



Term 4 2016

## Teaching and Learning

### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING SPACES

A new environment of school has been emerging over several decades of the last century, stimulated by new technologies and new understandings about learning. This has also been driven by the impact of new structures and technologies on the workforce. There is a need to expand on this change and to rethink daily organisation and structures for our students.

The organisational structure of schools (i.e. students are sorted into groupings based only on age) was started during the Industrial Revolution. Today we live in a post-industrial economy, and a rapidly globalizing world. The job security that previous generations enjoyed no longer exists. Today a person changes jobs every 3 years on average. We can hardly anticipate what the economy would look like in a month, or what set of skills it would require. Our industrial age school system simply cannot keep up with such rapid changes.

School environments are the place where skills are developed and students are supported socially as well as academically in order to eventually function as successful adults in the world.

The design of new school environments should now consider the use of a mix of media and locations, flexible student and teacher groupings as well as improved access to resources. Capabilities such as the ability to work collaboratively and problem solving skills are central considerations when dealing with technological and cultural change. Modern learning spaces must reflect a move towards more student centred learning approaches with teachers guiding and leading learning by interacting at a more individualised, differentiated level. Technology should be integral to the learning and should enable learning to occur both in a physical context as well as in remote and/or virtual contexts.

Typically, modern learning spaces would include places for community orientations; accessible information technologies; spaces for "home" bases and spaces for small group and/or individual learning. These spaces would be flexible and adaptable. Furnishings and equipment should be able to be rearranged with speed and ease. The 21st century classroom is reflective of learners who communicate and collaborate with ease. It supports learners who are independent and who are both creative and analytical. Most importantly the new school learning environment is designed to support different levels of technological sophistication and should encompass a variety of mobile devices.



Over the past few months, we have purchased some furniture for our Stage 3 cohort that has enabled us to begin the process of transforming our Stage 3 learning spaces into these types of environments. During 2017 the Stage 3 teachers will participate in some Professional Learning on Pedagogy and Space with a focus on transforming learning through innovative learning spaces. This is an exciting direction new for our Stage 3 students who already gain so much from our strong leadership program and stand to gain even more from such an exciting project!

### 3 MAIN PURPOSES FOR ASSESSMENT

Assessment tasks assist teachers in identifying some key aspects of students' learning. Assessments can be school based (i.e. a work sample) or they can be external assessments that are diagnostic or standardised. As the name suggests, a diagnostic assessment identifies strengths, weaknesses and knowledge or skills. Standardised assessments are formal assessments that have been designed to measure a child's abilities compared to other children his or her age.

At St Kieran's we use a variety of assessments in order to gain a clearer, more accurate picture of a child's individual progress. The MAI and Best Start assessments are both diagnostic. PAT assessments in Reading Comprehension and Mathematics are standardised and so measure against other similar students. All these assessments are actually "formative" too, in that they assist in "plotting" the student on the learning continuum.

There are three aspects to school based (i.e. work samples) assessments that teachers use. Teachers can use assessment either *for*, *as* or *of* learning. This is outlined below:

**ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING** occurs when teachers use inferences about student progress to inform their teaching. (Formative)

**ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING** occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals (Formative)

**ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING** occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards. (Summative)

Usually parents receive *summative* assessments of their child's learning. This usually occurs at mid-year and end of year report time, as well as the parent, teacher, child interviews which are held mid-year. Not *all* the results of assessments as outlined above are reported back to parents as many of these, e.g. the diagnostic or standardised assessments are really additional tool impacting the teaching and learning program designed for students.

Teachers however, often do share the results of some of these assessments with parents, particularly in situations where a child is having some difficulty and further support is required. Alternatively, this can also occur when a child is requiring extension to support a high level of achievement. This is because more data, as explained above, provides a more precise interpretation of the student's progress and/or needs.

### LEARNING SUPPORT AT ST KIERAN'S

Our **Learning Support Program** is a multi-layered program designed to meet the needs of specific students as well as providing collaborative support in terms of the teaching and learning class programs.

