would seem that we battle the same issues'. At the heart of our struggles is having clarity about *who we are* and *whose we are*. We all have a need to belong, be accepted, have purpose, know we are loved and experience joy.

Teachers have always faced the challenge of the generational divide between teacher and learner and the challenge of determining

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Confident and prepared for the challenge

We care for only what we love. We love only what we know. We truly only know what we experience.

Bouma-Prediger (2001)



Contemporary song writers such as Lily Allen provide an insight and critique of the current western culture as well as their search for truth. In *The fear* she describes the confusing messages communicated by a materialistic, consumerist society and a false media

The fear – Lily Allen

*I want to be rich and I want lots of money
I don't care about clever I don't care about funny
I want loads of clothes and ### loads of diamonds
I heard people die while they are trying to find them*

*And I'll take my clothes off and it will be shameless
Cause everyone knows that's how you get famous ...*

*Life's about film stars and less about mothers
It's all about fast cars and cussing each other
But it doesn't matter cause I'm packing plastic
and that's what makes my life so ### fantastic*

*And I am a weapon of massive consumption
And its not my fault it's how I'm programmed
to function...*

*Forget about guns and forget ammunition
Cause I'm killing them all on my own little mission
Now I'm not a saint but I'm not a sinner
Now everything's cool as long as I'm gettin thinner*

*I don't know what's right and what's real anymore
I don't know how I'm meant to feel anymore
When do you think it will all become clear?
'Cause I'm being taken over by fear.*

In the song *Him* she speaks of a god that little reflects the Christian understanding of God and yet I would suggest that she describes a view that is commonly presented and in her own way challenges the manner in which we speak about God.

Him – Lily Allen

And if there is some kind of god do you think he's pleased

*When he looks down on us I wonder what he sees
Do you think he'd think the things we do are a waste
of time*

*Maybe he'd think we are getting on just fine
Do you think he's skint or financially secure
And come election time I wonder who he'd vote for*

*Ever since he can remember people have died in his
good name*

Long before that September

Long before hijacking planes

He's lost the will he can't decide

He doesn't know who's right or wrong

*But there's one thing that he's sure of this has been
going on too long*

*Do you think he'd drive in his car without insurance
Now is he interesting or do you think he'd bore us
Do you think his favourite type of human is
Caucasian...*

So who are Generation Z? Whose are they?



St James Lutheran College teachers

what differentiates and binds teacher and learner. When we talk about God we need to not only know 'our' story but we also need to know the many other stories of God that abound in our culture and other cultures and to be able to place those in some kind of perspective for our students. As teachers of Christian Studies we are well placed to share the key biblical stories that tell us God's story and our story and how the two intersect. We can share the collective wisdom of the Christian tradition in all its diversity and complexity; we can examine past solutions to past questions and explore new solutions to new and old questions. We can introduce students to people such as Francis of Assisi and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who challenged both the secular and religious culture of their day and forged new ways of being and acting. We have poetry, art, symbol, music, literature, film, news, play, celebration, rituals to help us explore the experience of God.

More importantly we need to BE, be as God to our students. Jesus knew who he was; he did not judge; he questioned the culture; he stood beside people; he revealed God in his actions; he spoke truth into situations. Good teaching has always been learner centred, with an acknowledgement that the teacher is a learner. The key processes

Francis (12th/13th century) saw creation and everyone and everything in it part of God's domain or household. All became revelatory to him of the Trinitarian God relating to us in a way that energises us with divine connectedness as brothers and sisters in a common household. This included the brothers wherever they may be; it included all Christians and, indeed, everyone on earth; to serve them was his call. In fact, all creatures were members of a common household; as such they were his brothers and sisters as well. All of them were gifts of God. Crosby (2007)



of inquiry, reflection and discussion (CSCF 2005, p5) that underpin teaching and learning in Christian Studies creates the possibility of open and respectful dialogue where all questions, all material can be explored. This is further strengthened by the values and lifelong qualities (set out in *A vision for learners and learning*) which are the foundation for all that happens in a Lutheran school. In *Equip* we examine pedagogies that will engage students, use technology and allow them to think, analyse, evaluate, create, tell their story.

However, talking about God to Generation Z will demand my heart, my willingness to accept uncertainty, acknowledge my fears, expose my ignorance, read the Bible, develop a rich hermeneutic, explore different theologies, allow the Holy Spirit to transform my thinking, my acting, my believing and grow in relationship with my students.

Generation Z: Net generation, digital natives, naturals, dot.com kids

- » Born between 1991-2012
- » Typically children of Generation X
- » Youngest generation but are being parented by older parents and taught by older teachers than ever before
- » In education earlier and longer
- » Lifelong users of communications and media technologies: worldwide web, email, mobile phones, instant and text messaging, YouTube, blogs, Bebo, MySpace, E-books, Wikis, Wii, DSI, iPod, Twitter, etc ... only a few clicks from any piece of knowledge
- » Exposed to marketing younger
- » Multitask, moving quickly from one task to another placing more value on speed than accuracy
- » Will enter the workforce in an era of declining supply: more people exiting the workforce than entering it. And so for Gen Z the skills shortages, the ageing population and the global demand for labour will continue to empower them

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Z
<http://www.generationz.com.au>

Note: Back in June 2010 Adrienne Jericho and I began a conversation about an article for this edition of *SchoolLink*. We tentatively settled on the topic *Talking about God to Generation Z*. The matter of relevance, effective educational practice and sustainability of Christian Studies into the next decade was a strong driver for many of our discussions. While Adrienne expressed the strong desire to place Christian Studies in the spotlight he also wanted the article to have wider application and be seen of importance by all teachers. My hope is that all or part of this article can serve as a conversation starter for all teachers but in particular teachers of Christian Studies.

Emily Ross from smartcompany.com.au has written ten tips for employers of Gen Z (The Naturals). Below are some of the points she includes:

- » The Naturals are not a demographic, but rather the first wave of an 'entirely new way of thinking about communications, content and commerce' (Mike Walsh).
- » Whereas for Generation X, Y and Baby Boomers, technology has, for the most part, been about improving productivity, working smarter, Naturals see technology as the way they collaborate and connect. It's not just about a productivity solution.
- » Consumer and content decisions are made almost exclusively through social networks. 'Rather than taking an analytical approach to information they push it to the side and go through friends,' says McCrindle.
- » They have a more entrepreneurial mindset, they are used to using the internet to hunt for good prices and they are savvy about how they spend and where they spend it.
- » Rather than trying to work out ways to force a message into their daily regime, as a marketer, you should ask 'what do I have to offer my intended audience?' It could be new types of functionality, utility, entertainment or socialisation.
- » Remember, The Naturals just can't stop being connected.

