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Ministry Of Teaching



EDITORIAL

Lana Hibbard

A quality assessment task is one that promotes student learning whilst being both fair and ethical. If my assessment tasks are to reach this standard, I must ensure that the student is fully aware of the assessment process prior to the commencement of any assessment. Students need to know what will be assessed, when it will be assessed, how it will be assessed, and importantly, how it will be marked.

I have fallen in love with the beauty of rubrics as a tool for combining student learning and assessment. I am drawn to the way a rubric clearly articulates the key criteria of a given performance and describes performance at various levels of competency; giving students access to “insider” information as they prepare for a task. For the teacher, a rubric minimises subjectivity and increases consistency in grading, thus contributing to fairness.

Despite the wealth of information contained within, there are always a few who fail to take notice of the rubric and thus fail to address key performance criteria. Some of these may believe they have done well only to find they missed the point. God has given a set of guiding criteria to support us in the development of our lives. Nevertheless, just like my students, many will show that they have not made themselves familiar with the marking scheme. “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3:17 NIV). Whatever it is we do in life, there is one criteria that we must address if we are to pass God’s assessment, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33 KJV). If you fail to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Mark 12:30 NIV), you’re going to score poorly.

Although I love rubrics, I’ve concluded that God uses quite different methods in His judgement of me.

A rubric allows me to be more reliable in my judgement of a student’s performance. I can determine which and to what extent, criteria are present in a performance; however, I cannot assess what was happening inside the student as he / she constructed the response. God, on the other hand, is not limited to measurable outcomes. As the Lord said to Samuel, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7 NIV). While people can only see the outward appearance of actions, God can see the heart from which actions spring. Can I trust God, as my

assessor? Abraham knew the answer, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25 NIV).

The feedback contained in a rubric plainly shows what a learner did well and what they should continue to work on. This contributes to the development of an independent learner who is able to set goals and self-monitor performance, thus facilitating future success. All this pales into absolute insignificance, however, compared to the feedback from God’s assessment. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’” (Matt 25:34 NIV).

Unlike my rubrics, God’s assessment allows for only two levels of performance. My actions are either approved by God, or not approved by Him. They are either pleasing or displeasing to Him. I will be found faultless or sinful. There is no middle ground. The Laodiceans were told, “Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:16 NIV). My rubrics are constructed to accommodate the level of competence of the students but God’s criteria calls for a standard that is beyond my ability—I can never achieve the ‘perfect’ band. The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23 NIV). None can do well enough to gain God’s approval. When the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus replied, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:25–26 NIV).

My rubrics usually value hard work and originality and discourage plagiarism. God, on the other hand, encourages all to plagiarise. Jesus has done the task, it is finished, we just have to put our name on it and hand it in. “God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!” (Eph 2:4–5 NLT)

If I accept this free offer, I cannot fail. **TEACH**

“**Jesus has done the task, it is finished, we just have to put our name on it and hand it in**”



[Photography: Ann Stafford]

Student peer bullying

A brief overview of the problem and some associated myths

Kevin Petrie

Educator and PhD Student, Melbourne, Vic

Over the past few years the news media has increasingly highlighted the problem of peer bullying in schools. Within school communities there is a considerable divergence of opinion as to how it should be viewed and what should be done to address it. Research in the area of bullying began to flourish following the pioneering work of Dan Olweus in the early 1970s and has sufficient depth to provide considerable direction to schools. In the last 20 years, a number of researchers in New Zealand and Australia have contributed substantially to the growing body of knowledge. This article takes a brief overview of the problem and examines a number of the associated myths about bullying, in the light of recent research.

“Australia and New Zealand were placed in the top five countries with the worst reported incidence of school bullying”

Identifying the problem

Various media have recently highlighted a report from the “*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*” which included data on bullying collected from 36 countries (Jensen & Browne, 2008). It was concerning to note that Australia and New Zealand were placed in the top five countries with the worst reported incidence of school bullying. While any survey on bullying can be subjective by nature, these results are in line with numerous other studies from both countries which highlight the widespread problem that exists throughout our school system. Studies in Australia (Rigby, 2007; 35) have shown that around 50% of children experience bullying in some form. New Zealand research involving 2,066 secondary students (Adair et al., 2000), reported that 75% of students had been bullied, and 44% admitted bullying others, at some time during their schooling. It must be noted that these figures include children who may have been bullied infrequently or for only a limited time, and a number who report the personal effects of the bullying as minimal. Of particular concern is the small percentage of children who are bullied regularly and often—over long periods of time. From extensive work with Australian schools, Rigby (2007; 35) concludes that about 1 in 5 children are victimised by peers on a regular basis.

