

Broadsheet of Good Practice in Integrated Schools

Are We Doing Enough for Our Teachers?

Fr Peter Murphy, Papakura

The document issued by the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand – The Catholic Education of School-Age Children – came as a wakeup call for the Church in this country, especially the realisation that, despite the success of our schools, we were producing predominantly cultural Catholics and not followers of Jesus Christ. Christianity is at a crossroads.

We are between the ages; the old has lost much of its resonance and credibility, the new is yet to emerge. Our young people are being educated in a very secular world which in many instances is hostile to anything that smacks of religion and where conventional religious words carry little weight.

On the other hand there is, in the words of St Augustine, this restlessness in the human heart to search for the transcendent. The challenge for us as Church is to find a new language that speaks to the restless heart, especially among the young.

It is during such times of change that we need to go back to the foundations in order to go forward. The foundation, as described at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, is the man who built his house on rock. Gales blew, the rain came down but the house stood firm. This foundation is the practice of contemplative prayer, to which all followers of Jesus are called. For too long it has been perceived as the domain of the enclosed religious orders. The reality is that even the contemplative orders have caught the disease of busyness and have difficulty sustaining that contemplative spirit.

The call to contemplative prayer needs to be taken seriously. In the years that I have been meditating with children in our schools I have become very aware that the retaining of a Catholic Christian character lies very much in the spiritual development of the teachers. There is emphasis on professional development in faith but as we often say faith is caught not taught.

Unless there is equal emphasis given to spiritual formation of teachers (not just children) the religious (curriculum) development remains just a head trip. The Catholic Diocese of Townsville, which has implemented the practice of Christian meditation throughout the school system, has a programme of spiritual development leading up to a three-day silent retreat. It would be excellent to see such a programme implemented New Zealand-wide. Are there any visionary leaders ready to take this on?

Peter Murphy

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Colin James, in a conference at Victoria University on 3 December 2014*, summed up his view of the world now, and the likely changes facing New Zealand and the world. He covered firstly the rebalancing and relocating of the global economy and with it global politics, the hyperglobalisation of capital, finance and production, and the globalisation of people; and secondly the effect of digital technology which is radically transforming all aspects of production and the marketing of goods and services, not to mention how children are educated and how adults add to their skills. He noted that global life-sustaining ecosystems are being destabilised and climate change is coming. The rapidity of change is profound. He believes, "We are in a very different world from 20 years ago and probably a very different one from 20 years hence." Other international high-level analysts agree with that statement. We are facing a level of change greater than any since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, but at a hugely greater speed of impact.

We can be scared or optimistic about all this, but what is crucial is that we continue to think carefully about what it means to educate students for a future that we can barely imagine. It requires in particular that we enable our students: to find a way to think about and commit to God in a world where language about God has changed radically and often disappeared; to find new ways to contribute to the building of society and human relationships in a time of dizzying change and instability; to live by hope in an uncertain future; and to live by wisdom in an age where it may be hard to apply the wisdom of the past with any confidence that it will meet new situations. Our God is with us. The pace will not slow down, and it is imperative that we find our own inner serenity to live and act wisely and well.

We thank the writers in this edition for the stimulus of their thoughts and initiatives - they will help to orientate us for the year ahead. We look forward to the gathering of our Catholic education community in Wellington, 10-12 June this year. The Catholic Education Convention will give us many challenging ideas about who we are and what we stand for in this new world.

*See Colin James' website for the complete text of his presentation to this conference. <http://www.colinjames.co.nz/election-in-a-bubble/>



Janet McCarroll, Deputy Principal, St Mary's School, Tauranga

Students, teachers and parents at St Mary's School Tauranga are on a journey of implementing and developing 21st century models of reporting student progress and achievement. The days of written paper reports crumpled at the bottom of a school bag are numbered at St Mary's – where digital reporting methods see students as active and equal participants with teachers in their reporting, and parents engaged in the process as well.