On a film *A vision of K-12 students today*, students describe their use of technology and state that they want to CREATE, CONSUME, REMIX, SHARE INFORMATION, THINK, ANALYSE, EVALUATE, APPLY, CO-CREATE, LEARN BY DOING. They want to be engaged, to learn whenever, whatever, wherever (www)

http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=12272

They planted a tree...

The sun was hot and the shade sparse when over 65 educators from Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, USA, Canada, Hong Kong, and Palestine gathered in the courtyard of Dar al Kalima School in Bethlehem to plant an olive tree in memory of Dr Adrienne Jericho. Adrienne was the visionary who conceived the plan for a conference in Bethlehem, a conference of Lutheran educators from across the world meeting under the theme *Lutheran education: building vision, hope and leadership in challenging contexts*. And so we honoured him, and representatives of the nations present assisted in the planting of the olive tree, a tree that will bring shade and protection to generations of children and young people, just as God's word brings new life and protection to us all.

Rev Dr Mitri Raheb led a short commemoration; Mrs Sue Kloeden spoke on behalf of the Australian contingent, Dr Jonathan Laabs for the USA group and Rev Andrew Jaensch led with song. Together we sang *A Christmas Blessing* (the closing song from Adrienne's funeral) and in the heat of Palestine the message was as refreshing and comforting as it was in far off Australia.

An olive tree seemed fitting. Every part of this tree is used: the hard wood carved and fashioned into utensils and tools, the oil extracted for lighting and cooking, the pips and skin dried for stock fodder. Nothing wasted, all of it useful and relevant; like the word of God that inspired and encouraged and led Adrienne in his work as leader of Lutheran Education Australia. We thank God for his life, and if you are ever in Bethlehem drop into the school and say hello to the olive tree!

Lutheran Educators Tour, Palestine
 September/October 2010



Mitri Raheb, Sue Kloeden and Jonathan Laabs

Being a reflective teacher

Have you ever taught the perfect lesson? Does the 'perfect lesson' even exist?

Being a reflective teacher means living in a state of discomfort as we ponder these questions and constantly seek the unattainable; the 'perfect' learning experience where all students achieve optimal outcomes. Reflective teachers live with the challenge and joy of completing great learning experiences only to look back and ahead to consider what could be done differently next time. How does reflection work to inspire and drive us forward? How is reflective thinking an integral part of what makes a teacher?

Reflection is a critical part of the inquiry cycle for teachers and students. Reflective thinking is widely recognised as a critical skill in learning – and learning to learn. Reflective thinking deepens our understanding.

Reflective thinking occurs in many ways in the school setting. Lambert suggests one of the five critical features of a successful school is that reflective practice and innovation is the norm. This includes making time for many forms of reflection such as reflection on beliefs, assumptions, and past practice, reflection in action, in practice; collective reflection during dialogue and in coaching relationships (Lambert, *Building leadership capacity in schools* p22).

Reflection occurs in classrooms with students throughout the inquiry process. It occurs as teachers personally reflect. 'When we ask our students to reflect we often become more reflective ourselves. As we develop a more reflective discourse in the classroom, we find ourselves thinking more carefully about what, why and how we are teaching' (Murdoch, *Take a moment* p5).

Reflection also occurs as teachers work in teams to consider multiple perspectives and gain insights that can drive future learning and action. 'Like their students, teachers need to actively engage in trying out new ideas and then have time by themselves, and eventually with others, to think about what happened, learn from it, and try it again ... The combination of doing something in the classroom and also having opportunities to think, talk, and analyse what went on is critical to those who actually transform their schools' (Lieberman and Miller, *Teachers – transforming their world and their work* p88).

Dewey (*How We Think* 1933) defines reflection as that which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the reasons that

support it and the further consequences to which it leads. Reflection does not consist of a series of steps or procedures to be used by teachers. Rather it is a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems, a way of being a teacher. Reflective action is also a process that involves more than logical and rational problem-solving processes. Reflection involves intuition, emotion, and passion and is not something that can be neatly packaged as a set of techniques for teachers to use.

Dewey suggests three attitudes are prerequisites for reflective action:

1. Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness is an active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give full attention to alternative possibilities, and to recognise the possibility of error even in beliefs that are dear to us. Teachers who are open-minded are continually examining the rationales that underlie what is taken as natural and right, and take pains to seek out conflicting evidence. 'Being a reflective teacher means that you keep an open mind about the content, methods, and procedures used in your classroom. You not only ask why things are the ways that they are, but also how they can be made better' (Grant and Zeichner, *On becoming a reflective teacher* p106). Openness to the thoughts of others and the freedom to express oneself are crucial to the team reflection process.

2. Responsibility

Responsible teachers ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing in a way that goes beyond questions of immediate utility (ie does it work) to consider the ways in which it is working, why it is working, and for whom it is working. Responsibility has to involve reflection about the unexpected outcomes of teaching, beyond goals and objectives, because teaching always involves unintended as well as intended outcomes. Reflective teachers ask 'are the results good, for whom and in what ways,' not merely 'have my objectives been met?'

3. Wholeheartedness

By wholeheartedness, Dewey meant that open-mindedness and responsibility must be central components in the professional life of the reflective teacher. Teachers who are wholeheartedly regularly examining their own assumptions and beliefs and the results of their actions approach all situations with the attitude that they can learn something new.

The reflective teacher in Christian Studies

'In a changing social, economic and familial landscape, most of the support networks for meaning and identity that functioned for past generations no longer have the same plausibility and force. For many young people, the beliefs about life's meaning drawn from religious convictions and from the church do not seem to have the same cogency they apparently had in the past. In an environment awash with ways to make meaning and finding the 'true self' there is an urgent need for the churches to find strategies that will resonate with young people in their search for meaning, values and identity' (Rossiter, *Echo and Silence* p14).

The challenge for Christian Studies teachers has never been greater. Christian Studies requires teachers who are reflective, open and think deeply, raise questions and regularly review their beliefs about how students learn best in a subject that many students have discarded as irrelevant. Christian Studies teachers are called to grapple with and reflect on the questions that students are asking and facilitate learning experiences where students can inquire into their questions in real and challenging ways. The reflective teacher in Christian Studies constantly seeks the best ways of connecting the meanings of the Christian faith with concepts of significance to students, supporting students in their spiritual searching and exploration of, meaning, values and identity.

We support the ongoing learning and reflection of Christian Studies teachers through providing time for reflective thinking and action on classroom practice in personal and team settings. These opportunities will nurture and encourage teachers to consider what has worked well and what can be done differently. Will the Christian Studies teacher ever arrive at the perfect lesson? I think probably not. However, what an engaging and thought-provoking pursuit to be a reflective teacher in a Christian Studies team committed to reflective thinking.