Of equal concern is the common reaction in response to the reported survey, *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*. New South Wales Education Minister, Verity Frith, was reported as saying that she had strengthened principals’ powers to deal with bullying, “increasing suspension periods to 20 days” (Jensen & Browne, 2008). She goes on to say that, “New South Wales schools are safe places and bullying and stealing are not tolerated”. Such statements arguably indicate a gap in understanding both the extent of the problem and the steps needed to address it. The claim that many schools make in having a ‘zero tolerance’ towards bullying usually does little in itself to minimise it. The increase in public awareness doesn’t appear to coincide with an equal growth in understanding.

This misunderstanding over the seriousness of school bullying is also evident within the schools themselves. Oliver et al. (2001) surveyed middle and high school students in a number of small-town Midwestern schools in the United States. Many who admitted to bullying behaviour justified their actions by saying they believed the victims brought it upon themselves. They considered what they were doing was mostly in fun, and some even felt that bullying was helpful by making kids tougher.

A survey of principals by Flynt and Morton (2008) revealed that 88% believed bullying was a minor problem in their school. There is often a significant gap between the perception of staff and that of students. A major study by Bradshaw et al. (2007) involved collecting information from students and staff in 75 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, and 14 high schools. The total sample was 15,185 students (grades 4–8) and 1,547 staff members. Over 49% of children reported being bullied and 30.9% reported bullying at least once during the past month. Just over 40% of bullies and 23% of victims described their experiences as frequent. In contrast to these figures, 70% of staff estimated the amount of bullying to be 15% or less. It was also of interest that over 86% of staff believed they had effective strategies for handling bullying situations, whereas most students reported that staff intervention

usually made things worse. The vast majority of staff believed their intervention efforts were making the necessary difference, while most students felt their school was not doing enough. Additional data considered significant was that 13% of staff believed bullying was just a part of life that everyone has to go through, 53% reported having been bullied as a child and 22% reported having been bullied as an adult while working at the school.

This gap in perception is highlighted by Simons (2002, 25) in her research into “girl aggression”. In interviewing large numbers of students, it became evident that many victims were being quietly isolated without the teacher being aware.

If girls are whispering, the teacher thinks it's going to be all right because they're not hitting people. If they punch, they get sent to the office. Teachers think they're not hurting you...but they are.

Simons proceeds to offer this perceptive analogy:

At once I was reminded of scary movies in which only children can see the ghost. The adults pass through the same rooms and live the same moments, yet they are unable to see a whole world of action around them. So, too, in classrooms... victims are desperately alone even though a teacher is just steps away.

Dealing with bullying in schools needs to run deeper than the implementation of a particular program or an impressive zero tolerance policy. It needs to include the effort of getting down to the next layer and striving to understand school life from the students' perspective while remaining open to the development of whole-school practices that can significantly impact this next level of the social environment.

Bullying defined

It's important to carefully define bullying since not everything unpleasant that happens to a child at school fits this particular category. There are a number of accepted definitions, all containing the idea that bullying consists of “repeated negative actions or treatment by a more powerful person or group against someone who cannot effectively resist” (Rigby et al., 1997).

Power may arise from superior strength, maturity, peer status or peer support. It can be physical in nature, verbal, or indirect—through social aggression (Olweus, 1991). Social aggression can manifest itself through exclusion, rumour spreading, or the use of ‘relationships as a weapon’ (Simmons, 2002; 3). There are at least three features to help identify bullying behaviour (Flynt & Morton, 2008):

1. The harassment of the victim occurs over time;

2. The acts are harmful;
3. An imbalance of power is apparent.

Table 1 summarises forms of bullying which may occur (Rigby, 2007, 20; Sullivan, 2000, 14).

Cyberbullying

It is generally accepted that social and technological change provides further opportunities for the predatory behaviour of some people (Broad & Butterfield, 2001). Cyberbullying is defined as the “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). It is sobering to realise that students are potentially threatened with bullying and predation any time they are online or communicate electronically. The power of the bully comes, in part, through being able to remain anonymous (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

The safety and security of being behind a computer screen appears to free individuals from some of the traditional constraining morals and ethics that would normally moderate face to face behaviour (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). A survey by Patchin and Hinduja (2006) that drew 571 respondents revealed 11% who reported bullying others online and 29% who reported being the victim of online bullying. Cyberbullying was reported as being most common in chat rooms, followed by computer text messages, email and bulletin boards. The use of a cell phone to bully was relatively low compared to these other means. Studies have shown that, like traditional school bullying, there are real consequences for the victims, including school problems and delinquency (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

The West Australian Government last year promised \$400,000 towards what is claimed to be a world-first study into the prevention of cyber bullying among children and young people (Youth Studies Australia, 2008).

Myth-busters

Over the years, a number of myths have continued to proliferate regarding student peer bullying. Myths often take on a life of their own, and are most effective when there is a sliver of truth woven within.