Children who are *funded* for a learning disability – receive regular, ongoing 1:1 support from the Learning Support Teacher. These children are actually what we call "validated" in our system and they achieve this status as the learning issues they have fall within certain ranges which are determined by Catholic Schools Office. Children, who are identified by their teacher as requiring support or *extension* in their learning, can be assisted in a variety of ways. They could receive 1:1 or small group support from the Teacher's Aide (Kerrie Powell), the Learning Support Assistant (Karmena Hayden) or the Learning Support Teacher. Once

the class teacher has discussed this with the Learning Support Teacher and the Principal, a program is written (Learning Plan) outlining the particular focus for that child and how long the intervention will last. *This intervention can last from one term to more if required.* The Learning Plans teachers write usually support the children in areas of Literacy or Numeracy.

At times, however, children will require specific support in areas such as **Occupational Therapy** or **Speech Therapy**. These areas are quite specialised and have, in recent years, become a more regular avenue of therapy for primary aged school children. Teachers may suggest that (Speech or Occupational) therapy could be beneficial for your child. If this is the case, then an initial assessment by the therapist would ascertain whether therapy would be effective. Parents often aren't familiar with the assistance Speech and Occupational therapy can offer and so the following is an outline of exactly what these specialised areas are about.

Many children who are referred to **Occupational Therapy** have difficulties with handwriting. It is the Occupational Therapist's task to assess the child's handwriting and identify the underlying cause of the difficulties. The therapist will need to assess the level of functioning in the following areas:

1. **Visual Motor Integration** (neural function transferring what is seen into motor expression)
2. **Fine Motor Skills** (hand dominance, bilateral and motor co-ordination, in-hand manipulation, functional pencil grip, muscle tone, hand, arm and shoulder strength).
3. **Visual Perception** (discrimination between numbers, letters and words that are similar; spacing between letters; placing letters on the writing line and using margins correctly; identifying which letters have been formed completely; letter and number reversal).
4. **Cognition** (memory; language comprehension; specific learning difficulties e.g. problem solving and reasoning).
5. **Possible sensory processing difficulties** (..that interfere with posture, attention, tactile senses)

These may all impact on handwriting so it is important to determine and diagnose the underlying cause of the handwriting problem. There are a number of activities that a child can do to help with handwriting difficulties. An Occupational Therapist will usually provide a program of activities to be done daily alongside the school handwriting program that focuses mainly on letter formation and legibility. These activities tend to be incorporated into the child's daily routine. Most children improve with the correct intervention and with maturity. Some issues however, tend to persist into adolescence and could continue into adulthood if the right intervention is not given.

We do not currently have any Occupational Therapists working from our school, although if any parents needing the services of an OT aren't sure who to contact, they are welcome to contact the school.

**Speech Therapy** is the treatment for most children with speech and/or language disorders. A speech disorder refers to a problem with the actual production of sounds, whereas a language disorder refers to a difficulty understanding or putting words together to communicate ideas.

**Speech disorders include:** Articulation disorders: difficulties producing sounds in syllables or saying words incorrectly to the point that listeners can't understand what's being said.

Fluency disorders: problems such as stuttering, in which the flow of speech is interrupted by abnormal stoppages, repetitions (st-st-stuttering), or prolonging sounds and syllables (sssstuttering).

Resonance or voice disorders: problems with the pitch, volume, or quality of the voice that distract listeners from what's being said. These types of disorders may also cause pain or discomfort for a child when speaking.

Language disorders can be either receptive or expressive:

Receptive disorders: difficulties understanding or processing language.

Expressive disorders: difficulty putting words together, limited vocabulary, or inability to use language in a socially appropriate way.

Literacy Development Delays: Speech Therapists also provide intervention for students who are in need of support to develop skills in Literacy. These are students who require targeted intervention that supports the differentiation that occurs in the regular classroom setting. Speech Therapists are able to identify the issue and plan a specialised program of intervention.

Currently, we have one Speech Therapist who works with identified children at school, during school times. The Speech Therapist also sees children out of school hours. *It is important to note that both Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists are specialist practitioners and are not part of the Diocesan Catholic School system.* The specialist working with students at St Kieran's is a private practitioner who works under an independent business registration and is able to use the school premises in certain circumstances. It is neither an expectation nor custom and practice that children automatically receive Speech Therapy during school hours. This is because obviously in order to do this the child would miss out on valuable class time. As there are some exceptional cases (and only limited places) there is a process around identifying and prioritising who receives Speech Therapy at school.