Anne Dohnt is the Kindergarten/Primary Christian Studies Officer for the Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

How do we engage the disengaged?



Middle and Senior School teachers in WA at Equip workshops in 2009



Challenges of secondary teachers

All teachers face challenges in the classroom. The challenges for an early years teacher may be quite different from a primary or secondary teacher, but they still exist.

Several challenges for secondary teachers come to mind. One is accountability – the pressure on teachers for each student to perform at their best academically because the final school results will determine which business or tertiary institution's doors will open for them and their future. While behaviour management issues arise at all levels of schooling, vocal and confident hormone-charged secondary students pose challenges for most teachers. Timetable matters such as single or double lessons, morning or afternoon classes, the Thursday or Friday afternoon timeslot, or the jigsaw-like room hopping that is scheduled may exaggerate some secondary class problems. Each teacher's knowledge of the progressive changes in requirements for each state's secondary Certificate of Education are critical challenges for the senior years of school, so that students complete their secondary education with the appropriate mix of subjects that lead them to their desired career pathway. There can be the interesting challenge of engaging socially active teenagers on a Monday morning with educational learning outcomes, after the rather active events of the weekend that seem to dominate conversations in the yard and classroom. And trying to keep up with the increasing

number of ICT devices and their applications for education is another exciting reality that cannot be escaped!

One question frequently asked at Christian Studies teacher workshops such as *Equip*, is 'How do we engage the disengaged'? This question is an important one. As I reflect on my personal involvement in further study, attendance at professional development sessions or the time to network with other educators, I know that I have been engaged by the content or message when the material connects with my world or experiences; it makes me think because it has meaning. The same applies to students in our schools. When secondary students connect or find meaning in their learning, student engagement is maximised – whether it is in literacy, numeracy, history, sciences or other curriculum areas. Kath Murdoch (2006) writes 'The questions young people ask remind us that the search for meaning is fundamental to what it is to be human ... inquiry is all about thinking, thinking in order to make meaning'.

Student engagement matters; we need to relate with these young people, connect with them and make their learning real, relevant and purposeful. Murdoch (2006) again writes 'Inquiries ... link learning in the classroom with real experiences in the students' own lives beyond school ...'. When planning in any curriculum area, consider what tuning in activity is appropriate, according to what interest the students have and the questions

they ask. The tuning in activity that engages student interest is critical; provocations to create a disturbance, situations or case studies, or essential questions are all examples of activities that may be suitable.

Teachers of Christian Studies attending regional *Equip* workshops receive pedagogical and theological support in the area of Christian Studies, which includes considerable support material on engaging students. Kath Murdoch's book *Classroom Connections* includes many great ideas for tuning in strategies (eg brainstorming, chatterboxes, mind mapping, finish the sentence, graffiti boards, silent jigsaw), plus other support ideas for inquiry based learning in all classrooms. A major strength of *Equip* has been the transference of pedagogy to curriculum areas other than Christian Studies, allowing teachers to discuss and then try new pedagogies in a curriculum area where they may feel more comfortable. It has been exciting to hear some of the feedback from returning secondary *Equip* teachers during workshops; these regional workshops are making a difference for many teachers who are facing challenges with the practicalities of the secondary classroom.



Sue Kupke is the Secondary Christian Studies Officer for the Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

Pedagogy and the Australian Curriculum

Many educators can remember a time before the word 'pedagogy' came into common usage. All of a sudden, the word appeared everywhere. We discussed pronunciation and debated its significance. Now, early in the new millennium, we are told that: '...while the national curriculum will make clear to teachers what has to be taught and to students what they should learn and what achievement standards are expected of them, classroom teachers are the people who will decide how best to organise learning for students. They (teachers) will make decisions about the pedagogical approach that will give the best learning outcomes' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2009 p15). What does this all mean? Let's be clear about what pedagogy is before we examine aspects of the Australian Curriculum to locate its presence there.

What is 'pedagogy'?

'Pedagogy is a term derived from the Greek word *paidagogos* – (the word for) a family slave who escorted children to school' (Feigl, 2001. p1369). In England (and English speaking countries) we do not often use the term 'pedagogy' except in the context of the classroom and formal education. However, notions of pedagogy and education in

Scandinavia and Europe provide a broader understanding. In fact, 'in pedagogy, care and education meet. To put it another way, pedagogy is about bringing up children, it is 'education' in the broadest sense of that word' (Petrie et. al., 2009 p3).

Usage of the word pedagogy became more common after the researcher Newmann (1995) coined the phrase 'authentic pedagogy' to explain standards that boost student performance. Then as a result of parallel, large scale research in Queensland, Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001) was designed. Productive Pedagogies proposed that there were four key dimensions for pedagogy to be productive. Intellectual quality was where knowledge was problematic and higher order thinking required. Connectedness related to knowledge integration and linkages to the outside world. Recognition of difference featured inclusivity and notions of citizenship whilst a supportive school environment included aspects of social support together with student self-regulation.

In the past 10-15 years, a variety of other pedagogical frameworks have been popularised. As well as Productive Pedagogies, others include Dimensions of Learning (Marzano et. al.; 1997), Professional

Learning Online Tool (PLOT) and Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12 (PoLT). All of these frameworks capture the original notion of being a 'paidagogos' because, as well as an emphasis on intellectual rigour for students that includes multiple pathways for learning, these models also recognise that the learning environment is important and they acknowledge that positive student relationships contribute to learning.

The Australian Curriculum

An early criticism of the Australian Curriculum was the lack of reference to pedagogical frameworks and practices. However, as time has passed, this criticism has become muted because many would prefer the freedom to consider the most appropriate pedagogical framework and practices for their own specific circumstance rather than have a particular framework that is mandated. In any case, drafts of the Australian Curriculum are not a 'pedagogy-free zone' at all. A careful examination of existing drafts of the Australian Curriculum indicates quite clearly that there is overarching 'encouragement' to understand pedagogy and embed a variety of sound practices when transitioning to and implementing the Australian Curriculum. Comments below are based on drafts of the Phase 1, Foundation – year 10 documents (English, mathematics, science and history) and the draft of the geography shaping paper.

Pedagogy and the Australian Curriculum

The question to be asked is: 'Where do we find reference to pedagogy in the Australian Curriculum'? Clues lay in key areas of the draft documents.