Myth 1: Bullying doesn't occur at our school

“Bullying occurs in all schools to a greater degree than most people acknowledge” (Sullivan, 2000, 15). To admit this is an important first step for schools to take. Not all schools suffer the same amount of bullying, with some being considerably better than others. Olweus (1993) reports schools where the extent of bullying was four to five times higher than another school within the same community.

“Dealing with bullying in schools needs to run deeper than the implementation of a particular program or an impressive zero tolerance policy”

Table 1: Forms of bullying

	Direct	Indirect
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hitting • spitting • throwing objects • biting • pulling hair • locking in a room • pinching • pushing • scratching • property damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting another person to commit direct physical acts
Non-physical verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal insults • name calling • abusive language • abusive telephone calls • abusive electronic messages • extortion • intimidation • racist remarks • sexually suggestive remarks • spiteful teasing • sending poisonous notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spreading rumours • persuading another person to insult someone
Non-verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threatening gestures • obscene gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignoring • isolating • deliberate exclusion from group or activity • manipulating and / or ruining friendships • removing and hiding belongings

“*It is odd that we don't generally tolerate abuse in other parts of society or claim it to have positive effects, yet often accept it as a part of school life for children*”

A study by Orpinas et al. (2003) reports on a school-wide approach to create a more positive environment in a large public elementary school. This resulted in a 40% reduction in self-reported aggression, and a 19% reduction in self reported victimisation, among the younger children.

Myth 2: Bullying is character building. It helps develop resilience and teaches children to stand up for themselves.

Bullying, like other forms of abuse, relies on an imbalance of power. It results in isolation and the lowering of self-esteem, until many feel worthless (Sullivan, 2000, 15). It is odd that we don't generally tolerate abuse in other parts of society or claim it to have positive effects, yet often accept it as a part of school life for children, who are most vulnerable.

Effects of bullying on the victim

Children who are bullied suffer a significant increase in a wide variety of health issues. Studies such

as those by Williams et al. (1996) and Due et al. (2005) show that victimised children are much more likely to suffer from sleeping problems, bed wetting, headaches, tummy aches, and depressive symptoms. Increased frequency of bullying was shown to have a significant correlation for all reported health problems.

There is convincing evidence of a link between bullying and rates of suicide (Rigby, 2007, 56). This was recently highlighted by the Australian media (e.g. Herald Sun, February 26, 2009) in reporting the suicide of 17 year-old Allem Halkic, who took his life earlier this year. His parents reported evidence of cyberbullying in the weeks before his death. Also quoted in the same media article is youth worker Les Twentyman who claims to know of 10 teenagers who have taken their lives in the past 8 months due to cyberbullying. A Korean study by Kim et al. (2005) reported an increase in suicidal behaviours and / or ideation of 1.9 times the normal for children who are regularly bullied and / or bully.

Research by Vossekui et al. (2002) demonstrates a strong link between traditional bullying victims and serious forms of school violence. In two thirds of the 37 shootings in the USA that occurred between 1974 and 1999, the shooters felt “persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others prior to the incident” (Vossekui et al., 2002, 7). Following the fatal shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, the challenge to address bullying gained momentum in the USA with the revelation that the two teens involved in the massacre had been ostracised by many of their classmates.

The feelings of isolation and the loss of self-esteem can follow the victims into adulthood (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). Dietz (1994) completed research showing that adults who were bullied as children suffered from significantly more depression and exhibited increased difficulty in forming close, intimate relationships. A significant link has also been found between being bullied at school and being at risk of being bullied in later life (Smith et al., 2003).

It is true that a number of children are able to shrug off incidences of bullying, particularly at the mild end of the scale. However, to ignore its effect on many others due to a faulty perception that all children need to do is ‘toughen up’, simply encourages the continuance of the cycle of abuse that happens all too frequently within schools.

Effects of bullying on the perpetrator

A study by Olweus (1999) showed that around 60% of children characterised as bullies in year 6–9 were convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24. This compares to 23% who were not characterised as either bullies or victims. In addition, 40% of bullies had three or more convictions by the age of 24, compared to 10% who had no involvement in bullying.

A study by Pepler et al. (2001) revealed that adolescents who bully others are almost five times more likely to report alcohol use and around seven times more likely to report using drugs than their peers. It is perhaps unsurprising that a correlation exists linking those who bully in elementary school to those who bully at high school and college level (Chapell et al., 2006). There is also evidence to suggest adolescents who frequently bully others are at high risk for transferring these relationship patterns to other forms of power and aggression, such as workplace harassment, domestic violence and child abuse (Pepler et al., 2006). A survey of 5288 adults in Great Britain (Smith et al., 2003) demonstrated a link between those who bully at school and those who go on to bully in the

workplace. Pepler et al. (2008a) comments on this important link:

Children who persistently bully have failed to learn critical relationship skills and attitudes. Such children experience a wide range of physical and mental health problems and are in need of focused support to enable them to move on to healthy relationships—the foundation of well-being throughout the lifespan.

