



Term 1 2017

Embrace Equip Engage Empower

Welcome to the first **Learning Quarterly** of the year. The purpose of the Learning Quarterly is to share current issues and thinking in education, especially in the context at St Kieran's. I hope you take the time to read the various articles in this term's issue.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

As a Catholic school, there are three areas of focus throughout the year; Mission, Learning and Teaching, and Pastoral Care and Wellbeing. These three areas are part of our School Improvement Plan (SIP). Our focus in Pastoral Care in 2017 is around engaging parents in their child's learning. Research has shown that showing an interest and being involved in school has many benefits for your child.

The vision which has come from our SIP (2017-2019) has grown from **Embrace, Equip and Engage** to now include the word **Empower**. This means we are building on the focus we have had during the years (2013-2016). The word **Engage** continues to be a highly relevant aspect of all that we do at St Kieran's.

We've all heard the quote: "It takes a village to raise a child", and there is no better context for this than that of a school. In our Catholic system, we are a part of our Parish. The church and parish community all form an important part of our identity and our very way of being.

What is Parent Engagement?

Parent engagement is being positively involved and active in your child's learning. Your attitudes, values and behaviours can positively influence your child's education outcomes.

We know that parents, families and carers are some of the most important influences on a child's education. When you are positively engaged in your child's education, they are more likely to attend and perform better at school.

Effective parent and family engagement in education is more than just participation in school meetings and helping with fundraising; it is actively engaging with your child's learning, both at home and at school. When schools and families work together, children do better and stay in school longer.

You can support your child to get the most out of their schooling. The earlier you become engaged, the better it is for your children.

Why is parent engagement important?

Parent engagement is associated with improvements across a range of indicators, including:

- better education outcomes
- enhanced engagement with school work
- more regular school attendance
- better behaviour



- increased social skills.

Parent engagement is one of the four pillars of the Australian Government's Students First reform agenda for schools.

How you can help your child do well at school?

Teachers, as professionals, have a very big impact on students' learning but this work is complemented by positive support and additional encouragement from home. Parents have the greatest impact on their child's learning, not necessarily by understanding the current NSW syllabus, but by ensuring they:

- Spend time talking with their child, talking regularly about school and the value of learning.
- Learn about the world together
- Create a good homework environment
- Support good relationships
- Have high yet achievable expectations of their child and believe in their child's potential
- Encourage positive attitudes and respect for school and teachers
- Model the behaviours you would like to see in your child
- Talk and ask about what they are learning
- Ask what was and was not fun at school
- Help them to develop strong work habits

One of the most effective ways parents and families can help children to do better at school is to make sure they go to school every day. School attendance has a major influence on educational outcomes. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve better results at school and are more likely to complete their schooling.

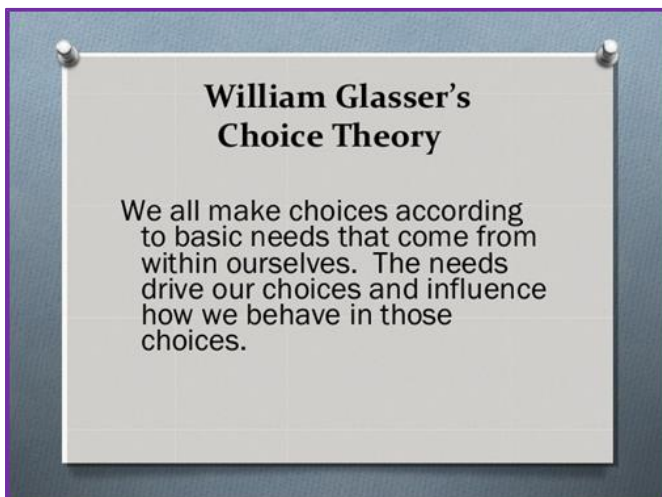
Visit: <https://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/engaging-parents-education>

QUALITY BEHAVIOURS – HOW DOES CHOICE THEORY WORK?

There is much written and highlighted in the media regarding the management of student behaviour. We also hear the word "bullying" used far too frequently (often inaccurately) to highlight stories of inappropriate behaviour. It is almost like the "bully" cannot help him/herself and the rest of us need to protect ourselves from people who have this label.

The simple reality is that schools are ideally placed to give children the skills to manage their feelings and actions. Schools also equip students to understand and achieve behaviour that is socially acceptable.

Schools will often base their approach to this on either a program or some research that supports their strategy. At St Kieran's we base much of our approach on the principles of **Choice Theory**.



Choice Theory (sometimes known as Reality Therapy) was developed by William Glasser who is an American Psychiatrist and the founder of the William Glasser Institute. Choice Theory contends that we are internally motivated, not externally motivated by rewards and punishment. This is not to say that children don't need consequences for behaviour that is inappropriate. On the contrary, children **need to know the boundaries very clearly** and it is ideal for children to **know and understand the consequences before any "miss-takes" in behaviour take place.** Choice Theory

can best be summarised by the following points:

1. All behaviour is driven by five basic needs. These are: survival; love and belonging; power; freedom and fun. *(Think of the person who reacts with anger when faced with a situation where he/she has been excluded from a party with friends/family. This is about Love & Belonging.)*
2. All behaviour is affected by a personal idea of our Quality World. Each of us has a different “Quality World” related to what we want or desire. As we move through life our Quality World can change. *(Think of the person who wants to be successful at e.g. a job or career. That person’s quality world is shattered when something goes wrong at work.)*
3. All behaviour is affected by perception. Reality and perception can often be two totally different things. Perception can be affected by one of the basic needs and/or beliefs relating to Quality World. *(Think of the child who has a strong need for power and whose quality world consists of being highly regarded for his sporting ability. This might well be the child who reacts badly when he is “out” or misses a goal resulting in the child arguing that it wasn’t fair. His perception means he does not see the reality.)*
4. All behaviour is affected by how we rationalise a situation. To do this we go to our “Comparing Place”. This is best described as the way we make sense of what we want (Quality World) and our perception. *(Think of the child who reflects on being “out” or missing a goal and attempts to make sense of the umpire’s decision)*

This approach empowers individuals to accept responsibility for their own actions and to initiate changes in situations that are not working for them. It means that in the context of a school, we are encouraging growth, maturity and independence in the students. It also means that the teachers approach is one of negotiation and consultation with the child rather than a punitive “top heavy” approach to behaviour. It means that standards and expectations are clearly outlined to the students, as are consequences for inappropriate behaviour. It also means that when things go wrong for individual students they are empowered to identify a positive way forward for the future. *(A question often asked when speaking with the child is... “How would you do this differently next time?”)*

THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an important link in the “cycle” of teaching and learning but it doesn’t just “occur”! Planning around the *timing, type* and *quality* of assessment is crucial to providing the best information about students’ learning. The following is a statement from the St Kieran’s Assessment Policy outlining the school’s beliefs about assessment:



Statement of Beliefs and Practices about Assessment

*As stated in Principles of Effective Assessment (BOS) we, at St Kieran’s believe that **Assessment** is the broad name for the collection and evaluation of evidence relating to student’s learning. It is integral to teaching and learning and has a variety purposes.*

We believe that effective assessment ensures precise monitoring of student progress. Valuable feedback then enables students to participate in and take responsibility for their own learning.

Assessment:

- *provides opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about student achievement in relation to syllabus outcomes*
- *enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do*
- *clarifies student understanding of concepts and promotes deeper understanding*
- *provides evidence that current understanding is a suitable basis for future learning. Principles of Effective Assessment (BOS)*

By regularly monitoring and analysing the data that is gathered through assessments teachers are then able to make informed judgments about both the progress of each individual student and the learning directions that need to be

pursued. They are also able to reflect on the *validity* of the data that has been gathered. This year was the second year that our students were assessed for the MAI after spending a week or two settling into their new class. This was because in previous years, teachers found the data to be inconsistent with actual ability when the students were tested before they had even started the school year. Professional discussion supported the decision to test a few weeks into the school year as students clearly needed to get back into the routine and to develop some rapport with their new teacher.

COMPREHENSION- HOW DO STUDENTS UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY READ AND VIEW?

'We know that although many students are accurate and fluent decoders, this does not always translate into having a good understanding of the text.' (Sheena Cameron 2009).

The good news is that comprehension strategies can be explicitly taught. Our goal is for students to have a 'toolbox' of strategies to enable them to become active and engaged readers and viewers.

A New Zealand Literacy expert, Sheena Cameron, lists a 'toolbox' of 9 key strategies:

- **Activating prior knowledge** (what do I already know about this topic?)
- Self-monitoring (recognising when I don't understand a word, phrase or paragraph and knowing how to solve that)
- **Predicting**
- **Questioning**
- **Making connections**
- **Visualising**
- **Inferring**
- **Summarising**
- **Synthesising**



St Kieran's teachers are armed with some new, excellent resources that specifically investigate these strategies, aiming to enable students to see that they can work out the meaning of what they read or view.

Let's look at Visualising....

Visualising is when a reader uses their prior knowledge and experiences AND the clues in the text to create a mental image of what the words are conveying.

Language when visualising:

- In my mind, I see....
- I can imagine...
- The movie in my head shows...
- Add detail by using the other senses : I can feel/taste/hear/smell/

Here's a visualising task to try with your children...You go first!

- Take turns to describe something that happened during the day....it might be something you saw on the way to work, or a dog you noticed playing at the park.
- Your child draws what they 'see' as you talk. They can ask questions to clarify (was it a large or small dog?)

Now it's your turn to listen and draw....then share and enjoy!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – TEACHING THE SCRIPTURES

Many of us may be familiar with Lectio Divina (Latin for divine words). Lectio Divina is a prayer process whereby we read the Sacred Scriptures and contemplate the meaning of words and their application to our lives. A variation of Lectio Divina is Visio Divina.

All our teachers are exploring the use of Visio Divina (Latin for divine seeing) as a means of prayerful reflection with students. Beginning with Scripture from their module of learning, teachers then find an age appropriate image or art work that captures the essence of the Scripture. The children are then asked a series of questions and discussion is facilitated to help them understand not just the story of the scripture but the meaning and relevance to their lives.



Year 1 this week used an image of the disciples throwing their net to the right side of the boat for Visio Divina. Jesus, the carpenter, was instructing the fisherman from the shore. Themes that emerged from the discussion included friendship, trust, surprise and thanksgiving. The children were able to successfully 'read the image'.

This link provides further information about Visio Divina;

<https://episcopalprayer.wordpress.com/visio-divina/>