Clue number 1: Study the general capabilities

The *Shape of the Australian Curriculum* paper states: 'Reflections on the nature of work in the 21st century typically identify important general capabilities, and many people argue that schools should help students develop them ... the *National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* sees these as including 'planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams ... the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines'. This, in turn, assumes that diverse pedagogical practices will be occurring in the classroom. For example, to be able to think critically and creatively, students will need to be able to



Positive student relationships contribute to learning

integrate knowledge and use that knowledge meaningfully. They will also be engaging in substantive conversations with both their peers and adults. Critical thinking requires students to apply their knowledge in a variety of situations. To work in a team and act ethically requires the development of a cohesive world view and empathetic understanding as well as a high degree of self responsibility. All of these capabilities have implications for our classroom pedagogy.

Clue number 2: Examine the verbs in learning area-specific content descriptors

Whilst some early drafts did not attend to this detail, later drafts of the Phase 1 learning areas provide clear clues about pedagogical practices. For example, in mathematics students will classify, solve, investigate and create. These are all verbs that will indicate that transference – and application of knowledge is important. They are verbs that indicate that students will be working in different ways and teachers will be teaching how to develop and use these particular skill-sets. This, in turn, will nurture and create an invigorating classroom culture. As time evolves, Australian Curriculum elaborations, work samples and even the recommended resources will all contribute additional clues about excellent pedagogical practices for our classrooms.

Clue number 3: Pedagogical processes are clearly embedded in particular learning areas

For example, an early and clear process is focussed upon inquiry. It is featured very explicitly in science and history, and, if the shaping paper is an early indication, also in geography. In science, science inquiry skills are embedded as a particular strand. In history the historical skills include historical questions, analysis and an understanding of historical perspectives. All this illustrates that, whilst content descriptions and standards feature, the way content is approached will require an understanding of diverse pedagogical practices appropriate for different learning areas.

Site-based conversations exploring and affirming particular pedagogical frameworks and practices will be a natural part of preparation, transition and implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The inclusion of the general capabilities highlights the original understanding of 'pedagogy' that adopts a holistic approach to the kind of learners who can thrive and continue to learn and develop in the 21st century.



Teachers will make decisions about the pedagogical approach that will give the best learning outcome

LEA's contribution to understanding pedagogy

For teachers who are undertaking *Equip* as part of accreditation to teach in a Lutheran school, each *Equip* module focuses upon growing an understanding of pedagogy in this broad sense. Early modules deepen understanding about inquiry in the context of Christian Studies. By the end of *Equip*, all pedagogical components ensure that teachers understand that good pedagogical practices stretch student minds, engage their hearts and connect them to the community.

In addition, in LEA's document, *A vision for learners and learning*, we have boldly stated our own aspirational, lifelong qualities for learners. So, as we consider pedagogical frameworks and practices and the general capabilities outlined in the Australian Curriculum, let us reflect upon our existing documents and professional learning for staff. This could occur in two ways; by re-visiting *A vision for learners and learning* (2006) to examine the section referring to the lifelong qualities, and by asking teachers who are currently attending *Equip* to share their new or re-affirmed pedagogical understandings.

Quality education in Lutheran schools is a given and yet there is another important dimension of education in our schools. We state that by 'living in community', and with God's help, our values of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, service, humility, courage, hope, quality and appreciation come to life. In fact, the origins of the word pedagogy; a *paidagogos* – (the

word for) a family slave who escorted children to school' (Feigl, 2001 p1369) and the broad definition of pedagogy where 'care and education meet' (Petrie et. al., 2009 p3) sums up the culture and ethos we strive to achieve in Lutheran schools.

The Australian Curriculum general capabilities

General capabilities as outlined at recent Independent Schools Queensland Australian Curriculum training

- » Literacy
- » Numeracy
- » Information and communication technology
- » Creative and critical thinking (Creativity, critical thinking)
- » Personal and social learning (Self management, social competence, teamwork)
- » Ethical behaviour
- » Intercultural understanding



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Dynamic and well-balanced learning experience

Accessing online course material

As a bright-eyed seven year old, I remember being amazed at the wondrous learning experiences my year 2 teacher fashioned in our classroom. From that moment, not only was I hooked on learning, but I was hooked on teaching. It was many years later, after studying and becoming an educator, that I fully understood the reciprocity of the roles of teacher and learner. Teachers who are reflective practitioners, committed to ongoing professional development, must be open to being both the educator and the educated. My *Equip* journey beautifully illustrates the interdependence of these roles.

I began my *Equip* journey this year as part of a small group of teachers from our school in Central Queensland. We studied our first two modules on-campus over a weekend, before embarking on an intensive four-day learning experience later in the year as part of a larger cohort of teachers from various regional Lutheran schools. Before the commencement of our first training session, we had access to the online course materials. Our face-to-face study of the first two modules involved a series of brainstorming and thinking activities based on the course readings, as well as time for group discussion and reflection. We also had some time to access, interact with and respond to the online materials under the guidance of our course leader. After completing the face-to-face component of our course, we were able to go away and digest all that we had heard, read and discussed before completing the remaining course activities and reflections online in our own time before returning for the next instalment of *Equip*.

I felt that the online component of the *Equip* modules dove-tailed beautifully with the face-

to-face mode of delivery. The LAMS platform used to organise the online content allowed the course leaders to upload readings, learning activities, reflection questions and even rich-media content such as video clips. Whilst we had access to many of these types of resources during the face-to-face course itself, the beauty for me of being able to access the course materials online was that I could retrieve these items at home before the course to familiarise myself with the content and then review the materials afterwards as many times as necessary to successfully complete the course follow-up activities in my own time and space.

I found that both of the *Equip* training sessions I attended provided excellent opportunities to engage on a deeper level with the course content by tapping into the expertise of the course providers through face-to-face interaction and questioning, viewing and discussing units of work and Christian Studies resources, as well as developing strong collegial bonds with teachers from my own school and professional networks with teachers from other Lutheran schools. After the intensity of the face-to-face training sessions, I found it quite refreshing to complete some of the required readings and reflection tasks online afterwards. The insights I gained from the discussions and collaborative activities I had been involved in as part of the face-to-face training sessions could later be applied to my reading of the course material, and then used to inform my online responses to the follow-up activities and reflection tasks. Also, as a teacher trying to balance a full-time workload with motherhood, family and study commitments, I appreciated being able to complete some of the course readings and reflections as time allowed in a self-paced mode of delivery.



