



Term 3 2017

Embrace Equip Engage Empower

Included in this issue:

Page 1

Learning Principles

Page 2

Flexible Groups in Teaching and Learning

Page 3

The Noble Art of Parenting

The Learning Quarterly (LQ) is published during Fallow Week each term. The purpose is to highlight and explore current practices in education within the St Kieran's context. It is one of the many ways we keep you engaged in your child's learning.

In Term 1, the LQ focus was on the importance of parent engagement and ways you can be involved in supporting your child to do better at school. Last term I wrote about the way learning and teaching has changed over the past 5-10 years to what is now referred to as 21st Century Learning. This term, I would like to focus on principles of learning, especially in the context of our Broken Bay Community of Schools and how that looks here at St Kieran's. The Learning Principles are a product of research, consultation and conversations among professional learning communities.

The purpose of the Learning Principles is to articulate a shared language that will assist our community to inspire learning into the future. The principles are based on a collaborative approach to learning, involving a partnership between families, learners and educators. They are there to sustain and deepen a culture that treasures the joy of learning and continues to nurture this joy to the students in our school.

The purpose of education is to allow our students to become fully alive human beings that are functioning to their potential in all aspects of their lives; intellectually, spiritually, physically and emotionally. In our Catholic context, we believe that relationships built on Christ-centred values determine how we support each other in achieving this potential. The values of respect, compassion, understanding and community are just some of those that we see as integral to learning at St Kieran's.

There are six learning principles that we believe are core for the learner at the centre. These are:

1. **Thinking** – learning is a product of thinking
2. **Collaboration** – collaboration enhances learning
3. **Agency** – learners must have agency (ownership) in their learning
4. **Dispositions** – learning dispositions are as important as skills and knowledge
5. **Challenge** – learning happens at the point of challenge
6. **Contextual** – learning is contextual

This year as part of professional learning program, our staff has been exploring the theoretical and practical aspects of thinking through the work of Ron Ritchhart and his project Cultures of Thinking. Thinking routines provide the students with ways of delving deeper into issues and topics, allowing them to *think about their thinking* and how this enables them to learn more deeply.

Last year's successful School Review at St Kieran's required us to set goals for the next three years in the areas of Learning and Teaching, Pastoral Care and Catholic Mission. Our three year goal in Learning and Teaching is very much focused on these learning principles; *to increase student ownership of learning in order to improve outcomes.*

While these learning principles have implications for the teachers and students, I would like to share the implications they have for our families in supporting our children and working in partnership with the school.

1. In relation to *Learning as a product of thinking*, as families we:
 - Share and model our passion for learning
 - Expose children to multiple perspectives, experiences and cultures
 - Encourage our children to question and reflect on their learning
 - See errors and mistakes as an important part of the learning process
2. In relation to *Collaboration enhancing learning*, as families we:
 - Partner with the school to bring about the best learning outcomes for our young people
 - Create a stimulating and supportive home learning environment
 - Encourage children to have positive and enduring friendships and to develop respectful relationships with teachers
3. In relation to *Learners having agency in their learning*, as families we:
 - Support our children to become independent learners
 - Ask questions that challenge our learners to seek their own answers
 - Respond positively to mistakes, helping young people to see them as opportunities to learn
4. In relation to *Learning dispositions being important as skills and knowledge*, as families we:
 - Encourage and model curiosity and perseverance
 - Communicate positive expectations and confidence in children's ability
 - Nurture social and emotional learning skills in our children
5. In relation to *Learning happening at the point of challenge*, as families we:
 - Know that challenge can be uncomfortable, but trust that challenge is good for our children
 - Support our children to take calculated risks in their learning
 - Provide feedback about the importance of process rather than outcome
6. In relation to *Learning being contextual*, as families we:
 - Support children to make links between the school and the wider world
 - Draw attention to similarities and connections between the known and the new

I hope that you can see the importance of partnership and collaboration between home and school in ensuring the best outcomes for our children. I hope to share a full copy of the Learning Principles with our school community as soon as they are officially launched.



Flexible Groups in Teaching and Learning

This year the Co teaching program has taken a slightly different turn for our Year Five and Six classes.

Co-teaching forms part of Professional Learning for our teachers and involves teachers collaborating as part of a team to analyse student data then plan, program and teach. This program involves grade teachers working with the Literacy Coordinator (Mary Brown) or the Numeracy Coordinator (Marisa Bombardieri).

The program is usually worked on, and implemented over the course of a term and is advantageous on many levels. Teachers share their expertise to create programs that differentiate in

order to meet needs at required levels. The close analysis of data at the start of this process ensures that the planning is targeted to provide an appropriate level of challenge for the students. Teachers working together in the classroom delivering the program facilitate a multidimensional approach to analysing the success of the program and informing future teaching and learning for those particular students.

For the students in Year 5 and Year 6, the program has been implemented across the stage. This means that rather than working with separate grades, the teachers met with the coordinator and focused on all students in Stage 3. Data was analysed closely and students were grouped according to needs. Strategies were then explored and planned for the different groups then implemented by one of the five teachers who were part of the planning process. Assessment tasks provided evidence for follow up analysis and reflection before future planning was considered.

The learning space in our Stage 3 area provided ample room for the groupings and the use of flexible furniture meant that smaller or larger groups could either meet to work independently on tasks or meet to discuss or reflect on learning.

This method of co-teaching across the stage enables greater accuracy when differentiating the program in that there is scope for improved teacher, student ratio. This type of teaching across the Stage also caters for the diversity of learners more succinctly. The collaborative planning process undertaken by the teachers ensures that resources and stimulus materials are identified and selected to best fit the purpose. It ensures the delivery of a range of strategies appropriate for students with different learning needs and levels of achievement.

This approach has worked particularly well in the KLAs of English and Mathematics, but has scope for implementation across other KLAs. Working across the Stage promotes flexible learning experiences and encourages students to work at their own pace to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills.



The Noble Art of Parenting

The responsibility that goes with raising healthy, content and well-balanced children can sometimes feel overwhelming for parents. Technology and the ease with which we are all connected means that parents are often inundated with advice and societal expectations. The missing link however, is the informal support that parents received from neighbours and/or extended family. Changes in society have led to an increased feeling of detachment. All of these factors appear to be contributing to the development of a sense of anxiety towards parenting in the 21st century.

Families currently are facing increasing time and money pressures. In the majority of households, both parents are working and this in itself means there is less time for communication with or even support from extended family. Family structures are becoming more varied too, as many children grow up in single-parent or co-parenting situations. This is modern parenting and it is challenging!

There isn't a one size fits all solution to this as family dynamics, standards and expectations as well as a family's economic situation all play a part in how different families cope.

There are maybe just a few key practices that may well be the "glue" to supporting and promoting whatever solutions work for your family!

- Eat dinner as a family as much as possible. Children learn valuable communication skills and life-lessons around the dinner table. No technology at the dinner table!
- Ask questions. Get to know your child. You might be surprised by what they're thinking.
- Model kindness. Model the type of characteristics you hope to see in your children.
- Set boundaries and appropriate consequences for your children. The goal is to *modify* behaviour by setting clear expectations and by following up. Children will test the boundaries you set. Stay consistent.
- Put your kids to bed on time. They need the sleep and you need time to recharge your batteries. Create a bedtime routine and stick to it.