Since the introduction of National Standards in 2010, Deputy Principal Janet McCarroll and eLearning Leader Jana Benson have been at the forefront of developing in-house methods of digital assessment and reporting around the National Standards. Both have completed post-graduate Masters research on the school's practice in the field, and their work has been recognised as far afield as the United States, where Janet presented her research in Boston on a Fulbright Scholarship in June 2014.

The New Zealand Curriculum encourages students to be actively involved and benefiting from assessment and reporting practices. At St Mary's, Janet and Jana made this an integral part of the school's Learning Vision: "To develop Assessment Capable Students, Teachers, School Leaders and Parents". Using this concept, and further supported by current academic research, St Mary's developed a 'student-centered' approach to assessment and reporting. Every student is encouraged to take full ownership of their learning, using the language of learning to share their learning with others.

In place of written reports and standardised testing, teachers and students engage in "critical learning conversations", which capture students' learning in progress, which is evidenced and digitised in a personal ePortfolio. By actively involving students in their learning and assessment, the emphasis is drawn away from the products of learning to the process of learning.

Critical Learning Conversations between students and teachers allow time for students to self-report to teachers. Students discuss their learning progress and achievement against agreed standards, and together with their teacher they determine and discuss their next learning steps.

This reflective conversation is captured on digital devices and over time builds a rich narrative of the child's learning development. This learning story shows the assessment for learning process, including the learning purpose; learning intention; co-constructed success criteria; artifacts of learning; and student reflections incorporating feedback and feed-forward from the student to the teacher. Teacher and parent comments are also contained in the Learning Story as an integral part of the reporting process.

In 2015, the school will use these Learning Stories as their Interim National Standards Report, which will be shared with parents using students' digital e-Portfolio in Google SITES. This secure web environment is a significant advancement from the days of written report cards, but the real benefits according to Janet, are in the learning outcomes achieved by the whole process. "The rich layers of authentic student voice achieved in these digitised conversations provide undisputable evidence of student learning – and their value is incomparable relative to a one-dimensional comment in a written report."

Janet's research undertaken at St Mary's School has provided revealing insights into the power of student self-reporting, and concludes that this dynamic feedback strategy is more powerful than traditional models where teachers provide one-way feedback to the student and parents. Students have felt empowered by their involvement in the process, and speak revealingly and insightfully of the benefits they perceive in online reporting:

- *"I think it's good because you can share our learning at school with your parents, and [they] can interact with what you're doing in class. You can get really involved in a lot of learning with it."*
- *"You could talk to her for two hours and she wouldn't understand. Show her [online] and she'll understand in a few minutes."*
- *"Only because you can ask the teacher questions instead of you getting your letter home of what she thinks of your test. You can actually ask her how you can improve rather than a piece of paper to your parents."*
- *"And you actually hear it from the student and not the teacher. You have the student's point of view."*

Not only children but also their parents see the value in this form of assessment and reporting:

- *"I thought it was great. I thought it showed what they were learning and how they were learning. It showed that they were thinking about what they were doing and it wasn't just...you know how with maths especially, you can get an answer right but it doesn't show any thought process? So it actually shows that they understand what they're learning and they can think about where they can improve. I think that's very positive for kids; to be able to set goals for themselves and understand what they're doing."*
- *"It gives them some responsibility in their learning. And some focus as to, say, a goal to improve themselves. I thought it was really good and also sharing it – you're actually seeing it and you can say to your child 'hey look, this is really good' and they feel positive and want to do better."*
- *"From a reporting point of view also, by hearing it and seeing it when it's 'where to next?' or 'what to work on', it makes it lot clearer for the parents."*

The outcomes of the research undertaken at St Mary's were enthusiastically received when Janet traveled to the United States in 2014 as a Fulbright Scholar. This year she and Jana Benson are presenting further findings at the International Conference on Thinking in Bilbao, Spain.

The use of eLearning and digital technologies is a high-priority for the Ministry of Education, and it is fantastic to see such significant educational leadership from within our Catholic educational environment.