Reading other teachers' responses provided different perspectives

Some of the online learning activities were designed so that participants could view others' responses, and so course providers could send individual feedback to learners. Reading other responses both affirmed my understanding and provided me with some different perspectives on the course content. In a face-to-face learning environment, it is not always possible to engage every learner in discussion, encourage each person to speak in front of the group, field every question, capture all responses or provide meaningful individual feedback. When learners are given the opportunity to respond in an online environment, however, the doors to hearing each learner's voice are opened; their discussion contribution, questions and responses. My understanding of the course content and the depth of my personal reflections certainly benefited from having the opportunity to share ideas with other educators in an online learning environment and receive feedback on my learning from course leaders.

In my opinion, the face-to-face and online delivery modes were complementary in the case of our *Equip* training. I found the course to be a dynamic and well-balanced learning experience, with the opportunity for both intense group discussion, collaboration and network-building, as well as personal review and reflection. As a teacher engaged in professional learning, slipping back into the shoes of a learner throughout my *Equip* journey has been richly rewarding in terms of my knowledge of the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework and its associated pedagogies, and also in my understanding of the nature of 21st century learning and the capacity for learners to benefit from multi-modal learning experiences.



Teachers who are reflective practitioners... must be open to being both the educator and the educated



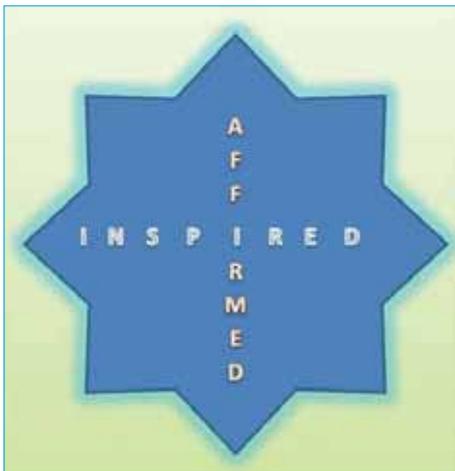
Amanda Gosney is a teacher at St James Lutheran College, Hervey Bay Qld

Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region

LESER Conference 2010

Theme: Affirmed, Inspired

A buzz was in the air in August as 290 principals, teachers and staff from our schools, together with special guests gathered at Rydges on Swanston in Melbourne for our LESER Conference 2010.



Theme for the conference was Affirmed, Inspired

Wednesday 18 August

The first day principals came together for a special time of professional learning and sharing. This day was conducted by *Principals First*, professional people sharing their experiences. The topic for the day was, *When you can't sleep the night before: having the hard conversation*. Principals reported the time spent was very beneficial.

Thursday 19 and 20 August

Chris Surridge (Chair for Thursday) welcomed the large group assembled for the LESER Conference 2010. Pastor Greg Pietsch opened the conference and opening worship was lead by Pastor Mark Winter, conference Chaplain, with music provided courtesy of our friends from Lutheran Primary School, Wagga Wagga. The keynote speaker for the morning was Kath Murdoch who spoke on the topic, *What do successful teachers do?* After a time of sharing over morning tea, delegates broke into elective groups.

Over the two days of conference, delegates had the option of attending some of the 32 electives offered. Sarah Deutscher, Director of Uberlife, was our guest speaker for the afternoon. Sarah spoke on the topic of *Understanding Gen Y*. A comment from one of our teachers, 'really inspiring and motivating. I feel so energised to make change and to help and guide the next generation'.

The conference dinner was held on Thursday evening. This was a time of sharing over a meal and delegates very much appreciated the social and networking opportunity, as well as feeling being a part of the bigger Lutheran education family who support and care for each other.

Jane Alexander (Chair for Friday) welcomed all once again and Pastor Mark began the day with a devotional thought. The keynote speaker for the morning was Dr Chris Perry who spoke on *Recognising emotional intelligence*. A highlight of the day was the closing worship service, a special time where Holy Communion was celebrated. An offering of thanks was taken up and over \$1,000 will be forwarded to Lutheran Education Australia to support the *Books for Bikes Project* in Indonesia.

Saturday 21 August

On election day our principals, business managers and school council chairpersons met for the Schools Assembly. Following the business of the day Adrian Wiles shared aspects of his role in Canberra as Assistant Director: National Policy.

Thank you for a wonderful few days of fellowship and networking.

Elizabeth Kloeden

Director

Lutheran Education South Eastern Region
Box Hill, Vic

Business Management at Lakeside Lutheran College

Year 11 students studying Business Management at Lakeside Lutheran College are turning their book knowledge into practical experiences. In the first unit of the course they were challenged to run a small business in an ethical and socially responsible manner. After visiting local shops and noting how different businesses operate the students came up with their own businesses to run at the school.

The two classes had a friendly competition to see who could make the largest profit after all costs were calculated. The students had to design business logos, advertise their product, organise the layout for the business, operate the store and source where to purchase their products. After all the set-up costs were covered the students were able to present a large cheque to the local Combined Christian Churches Charity which helps families in the area.

Lakeside Lutheran College

Pakenham, Vic



Lakeside year 11 students donated the profits

Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

Everyone's doing circles at Bethania

From prep through to year 7, everyone at Bethania is doing circles. Not running in circles but sitting in circles to talk, solve problems and learn new things. Circles are now an integral part of how our school operates and play an important role in our school's restorative practices.

The use of circles is not something new. Many Indigenous communities have used circles as a way of communicating and sharing information. Our own Australian Indigenous communities use circles to enhance aspects of community connectivity. Circles are also a very important part of the restorative process.

At Bethania we have adopted circle time in our classes. For my 'lively' class it has been

such a positive way to begin each day and to interact with each other. The students in the class love circle time because everyone has the opportunity to be seen or heard. As the teacher I join the children in the circle. Students have commented that they like the teacher down at their level and that they feel their voices are heard and valued.

For me the benefits of the circle is that I get to see each person, the focus is on the person who has the talking piece (Violet, our class bear) and others know that they are not to interrupt. Children don't have to worry about another child touching them from behind or bothering them, which is what used to happen when standard group seating on the floor was used.

We start the day with a *Good Morning Hi 5* around the room and then use different topics to

identify feelings, emotions and how each child is travelling on that day. For me as the classroom teacher, it is an excellent barometer to know what issues are affecting children, what the energy levels could be like and how this could impact on learning and teaching in my room.

All discussions are done in the circle, as well as devotions, oral language and novel. When an issue is discussed it is also done in the circle. This gives authenticity to the process of restoration for those affected by the behaviour of an individual or when the class has been disrupted by interruptions. It is also a safe place where children have the opportunity to discuss how they feel about situations using supportive and restorative language.

The benefits in my class have been amazing. The children who are usually quieter and move to the back of the class have developed greater confidence to be a part of the group and to share their thoughts and ideas. The pastoral care and management aspect of the circles has been outstanding. One of the surprising benefits has been the improvement in student's oral language and the increasing complexity of the thoughts expressed.