It is significant to note that bullies suffer from many of the same overall health problems that the victim does, including more psychosocial issues than their peers (Holt et al., 2007). The most-at-risk group are the bully-victims, who both bully and are bullied by others.

Myth 3: Teachers know how to handle bullying. They’re trained to deal with it.

Most teachers haven’t received training in how to deal with bullying. A New Zealand study by Adair et al. (2000) found a relatively small percentage of children reported bullying and perceived teachers as intervening infrequently. Many students believe that teachers are quite unable to help resolve cases of bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007). It’s not surprising that most (particularly older students) are unwilling to inform teachers if they are bullied, or if they observe bullying taking place.

Myth 4: We were just having fun! Can’t you take a joke?

While the perpetrators may perceive they are just having fun, the effects on the victim remain. Naturally, there is playful teasing that happens between friends that can be harmless. However, school communities need to clearly understand the difference between this, and the victimisation that can occur in the name of ‘having fun’.

Blanco (2008, 41–42), in reflecting on her own experiences at school, writes the following poignant comments:

There are millions of others who are just as ashamed and embarrassed about it as I am. We work, we dream, we marry, have kids and grow old, and rarely does anyone ever suspect the truth. Our classmates put a hole in us, and our self-esteem keeps falling out...Everyone needs to feel they belong. When you denied us that, you stole something that we have spent out entire lives trying to get back...And the worst part is that most of you never meant to hurt us. You probably don’t even remember making fun of us.

Myth 5: Everything unpleasant that happens between children is bullying.

There are many times that interpersonal problems which occur between children do not fit the bullying

“Adults who were bullied as children suffered from significantly more depression and exhibited increased difficulty in forming close intimate relationships”

category. They may still be very hurtful and in need of teacher intervention, but it's important not to confuse them with bullying. Time and care needs to be taken to distinguish accurately between the two.

Myth 6: Bullies are all 'thick kids' from dysfunctional homes and are pathologically destined to malign others

Researchers acknowledge a wide range of factors that can cause bullying to occur. These include developmental, genetic, environmental and social factors. It is certainly true that particular groups are over-represented, such as children who experience dysfunctional family life in which they feel unloved and / or overly controlled (Rigby, 2003). These children may grow up without experiencing or developing empathy and therefore struggle to have empathetic regard for others. Low cooperativeness is another characteristic that can be a predictor of bullying behaviour (Rigby et al., 1997).

In many cases, bullies present as ordinary kids who target people who are different from themselves and "seek to exploit those differences" (Aluede et al., 2008). Although some bullies are themselves disliked, many are popular and socially skilled students whose 'put downs' of certain students gives them approval from their peers and additional social status. Their ability to use their social skills in positive student-teacher relationships often makes them less likely to be identified as a potential bully. In short, bullying problems need to be seen as arising from "complex interpersonal dynamics rather than simply from a child's problems with aggression" (Pepler et al., 2008a).

Another distinction was made by Rigby (2007, 17) when he coined the phrases "non-malign bullying" and "malign bullying". Non-malign bullying can be associated with "mindless bullying" where the perpetrator isn't motivated by malice and does not exhibit the typical hostility. However, it needs to be remembered that the hurt and distress experienced by the victim is just as real.

Myth 7: Bully victims are kids who have been over-protected and are just too sensitive.

Just as there is a wide range of reasons why bullying occurs, there is an equally wide range of reasons why a person becomes a victim. Sullivan (2000, 26) identifies three groups who are over-represented in the group. Firstly, there are the children who are inclined to be introverted, suffer from low self-esteem, and have less social skills such as assertiveness. Secondly, there are children who tend to be provocative, causing tension and irritation around them. Thirdly, there is the most at-risk group, the bully / victims who, being stronger and more confident, bully others and are bullied. Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) note that victimised children may

come from families that are over-protective or over-involved in their child's life because of the anxiety and insecurity they recognise in their child. Two studies completed by Rigby et al. (1997) identified a lack of cooperation that, as well as being an identifying trait of bullies, was also a characteristic of many victims. There are also children who are bullied simply because they are different from the dominant peer group in some way.

Myth 8: Bullying is predominantly a boy's problem

Aggressive behaviour in girls has long been considered not as prevalent as in boys. However, some believe there may be measurement concerns with the self-report questionnaires often used (Pepler et al., 2006). In some observational research, the difference between the rates of bullying of boys and girls is not as great as previous surveys indicate (Pepler et al., 2004, cited in Pepler et al., 2008b).

There is certainly a marked difference in the way boys and girls bully (Owens & MacMullin, 1995). Boys use more direct aggression, while girls use more indirect approaches such as exclusion and the manipulation of friendships.