Media Release – 14 April 2015

Integrated Schools to Embrace Digital Learning Professional Development

Schools all over New Zealand are seeing large numbers of digital devices invading their classrooms in the hands of their students from as young as five.

Some schools are adopting community based initiatives while others are opening their doors to BYOD programmes. One recent survey suggests that now over half of our schools have some form of digital classroom programme underway.

In recognising that the purpose of such devices in our classrooms is to enhance the learning outcomes for all students, the NZCEO has moved to provide support for their teachers nationally via a new association with the professional development team at Cyclone.

Pat Lynch KNZM, CEO, NZ Catholic Education Office, observed “Providing practical and meaningful classroom based professional development for our teachers is critical to addressing the changing learning dynamic in our modern classroom learning environments.

“The guidance that Cyclone staff have provided both at St Thomas of Canterbury College and also at Sacred Heart College (Auckland) has been outstanding, supporting the changes that such devices cause in our teaching and learning. It seemed important to recommend to our affiliate schools the capability of the Cyclone staff to help plan and implement similar long term programmes for their schools.”

According to Leigh Gibbard, “Regardless of platform – Apple, Microsoft or Google, digital devices in the hands of students need careful school and classroom management to ensure that programmes of learning move from simple substitution towards transformational learning and improved learning outcomes. Expectations of improved learning with digital devices without pedagogy are doomed.”

With ex teachers (both primary and secondary) forming the Cyclone PLD team their experience includes top educational qualifications from Apple, Microsoft and Google.

Each member works closely with school senior management, BOT and classroom teachers to ensure that there is strategic alignment with community expectations and learning objectives. A one off course or conference is ineffective – sustained mentoring is powerful and results are observable.

Cyclone and NZCEO will work together with affiliate schools (Catholic and integrated schools) to recommend how each school is best able to appropriately embrace the adoption of such digital devices within their community of learning.

For more information regarding this affiliation call:

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Progress At Sacred Heart College

Louise Oliphant, Learning Support/Digital Learning, Sacred Heart College, Auckland

Educators have frequently debated the effectiveness and sometimes the validity of providing reader/writers for students who cannot access assessment materials, nor complete papers according to their ability.

Ongoing research at Sacred Heart College in Auckland indicates that the presence of a second person in an exam situation is not always beneficial. This is probably one of few situations in which the removal of the 'human factor' often makes for a better outcome.

Trained support persons are highly professional in the way they deliver that support, but subconscious body language and personal evaluations are always a factor. It is part of being human. It is argued that these variables are not present when a student uses a computer. Students do not form an unconscious relationship with a computer, nor interpret subtle body language and facial clues.

In partnership with Speaking Solutions, digital delivery of exam papers has been a reality at Sacred Heart College in Auckland for some years. Speaking Solutions is a private agency specialising in communication software and digital learning tools. The process has not been an easy one, with many beneficial learning experiences for both teachers and students along the way, but now, students are offered papers almost identical to those completed by their peers.

Using a combination of text to voice, voice to text and other specialised software the Digital Learning team is able to quickly and efficiently tailor access to suit individual needs.

This research project has recently been recognised by Paul Nisbet of the world renowned centre, Call Scotland, where digital assessments are widely accepted as the norm and the everyday expression of Inclusion (www.callscotland.org.uk). Mr Nisbet would agree that digital delivery of assessment

papers places the focus of control firmly with the student removing any relationship variable.

A further and not insignificant benefit is the cost saving to schools and other educational organisations. Once trained, teachers can very quickly modify papers to suit digital delivery, whilst the appearance of the "paper" has not been radically changed. Additionally, several multi-levelled students completing the same or different subjects can be supervised in the same room with only one or two supervisors. At Sacred Heart College more than 100 digital papers have been delivered in one exam period.

Nationwide the projected savings in personnel, separate accommodation and time would be substantial. Inclusion principles aside, we believe that economic considerations alone should encourage NZQA to bring forward their projected target of Digital Exams within 8 years.



Junior exams in progress. Student are engaged and independent.