Circles have quite simply changed my class with a little more peace, harmony and clarity now reigning in our room. We love doing circles!

Trudy Peterson

Teacher
Bethania Lutheran School
Bethania, Qld



Bethania students using circle time

Reflective learning and student roles in reporting at Faith Lutheran College, Redlands

From the establishment of the middle school in 2003 at Faith Lutheran College Redlands, students have, through reflecting on their own learning, held an important role in the formal reporting process.

Over the years, their role has been refined, to ensure that they are supported in their preparation for partnership meetings and also in assisting them to produce specific information relating to their learning journey and personal growth, which is included in their formal academic reports at the end of each semester.

Our reporting program is structured accordingly with student input a part of all reports except the term 1 interim report.

Term 1 partnership meeting

These three-way meetings are scheduled in week 4 of term 1. Students are given a proforma which gives them the opportunity to reflect, in an organised manner, on their strengths, challenges and goals for the year. With the assistance of the Pastoral Care teacher, the students lead the meeting.

The 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute – <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>) have become a focal point for analysing and supporting students in their personal growth. Five of the 'internal assets' which underpin 'commitment to learning' have been identified as a frame for the personal reflection of students.

This provides a helpful structure to instigate conversation and identify responsibilities of all involved in learning. Students lead the

conversation and talk through the best plan for them for the coming year. The written meeting notes are shared with Key Learning Area teachers following the meetings.

Terms 2 and 4 formal academic report

In addition to the regular achievement levels and comments from Key Learning Area teachers, and personal observations by Pastoral Care teachers, students develop a personal reflection, linked to the Lifelong Qualities for Learners.

In order to ensure that this process is structured, consistent and relevant, sentence starts are used to initiate specific responses.

Students complete this process online, via the college webblocker, and then the information is linked to the academic reports and collated into one document.

NAIDOC at Peace Lutheran College, Cairns

How do you celebrate NAIDOC week in a school where there is a fairly large proportion of Indigenous students from mainland York Peninsula communities and the Torres Strait Islands as well as from Hopevale, the community which the college was set up to help educate? In the past, our Indigenous students and staff, as well as representatives from the local language groups have been involved in the special chapel and in classroom activities such as weaving and dancing. It was time to bring in a new emphasis – activities where our Indigenous students would feel very special and even more proud of their heritage.

We are lucky in Cairns that much of the tourism industry is based on Indigenous culture. After some investigations it was decided to approach Rainforestation, near Kuranda on the Tableland – some 20 minutes drive away to see if they could help us. The dates were set, the college buses booked and the whole school prepared to visit Rainforestation over two school days. The year 12 students went with the junior school to help with the prep and year one students while the middle and year 10 and 11 students visited the next day.

Hareem, from year 5, and Kaito, from year 4, described their feelings about the day for the college newsletter.

August 16 and 17 saw everyone at Peace Lutheran College celebrating NAIDOC



NAIDOC week celebrations at Peace

week. (We were not at school in July when NAIDOC week is celebrated all over Australia.) It got off to a great start. We had a lovely chapel with beautiful prayers and a fantastic story from Pastor Peter. Then we went on the bus to Rainforestation. We got to see the Pamagirri Dancers – they were pretty cool. Then we saw some people who were doing spear throwing. Well, in our opinions it was really good because they threw it in the stump of a tree and they threw it really far. After this we watched a person playing a didgeridoo who blew it to sound like a dingo howling, a kookaburra laughing and a kangaroo jumping and hopping. It was awesome. We also had



Peace College students during NAIDOC week

turns at throwing a boomerang and saw lots of native animals. It was a great way of finding out about local Indigenous culture and celebrating NAIDOC week.

Teaching staff and tutors also felt it was a good way to celebrate our Indigenous culture. The looks of pride on the faces of our Indigenous students as they watched the school engrossed in learning about *their* culture made the whole celebration even more worthwhile.

Sue Rivers-Young
Chaplain/Counsellor
Peace Lutheran College
Cairns, Qld

Term 3 partnership meeting

Again, students lead the discussion in these meetings with their parents and Pastoral Care teachers, following the same structures as in term 1, but applying it to their achievements as noted in the first semester reports. A reflection of the progress and areas for further development are identified and strategies discussed for the coming semester.

In summary ...

Empowering our students by giving them the opportunity to reflect on their own learning through carefully structured written response and also via planning partnership meetings, ensures that they all have the opportunity to step up and take charge as responsible learners.

(Faith Lutheran College, Redlands is a P-12 college in Redland City. The middle school operates from years 7-9 in a purpose built precinct on the middle and senior school campus at Thornlands).

Deb Osland

Head of middle school
Faith Lutheran College
Redlands, Qld



Staff, students and parents discuss progress at Faith

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

Hard work and good education delivers

As a student at Yirara College, I was really encouraged by all of the opportunities I had. I wanted to try new courses and learn about things I hadn't even heard of before. I graduated from year 12 in 2008 and started as a Trainee Sport and Recreation Officer in 2009 at Yirara College.

Sport is a big part of my life. I love footy and basketball. I like to basically play any sport and will give anything a go. So it just makes sense to me that I am now using sport as a tool to encourage young Indigenous youth.

There are many strong people who have been good role models to me and other students at Yirara. This is very important to me. These staff members helped me stay at school. I didn't have much in the way of family support and so the Yirara staff became my family and were the ones that encouraged me. Some of this encouragement was in the form of structured sessions like devotion times and sometimes it was just during a conversation. They genuinely took an interest in my life. Hearing testimonies from other men really spoke to me. They make me want to become a better person.

While I was at Yirara, I knew that for any situation that I was facing, there would be someone to go to that could help. These people included:

- » houseparents who helped teach me living skills
- » coaches who taught me about sport
- » teachers who helped me academically and with career pathways

Because of all of this, I would like to be a role model for others. I have been through what a lot of Indigenous youth are going through and I think I have a lot to offer them. I want to help them be strong and realise the importance of education.

I know that there are still challenges ahead, I know that I still have lots to learn as I continue my studies and complete my traineeship. I am still making the transition from student to a staff member of Yirara College but I believe that I now have a better chance of success because I have learned ways to handle situations.



Glenn Waistcoat is the Trainee Sport and Recreation Officer for Yirara College FRM, Alice Springs NT

Glenn Waistcoat – A sporting chance

Why a career in sports and recreation?

I really love my sport and wanted to pass that on to other people. I've already done a Certificate II in Sports and Recreation and I'm able to use a lot of what I've learned on the job already.

What would you say to others thinking about a career in sports?