Simmons (2002, 3) concludes that this hidden aggression is "epidemic, distinctive, and destructive".

Within the hidden culture of aggression, girls fight with body language and relationships instead of fists and knives. In this world, friendship is a weapon, and the sting of a shout pales in comparison to a day of someone's silence. There is no gesture more devastating than the back turning away.

In Conclusion

Every school should recognise the extent of bullying and take the necessary steps to prevent it. There is evidence that appropriate school interventions can make a significant impact on the incidence of bullying. As long as bullying is downplayed or ignored, students will continue to suffer harm that can cause lifelong damage to both victims and those who bully (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008). **TEACH**

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Domestic violence

An important social issue for schools

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Teachers and school communities can have a positive impact on the lives of students who live in homes where domestic violence occurs. By understanding the dynamics involved and the impacts of domestic violence on children and young people, teachers and schools will be better equipped to deal with this important social issue.

“*Any pattern of behaviour that is used to dominate or control another, most commonly by inducing fear, is domestic violence and constitutes abuse*”

Prevalence

Domestic violence is not a new social issue. Studies estimate that 23% of Australian women who are married or live in a de facto relationship have been exposed to domestic violence at some point in the relationship (ABS, 1996). Even more disturbing is that 61% of women who reported violence by a present partner also reported having children in their care (ABS, 1996; Laing, 2000). Internationally, it is estimated that one in three to one in ten families experience domestic violence (Tomison, 2000).

Mistakenly, there is a widespread belief that if a child or young person lives in a household where domestic violence exists, they are not harmed unless physical abuse is extended towards them. This assumption is incorrect and it ignores the devastating effects that can occur when children are exposed to such violence (Laing, 2000; Tomison, 2000).

Domestic violence: What is it really?

Domestic violence does not just include physical assault. In fact, physical assault usually only occurs late in the cycle of violence and in some circumstances partners have never actually physically assaulted their spouse. To understand the impact that domestic violence can have on children, young people and women, in the absence of physical assault, it is important to note that domestic violence is essentially about power and control.

An abuse of power perpetrated mainly (but not always) by men against women in a relationship and after separation. It occurs when one partner attempts physically or psychologically to

dominate and control the other. Domestic violence takes a number of forms. The most commonly acknowledged forms are physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse and economic deprivation. (Bullen, 2003, p. 25)

This means that domestic violence includes physical violence such as hitting, punching, choking, kicking, inflicting burns or using weapons. However, it can also incorporate being raped, being forced to perform humiliating acts during sex (sexual abuse), having to beg for money for basic necessities, withholding money or assets (economic abuse), limiting a partner's ability to access and spend time with friends and family, constant questioning about where a partner has been (social abuse), belittling and humiliating, threatening violence and intimidating behaviour (psychological abuse). In essence, any pattern of behaviour that is used to dominate and control another, most commonly by inducing fear, is domestic violence and constitutes abuse.

Domestic violence as a gendered crime

It is impossible to understand the impact of domestic violence and ways to combat it unless we acknowledge that this is usually a gendered crime where the majority of perpetrators are men (Bullen, 2003; James, 1996; Tomison, 2000; Weeks, 2000).

Despite its explosive nature, men are often not afraid of women's violence and may mock and laugh at their wives' aggression... Women, however do fear male violence. Apparently, it is clear to many men that they are ultimately in control, even when their wives are violent... While violent women experience themselves as out of control, violent men experience themselves as asserting the ultimate control over their partners. (James, 1996, p. 123)

Thus, domestic violence is not an anger management issue as is often mistakenly believed. Domestic violence is violence that is used by someone who is in control of his or her anger and

uses a pattern of behaviour to extend power over another in an intimate relationship and is more often used by men in this context (James, 1996). For example, a man who shuts every window in the house so that his neighbours do not hear him assaulting his wife, would demonstrate that he is in control of his anger and is deliberately using his physical strength to control his wife's future actions, and thus would be guilty of domestic violence. However, if this same wife hit back at her partner to protect herself or hit back in anger and frustration at her mistreatment, she would not be guilty of perpetrating domestic violence.

Weeks (2000) asserts that domestic violence is a gendered crime due to underlying beliefs in wider society that see men in a position of entitlement. Widespread gender inequality still exists and is often seen as normal or viewed as acceptable. This is evidenced when men are seen as the head of the home and entitled to extend control over other family members (Armstrong, 1986; Ranke-Heinemann, 1991) or when bullying is overlooked when perpetrated by men and boys as it is seen as 'normal' behaviour and as a masculine trait (Mills, 2001).

Christians and domestic violence

Christian families in Christian schools are not immune to experiencing domestic violence or other forms of abuse. We know that domestic violence transcends the boundaries of economic status, religious beliefs and cultural background.