SunSmart Schools Information: Congratulating St Joseph's School, Dargaville and St Patrick's School, Waimate



Students from St Patrick's School, Waimate

Congratulations to St Joseph's School in Dargaville and St Patrick's School (Waimate) for being SunSmart Schools. NZ's skin cancer rates are among the highest in the world, yet skin cancer is largely preventable, so teaching our youth about how and why we need to be SunSmart is essential. With around 35% of schools participating in the programme nationally the Cancer Society wants to encourage more to become actively involved. "We encourage schools to apply to the programme – it's quick, easy, and has a variety of benefits other than just protecting against skin cancer," says Jim Callaghan, Cancer Society of NZ Health Promoter.

Visit www.sunsmartschools.org.nz to find out more and to apply – local staff will help you with your application. You can also freely download our new cross-curriculum Resources at www.sunsmartschools.org.nz. There are 4 Levels designed by educational experts with front loading, hands-on and Inquiry lessons. They are linked to the NZC and can be used to assess National Standards for numeracy and literacy.

Our Lunchtime RE Fun Club

Margaret Chylek, DRS, St Joseph's School, New Plymouth

Lunchtime badminton, tennis, choir, kapahaka? All of these wonderful activities are available for students to participate in during their lunch hour. One day I thought to myself, we are a Catholic school, so why not an RE Club? So last year we began RE Fun Club on Friday lunchtimes.

RE Fun Club runs for Year 3-6 children and involves participating in Christ-centred activities that are engaging and fun for children. Often, as you will see, the activities are not heavily religious and are aimed to make children realise that you can include God in the fun things in their life.

RE Club is also simple. Teachers are very busy people and in Catholic schools they already go the extra mile. The activities we choose are easily organised, cleaned up and packed away.

Here are some of the activities we have done:

- Children made 'faith catchers', a simple polystyrene cup decorated with stickers. Inside the cup they put little cards of who they 'caught' their faith from, parents, teachers, grandparents, priest etc. As they walked out the door a few fruit jelly lollies were slipped into their cup as a symbol of the Fruits of the Spirit.
- We printed off cardboard presents, hole punched them and distributed them, with safety pins, to children and staff in the playground saying 'you are a gift from God.'
- Children used ipads to record Christmas songs and messages.
- Children decorated the driveway with chalk messages and pictures.

- We made 'Smores', which are a marshmallow sandwiched between two chocolate biscuits and microwaved... yum! What does this have to do with God you might well wonder. Children were given a sheet of paper to colour. On one half were instructions for Smores, on the other half instructions from God... Love God, love one another. The message was simple and clear.
- Minecraft is a computer game that many children are familiar with. We did a session called 'Godcraft' where children used similar small mosaic shapes to make a creation picture.
- With the help of a 'crafty' parent, our current project is sewing bunting made from hessian with our Gospel values of Tika, Pono and Aroha.
- Other activities have included face-painting, bookmarks, cards, wordfinds etc. I try not to include food treats more than a few times a year.

The number of children who come to RE Club varies as there are often other sports practices on, but it can be as many as 40. There are some regulars who never miss a week, and more girls than boys. It's hard to give up a good game of cricket for anything! What we have found, though, is that many of the children who come are 'unchurched' and this is a wonderful way of evangelising. The children go home and talk about what they have done at RE Club. It is also a space for those who sometimes find friendships and social activities awkward.

If you have a little extra time and energy I would encourage you to give RE Club a go at your school. I'm sure both you and the children will enjoy it.

Meaningful Ritual and Prayer

www.liturgyritualprayer.com is the website of Australian Monica Brown's Emmaus Productions, which provides music and resources for liturgy, ritual and prayer, for staff prayer and development days, and for use with students. Many of our schools already use these online resources.

Membership fees for www.liturgyplanning.com include access to www.liturgyplanningimages.com. Categories and subscriptions are listed on the website. To give a guideline, schools with 1-200 students pay A\$265 annually, schools with 801+ pay \$440. A student module is \$50.



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