I get to travel, meet experienced coaches and teach students new things. The job has lots of interesting areas to learn and it doesn't feel like hard work. I am a trainee Sports and Recreation Officer at Yirara College and I love it.

Where do you see your career taking you?

I am aiming to be a professional coach and I'd also like to go on to university. I study at college now.

What's the best thing about working?

I am learning lots of new things. The staff who mentor me are really helpful. I learn a lot from watching how other teachers and students interact and from this I am developing my own teaching and coaching style. I love meeting new students.

How do you feel about having your own income?

It makes me feel really good that I'm earning my own money. I am able to save it and manage it. I do not need to rely financially on my family anymore.

What's the best advice you could give students moving into work?

Don't ever give up. Watch the people around you and learn from them. Don't be scared to ask questions.

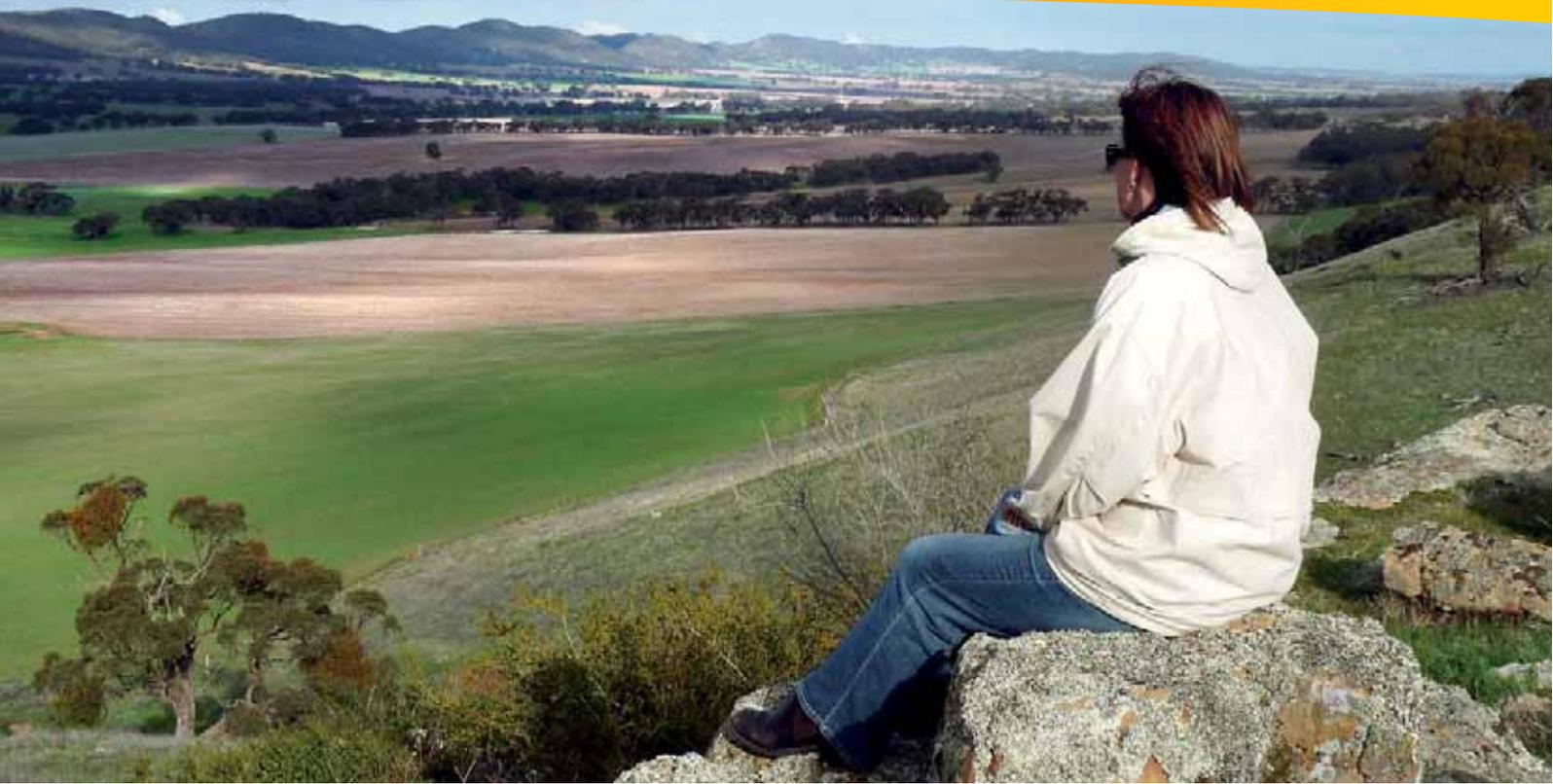
Any other advice?

Keep going to school, don't be lazy. Make good choices with your life.

Glenn's presence as a teacher, leader and role model at Yirara has been invaluable to the students.



Glenn with the 'Fellas' senior soccer team



Whether we are aware of it or not, at every moment of our existence we are encountering God, who is trying to catch our attention

Small group retreats program

The Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA) has now arranged or facilitated a total of 13 small group spiritual retreats for key staff since we instigated this program two and a half years ago. We use two venues: the Sevenhill Ignatian Retreat Centre and the Carlsruhe Manse Retreat. We have reserved the Sevenhill experience for principals and kindy directors, with Carlsruhe being made available to any staff member in our Lutheran schools who hold a position of responsibility (that's everybody!). A total of 77 staff from 30 LSA schools have now participated in a retreat.

Whether we are aware of it or not, at every moment of our existence we are encountering God, who is trying to catch our attention ... but we are not always conscious of, or alert to the presence of God.

There is a strong expectation that our senior staff show spiritual leadership. We believe that it is vital for maintaining the future directions and spiritual culture of our schools that we intentionally look at ways of encouraging and advancing the personal faith journey of our school leaders, in order that they maintain passion and commitment for spiritual leadership. One of the challenges that we face in attracting participants to engage in what is effectively spiritual leadership professional development, is to convince them that it is OK, important, even essential for them to take time out of regular school life to do this. By the end of the retreat, the universal sentiment seems to be it really needed to be longer.

The Carlsruhe retreat was such a gentle but life changing experience for me. I initially had such closed expectations about the whole experience but am so thankful that I was given this opportunity.

”

We have settled on what really is a two-day format spread over three days. We arrive at the retreat venue late in the afternoon just in time to settle in before the evening meal. An after dinner session sets the scene for the retreat. We leave after lunch on the third day.

The insights of Ian Cribb, our Jesuit retreat leader at Sevenhill have been an incredible blessing to us. Ignatian Spirituality helps us born and bred Lutherans to develop a new dimension of thinking about our relationship with God.