In fact, Christianity can increase the likelihood that women and children will experience violence from a partner, as historically, the church has viewed women and children as subordinate (Armstrong, 1986; Ranke-Heinemann, 1991), and even now, women are not viewed as equal in many of the church structures. Oppressive behaviour towards women is usually justified by Biblical passages such as Ephesians 5:22–24, often with instruction by Paul in verse 25 for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church being forgotten or neglected.

The importance of the nuclear family within western Christian communities means that attitudes towards the marital relationship can see the marital relationship valued above the wellbeing and ultimate safety of women and children. These beliefs can expect women and children to remain in an abusive relationship no matter what the circumstances or personal cost (Livingstone, 2002; Wendt, 2008). Even the more liberal Christian leaders and communities often misunderstand the dynamics of domestic violence; believing only physical violence constitutes abuse and thus gives reason to separate from a spouse. Most underestimate the huge impact

and devastating effects that non-physical forms of domestic violence can have on women, children, young people and even the men who abuse.

Effects of domestic violence on children and young people

The effects of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people are often brought to the forefront at school. Domestic violence can have a range of effects from decreased educational performance and behavioural problems towards teachers and other students, to internalised and self-destructive behaviour (Johnson et al., 2002; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Laing, 2000; Tomison, 2000).

Laing (2000) states that children and young people who live with domestic violence, consistently display a range of behavioural and emotional problems when compared to children who do not live with domestic violence. These include aggression, acting out, antisocial type behaviour, depression and / or anxiety (Humphreys, 2007; Johnson et al., 2002; Laing, 2000; Tomison, 2000). It is important to point out that depression and anxiety are often overlooked in school settings, as they may not present behaviour management problems in the classroom or the playground (Laing, 2000).

Longer-term implications of exposure to domestic violence can be profound. Children learn from the behaviours displayed at home, with exposure to domestic violence being a strong indicator of violence in adolescence and adulthood. Witnessing domestic violence teaches children that violence is an acceptable means of conflict resolution and is part of family relationships (Osofsky, 1995). Furthermore, since perpetrators often avoid punishment or consequences, children may interpret violence as an acceptable way to control or manipulate people (Osofsky, 1995). In addition, witnessing domestic violence as a child increases the likelihood that the child will form adult relationships that are violent. Boys who observe a male parent / caregiver perpetrating domestic violence have an increased likelihood of becoming perpetrators themselves in adulthood.

It is imperative that teachers never underestimate the impact of domestic violence, as outsiders are never able to ascertain the full extent of any given situation. For example, just because a child or young person does not witness the violence being extended towards the mother does not mean that the child or young person does not hear the screams, hear the destruction, see weapons in the home or cognitively understand how these are used. The impact on a child living in an environment where tension exists, where intimidation and control are continually exerted, where isolation is likely and

“Witnessing domestic violence teaches children that violence is an acceptable means of conflict resolution and is part of family relationships”

where the likelihood of other abuse occurring to the child is increased should never be minimised, and should always be taken seriously (Humphreys, 2007; Laing, 2000; Tomison, 2000).

It is important to flag that not all children or young people are affected in the same way and that there is a danger of over-pathologising (Humphreys, 2007). Some children and young people do manage relatively well living in a traumatic environment. The discrepancy is often attributed to differences in severity and contexts within which children and young people live (Humphreys, 2007; Laing, 2000).

Why women don't leave

The reality is that women do leave violent relationships; however, significant barriers make leaving difficult. The biggest barrier is that leaving is often the most dangerous time for a woman and her children (Humphreys, 2007). Humphreys (2007) reports that 76% of homicides related to domestic violence occurred at a time that involved separation. Studies show that the time of separation is a time where violence and sexual assault increase dramatically (Humphreys, 2007).

Other reasons that women stay in violent relationships may include limited access to money or resources that would enable a woman to leave, low self-esteem, perceived dependence due to years of abuse, social stigma, questions about the custody of the children, and feelings of powerlessness (Humphreys, 2007; Laing, 2000).

Laing (2000) suggests that communities need to shift the focus away from 'why a mother does not leave' to, 'why a man uses violence which harms all members of a family' (Laing, 2000, p 22). The underlying belief that women are primarily responsible for the welfare of children and for family difficulties also needs to be challenged (Laing, 2000). This belief actually aids and condones violent behaviour and renders invisible perpetrators of such violence (Laing, 2000; Weeks, 2000).

Recognising signs that a child may be exposed to domestic violence at home

Children respond to domestic violence in different ways, with some appearing relatively unaffected and others displaying a range of psychopathology or adjustment issues (Horner, 2005). Generally, the impact of domestic violence on a child will vary according to the child's developmental level, the frequency and severity of the violence, the availability of the mother or other support and the relationship of the perpetrator to the child (Baker et al., 2002; Horner, 2005; Osofsky, 1995).