A good plan of action is...

- Firstly, parents need to discuss the possibility of Speech Therapy with the class teacher, or Learning Support Teacher, in order to identify whether a child would benefit from intervention.
- If parents decide to pursue this, then the Speech Therapist will always do an initial test and report to ascertain the child's needs.
- Parents can then decide whether or not to proceed with Speech Therapy. If they would like their child to attend Speech Therapy at school (with Rebecca Clarke) they must make an appointment to see the Learning Support Teacher. At this meeting the Speech Therapist's report will be discussed. This way, if it is a high needs case, or if there are special circumstances – we (the school) are able to prioritise availability.

Parents are not to make private arrangements with the Speech Therapist to have sessions held during school hours. It goes without saying that private arrangements for Speech Therapy outside of school hours is something parents may organise freely although it is still beneficial for the school to know that this is occurring. This is because reports from the Speech Therapist will always contain identified concerns and strategies for teaching and learning which may be incorporated into the classroom setting.

## **SPEAKING AND LISTENING IN THE PRIMARY YEARS**

*'Talk plays a central role in learning; in learning how to think and in talking your way into meaning.'*  
Christine Edwards –Groves, Michele Anstey & Geoff Bull

Oral language is the foundation of all student learning and social interactions. It is essential for literacy learning, which underpins learning across the curriculum (Cameron & Dempsey 2016). Effective oral language (speaking and listening) is essential for social, emotional and academic wellbeing.

Strong oral communication skills are essential for:

- developing critical thinking
- analysing and synthesising information
- articulating a point of view
- making connections between previous and new experiences.

At St Kieran's, specific speaking and listening skills are taught and practised daily in K-6 literacy lessons and are incorporated into all aspects of our day.

Some of these experiences K-6 include:

**Think, pair, share:** Rather than a teacher asking a question and choosing one student to answer (while others zone out!), students are given a question and a few seconds to **think** about a response. They then turn to their 'knee' partner and share their ideas. Finally, students are invited to **share** with the class.....but by now they have ALL engaged with the question.

**Inside/Outside Circle:** Students form 2 circles, in a donut shape. The 'inside' students face their 'outside' student. The 'inside' students speak to their outside partner (this could be sharing about the weekend, their opinion on a topic, what they just learnt in a Maths session etc...) and their partner responds. Then, the outside circle students move 2 places...and they do it all again. This way, every student has shared and listened ....they are all involved.

**Would You Rather...?/Topic talks:** These are short, fun and all answers are valid. The topics vary for different levels: e.g

- *What is one thing you couldn't live without? (Junior)*
- *Would you rather have the ability to fly or be invisible?(Middle)*
- *If you were able to witness an historical event, what would it be and why?(Senior).*

**How can parents help at home?** This website makes some excellent suggestions for linking oral language to learning at home: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/>

*For younger students....*

Book talk is an important part of reading. Chat about the book before, during and after reading and really encourage your child to talk about their ideas and ask questions about the book.

Here are some questions you can ask at different times before, during and after reading the book:

- What would you like to read about?
- Look at the cover – what do you think this book is about?
- What is happening in the picture?
- What do you think is going to happen next?
- What was your favourite part of the book?
- Who was your favourite character in the story? Why did you like that character?
- If you could change the ending of this book, what would it be?

*And for older students:*

- Talk to your child about their understanding and encourage their reading and writing efforts.
- Share family histories and stories through talking and encourage your child to talk to older family members.
- Discuss television shows or films that you have watched together.
- Encourage your child to develop their own library of books.
- Talk about world events and encourage your child to look at the different sides of the story to form their own opinions.

*'One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.'*

*Bryant H. McGill*

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CREATIVE ARTS

Please consider this fractured fairy tale.