The Carlsruhe experience operates under a similar format using the following statement as a guiding principle: *A retreat is about God. A retreat opens time and space for us so that we may hear God's voice.* (Jane E. Vennard – author of *Be Still*)

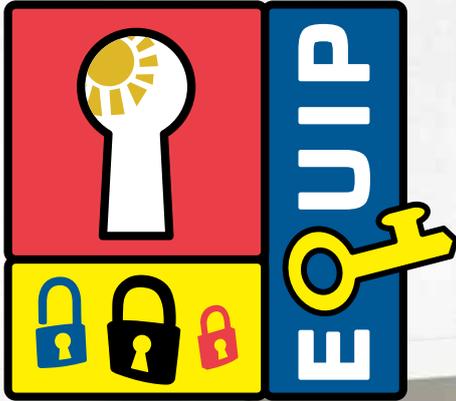
The surroundings at Carlsruhe are highly conducive to building a greater awareness of God's presence. The opportunity to intentionally take time out for spiritual reflection has had a profound impact on participants.

We believe that our ability to maintain the spiritual fabric of who we are as Lutheran

schools is dependent on us being prepared to invest time and resources into programs like this that help to encourage key staff in our schools to nurture their relationship with God and therefore enhance their effectiveness as spiritual leaders.



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



Reflections on Equip...

Equip – the in-service professional development program for the accreditation of Christian Studies teachers

The most useful discovery for me today was the realisation that children need help to articulate what they think. I will use questioning, modelling and reflection time to allow them to process their learning towards understanding.

My own understandings, prior knowledge, perceptions and pre-conceived ideas and experiences were challenged to the basic core of defining religion and spirituality.



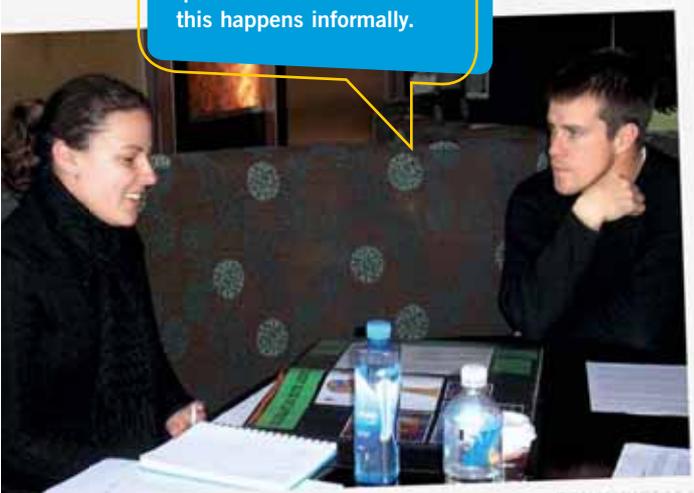


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Getting students to think, intriguing students and exciting students about questions about life – often this happens informally.



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As a relatively new teacher I appreciate the openness of the learning environment at Equip. I now feel less ignorant and more comfortable with my own approach.



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Confident and prepared for the challenge

Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) Executive Director, Dr Adrienne Jericho, died suddenly on Saturday 28 August 2010. In this edition of *SchoolLink*, the first since his passing, it is fitting to reflect on the legacy and challenge left to all of us who serve Lutheran schools.

Adrienne Jericho became the National Director for Lutheran schools in January 1995 and he produced the first edition of *SchoolLink* in August the same year. In that edition, he stated the aims of this new publication:

...to foster positive relationships and links between Lutheran schools in Australia. All involved with Lutheran schools are linked in a common mission, working in schools which are agencies of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). SchoolLink in turn also aims to foster links with the LCA.

In that first edition, Adrienne reported on the 1995 February census which showed enrolments in Australian Lutheran schools had reached 20,000 for the first time. He went on to report other 'snapshot' data:

- » new schools planned (seven for 1998)
- » numbers of full-time and part-time teachers (1,200 and 282 respectively)
- » number of graduate teachers joining the profession through Lutheran schools (62; with 20 of them being Lutheran Teachers College, now known as Australian Lutheran College, graduates)
- » projections of consistent enrolment growth at about 5% annually to the year 2000

He also reported a number of reasons often advanced for the continuing growth of Lutheran schools:

- » a reputation for a quality program of education
- » a strong Lutheran school culture and core values
- » congregations see schools as a way in which they can serve their community

- » committed staff with an understanding of the principles and practices of Lutheran education
- » integration of faith and life
- » back up resources from district (regional) offices and other established schools

what Simon Breakspear was getting at when he made that statement. At the same time, Adrienne was, above all things, a man of God; he knew the timeless and changeless verities, and he was always alive to the privilege and responsibility we have in shaping and enriching

...the privilege and responsibility we have in shaping and enriching young lives through the distinctive, enduring values and beliefs of Lutheran education.

”

Well, that was 1995. At the recent Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) conference held in Sydney, one keynote speaker (Simon Breakspear, currently Gates Scholar, University of Cambridge completing a PhD in education system reform), proclaimed: 'It's not 1995 anymore!' and then listed off the many changes to our lives, especially the lives of young people, since then: google, ebook, ebay, Global Financial Crisis, 9/11, twitter, facebook, skype, GPS, iPod, iTunes, iPhone, digital photography, sequenced human genome, rise of China, Harry Potter – always switched on, sharing, no longer just consumers but also producers, designers, connectors etc.

In the almost 16 years that Adrienne Jericho led LEA from 1995 to 2010, a time of quite profound change, no-one was more aware of the social, political and technological issues and changes which were impacting on schools, church and society. He worked tirelessly with vision and clear faith over all of those years to strategically lead the work of Lutheran schools and the systems in responding to those challenges, in ways that would build both capacity and commitment within the educational community and its stakeholders and the LCA and its agencies.

It is true, it's not 1995 anymore, and Adrienne Jericho would be among the first to appreciate

young lives through the distinctive, enduring values and beliefs of Lutheran education.

In that first edition of *SchoolLink*, Adrienne Jericho stated:

Lutheran schools are viewed positively in the Australian community. They are seen to stand for something worthwhile and to foster a sense of community where each individual is valued. It is a good feeling to belong to a network of schools which serves so positively. The challenge is to take advantage of the opportunities that this presents...

That there are so many now who are equipped, and are being equipped, to serve and lead our schools, to build on the advantages and opportunities presented, is lasting testimony to Adrienne Jericho's leadership. He would be honoured and reassured to know that so many will faithfully continue this vital work, confident and prepared for the challenge.



Ann Mitchell is the Chairman, Board of Directors, Lutheran Education Australia Ltd

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