Some indicators that a child is experiencing domestic violence may include:

- Frequent or extreme anger for no apparent reason, or anger that does not match the

severity of the situation. Children are rarely angry for no reason; however, their anger may be expressed at a superficial cause;

- Sadness or depression;
 - Passivity;
 - Avoiding going home, spending extended hours at school or at friends' homes;
 - Lack of concentration at school;
 - Constant tiredness in the classroom;
 - Attempts to intimidate or control other students or teachers (bullying behaviour);
 - Physical injuries;
 - Changes in behaviour;
 - Difficulty focusing on tasks in the classroom;
 - Constant worrying over the safety of people they are close to;
 - Withdrawal from friends and activities;
 - Complaining of vague somatic symptoms such as stomach ache or headache;
 - Strong stereotyped beliefs of masculinity (aggressor) and femininity (weak / victim).
- (Baker et al., 2002; Horner, 2005; Osofsky, 1995).

Adolescents may display behaviours that reflect their feelings of rage, shame, betrayal and powerlessness. These are often manifested in rebellious 'high risk' behaviours such as:

- High levels of aggression;
- Criminal activities;
- Alcohol and illicit drug abuse;
- Truancy and / or leaving the home;
- Dating violence;
- Suicidal thoughts.

(Baker et al., 2002; Horner, 2005).

It is important to note that these indicators are general and may indicate the student is experiencing other problems such as separation of parents or other types of trauma. Therefore, it is important not to assume what is happening but to either speak with the student or refer them to someone, such as a school counsellor, who may be able to assist.

What should teachers do if they suspect a student is experiencing domestic violence?

Teachers, as primary caregivers, are in a unique position to assist with identifying students who are experiencing domestic violence and in offering appropriate interventions and referrals to services that can minimise the impact of domestic violence on the student (Horner, 2005).

Every context will be different and appropriate action will depend on the signs the teacher notices, the student's age and behaviour, the relationship the teacher has with that student and the particular skills of the teacher. However, if a teacher suspects something is not right for the student, it is generally acceptable to talk to the student and ask what is troubling them. Genuine concern and a safe environment (private space) will make it more likely

“Communities need to shift the focus away from 'why a mother does not leave' to 'why a man uses violence which harms all members of a family'”

a student will disclose abuse (if this is happening for them). Keep in mind that the student may not reveal the situation the first time you speak with them; let them know that if they need to talk in the future, you will listen.

Given the dynamics of domestic violence and the fear that goes with it, it is important that the student feels you are not only a safe person to tell but that you will be able to deal with the information they disclose in a way that is respectful, non-judgemental and that will not put them in danger.

Teachers need to be upfront and explain that there are times when information must be shared with others. Mandatory reporting requirements / obligations vary across States and Territories so it is important that teachers contact their governing body to determine their legal obligations and responsibilities in accordance with each State / Territory's legal requirements. Teachers will also be guided by school policy guidelines.

Finding out that a child is experiencing domestic violence at home can leave teachers feeling an overwhelming need to save the child from the situation. However, it is not the teacher's role to end the violence or conduct any investigations into the allegations.

Supporting the student

Despite not being able to stop the violence, the teacher's role is vital in promoting healing in the student. A willingness to listen to a student's story without judgement can offer a sanctuary where resiliency and personal strength can begin to be reconstructed. One of the most important ways teachers can offer assistance is to provide a safe and supportive place for the student to openly discuss their fears (Kearney, 1999).

Teachers may feel that the school counsellor is best equipped to deal with supporting a student who discloses they are experiencing domestic violence and referring the student to the school counsellor is often a good option. **If a student discloses abuse, the best course of action is to consult a professional who is trained to deal with these situations.**

Kearney (1999) suggests that teachers can support the child by:

- Being aware that students feel they have no power to control the situation. Increasing their sense of control by offering some choices in the classroom can build their sense of security and safety.
- Allowing alternative ways for children to complete work.
- Encouraging cooperation and participation and minimising the use of competition.
- Modelling non-violent and pro-social behaviours in the classroom and pointing

out strategies for problem solving that do not involve violence.

- Rejecting the use of fear or punitive punishments as disciplinary measures.

Below are some suggestions based on my own experience of working with those living in situations of domestic violence or other forms of abuse. (Since each context is different, these suggestions should be used as a guide only.)