*"Once upon a time, all over the world, no children went to school, because schools hadn't been invented. But children and young people still learned all they needed to become useful grown-ups in their community. They did this by listening to their elders, who told them wise stories and sang songs with them; together with the adults they danced and made music and performed the deep ceremonies and necessary lore and laws of the people; with the adults and each other they drew patterns and painted pictures and fashioned sculptures to create and communicate images and meanings; they invented stories that, although make-believe, were models of both the real world and other possible worlds – and they brought the models to life by acting them out. They learned by making artful play, music and drama and from all these experiences, where the body and senses, the brain and the emotions were all working together in constructive harmony, they made order and meaning for themselves in their personal, relational and objective worlds....."*

*The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential - by Robyn Ewing*

In a nod to the old saying 'everything old is new again' the importance of Creative Arts across the curriculum has experienced a resurgence. As a learning area; Music, Visual Arts, Dance and Drama, the components of Creative Arts, have been travelling well. But as a tool or medium for the teaching of other subjects, Creative Arts has experienced a bit of a re awakening.

Each year the Broken Bay Diocese asks students in Years 5, 7, and 9 to complete a survey about Religious Education. ***Why Years 5, 7 and 9? Research has shown that children and teenagers made major decisions about their faith and culture within this time span.***

The survey results showed over welcomingly that engaging with Faith Development activities and Religious Learning experiences through the vehicle of Creative Arts enhances the enjoyment, engagement and learning of Religious Education for our students.

As a direct consequence of the Diocesan Student Voice Surveys learning through the medium of Creative Arts has been explored by the staff of St Kieran's. This year Stage 2 and 3 teachers have engaged in Professional Learning in the area of *Visio Divina*. *Visio Divina* is a prayer process where instead of reading the Scriptures the children see the picture. The act of seeing, thinking about, discussing and praying can be completed in one session or run over a week as the children explore the image from different perspectives and relate the message of the image to their lives. Teachers have explored a variety of professional readings, planned, taught and observed each other, discussing the effectiveness of the lessons. A Visual Arts lesson was then based on the image used for *Visio Divina*.



Kindergarten students express the joy of the man cured from leprosy.



Year Five students captured the anguish of the women of Jerusalem.

Likewise, in the strand of drama, scriptural plays and dramatized bibles have further enabled teachers to provide a dramatic quality to Religion Education. Role play, echo plays, frozen pictures, dramatized Scripture further enable children to explore the meaning around Scripture passages.



Students ask Jesus why he would eat at the home of a sinner.



Students' role play the Journey of Jesus to the cross.

The church was silent as all students focussed on the pain of Mary, Jesus' Mary. Such deep immersion in a story is attained through drama.

We have all experienced the joy of singing. Most of the hymns we sing at Mass are based in Scripture and re tell the story of the Jewish people, Christ the Saviour and how the message of the Scripture might look in our times. "Go make a Difference", "Yes Lord", and the "I Believe" are a few examples of singing our faith.

Religion is not simply taught in the half hour Religious Education lesson. Lessons from the Scripture are also taught through the medium of our rich Creative Arts Curriculum. There are many other ways Religious Education is modelled and taught to our children but more of that next year.

*Yours in Catholic Education, Mrs Kerrie Wetzlar*

## Pastoral Care

### ST KIERAN'S IS A KIDSMATTER SCHOOL

KidsMatter is a mental health and wellbeing framework for primary schools and is proven to make a difference to the lives of Australian children.

KidsMatter provides the methods, tools and support to help schools work with parents and carers, health services and the wider community, to nurture happy, balanced kids.

This year, 2016, the staff of St Kieran's have partaken in the learning of Component 3 KidsMatter.

Over the past few years St Kieran's have completed Component 1 – *Positive School Community* and Component 2 – *Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)* for students.

The focus of Component 3 is *Working with Parents and Carers*. Our aim has been to provide each student with learning opportunities within a positive school community. We are now aiming to engage parents in the students learning of SEL skills and provide a positive partnership between the school and the home.

The KidsMatter Primary website is a wonderful resource for parents and carers, offering valuable advice and resources. Please visit [www.kidsmatterprimary](http://www.kidsmatterprimary) for more information on Component 3.

Alternately you can see Mrs Karen Sullivan, Pastoral Care / Wellbeing Coordinator at St Kieran's.



Please click on the link below for information from Michael Grose. Michael is the author of numerous parenting books. His background is in education and he has researched the topic of positive families for many years

**Michael Grose – How to encourage kids to problem [solve](#)**