- Respect the information the student has given you and do not tell those who do not need to know; however, secrecy on behalf of the teacher does not aid in 'helping' the student. Appropriate 'others' will need to be told / consulted according to your school's policies and procedures and legislative requirements.
- Depending on the student's age and maturity, let them know what you need to do with the information they have given you (eg. mandatory reporting). This shows respect and will ultimately build trust.
- Ask the student what they would like to see happen; however, do not make promises you cannot keep. The student may discover that simply sharing this 'secret' is enough for now.
- Do not feel you have to 'rescue' the student or stop the abuse. Never underestimate the power of a student being able to 'just talk' to someone who does not judge.
- Always re-enforce that violence or abuse is not their fault.
- If you feel comfortable enough, discuss a safety plan with the child or enlist other members of staff, such as a welfare or social worker, to assist you and the student in making the plan.
- Offer to link them in with the school counsellor. If your school does not have one, find out what is available in your community (contact the Department of Community Services).
- Address practical issues, you may be able to arrange a 'tension free' place to study.
- Use your judgement to make allowances regarding extensions for assignments.
- Ensure your school has a zero tolerance to bullying and address bullying at school appropriately. Do not dismiss bullying as 'typical masculine behaviour'.
- **Never approach the parents, particularly the offending parent without consulting a trained professional as this could place your student and the partner in greater danger.**

Domestic violence will be present in the lives of some of the students at your school. Therefore, it is vital that teachers be able to recognise and respond to domestic violence in ways that will assist in the protection of students and enhance their ability to learn and reach their full potential. **TEACH**

“It is important that the student feels you will be able to deal with the information they disclose in a way that is respectful, non-judgemental and that will not put them in danger”

Teaching & Professional Practice

This article is not intended to provide case specific advice or take the place of professional advice. Readers are advised to consult a qualified professional regarding specific responses to individual cases.

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H&S Issues

Power cords can be a hazard in the school environment. Not only do plugs have to be kept in good repair, but cords that snake their way across classrooms, attached to multiple power boards like neuronal networks, are quickly dealt with by OH&S officers. Equipment is checked regularly. Faulty items are discarded and replaced. Electrical currents are not something with which we take chances. Our students' lives are too precious and we have a duty of care while they are at school. Yet, in spite of the dangers, a good source of power is essential to the smooth operation of a school. Without it, lights go off, computers shut down, canteen food spoils, and teachers feel handicapped. If the power supply is cut off, top priority is given to restoring it immediately.

I wonder if the same can be said for the spiritual power supply to our schools. What consideration do we give to maintaining a constant supply of spiritual

power to ourselves and our students? Take a few seconds to reflect on this spiritual power checklist:

- Teachers make it a priority to keep the power flowing in their own lives by setting aside time each day to connect with God in a meaningful way.
- Students' spiritual development is a regular item on staff meeting agendas.
- Staff have devotional times together and support students and their families with prayers.
- The school has a parent prayer support group that prays for the staff and students on a regular basis.
- Bible/chapel classes are relevant, engaging, participatory and representative of a wide range of activities.
- Students have time to share their connection with God both formally and informally.
- Time is made available for students to pray in groups or alone.
- Space is made available for students and staff to pray in groups or alone.
- Opportunities are provided for students to have quiet time to reflect on God's power in their lives.

When issues disrupt the spiritual power supply to our schools, how quickly do we identify them, and make it a priority to reconnect our students to the Source of spiritual power? While our concern for OH&S issues is important, our concern for the Eternal Health and Safety of our students is even more important. It is our core business. **TEACH**

EH&S issues are a joint initiative between the Adventist Schools Australia Curriculum Unit and Avondale College.



["Teaching is...": Lanelle Cobbin]

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Curbing violence in schools Implications for Christian educators

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Abstract

A safe and supportive school environment is necessary for enhancing and nurturing students' gifts, talents and abilities. Within the last ten years, however, there has been a dramatic increase in violent confrontations within school environments around the world. There is no doubt that the well-being of students is at risk. This article explores the antecedents and etiology of violence and describes psychoeducational intervention and prevention models that can be used to reduce or prevent it. It also focuses on the collaborative roles and functions of Christian educators in significantly reducing the incidence of violence through the implementation of self-enhancing, growth-producing, and character-building programs and activities for students.

Despite the warm weather, Alex is dressed in several layers of clothing, including a hooded sweatshirt and a jacket. He has felt depressed for months and has decided to do something about it. He wends his way to school with one thing on his mind. He enters the building just minutes before the bell rings to signal the start of the first period. The hallways are filled with students, teachers, and staff personnel. He slowly unbuttons his jacket and clutches his fingers around the trigger of a gun.

Derek, aged 16, a newly accepted 11th grader at Stakeholders High School was repeatedly punched and kicked by five of his peers on his first day at school. They told him that all new students had to go through the 'initiation'. He was told that if he complained to his parents or his teachers, he would be subjected to more attacks.

Definition of violence

Violence refers to the threat or use of physical force with the intention of causing physical injury, damage or intimidation of another person.¹ There are a variety of forms of interpersonal violence, such as

homicide, aggravated assault, armed robbery, and forcible rape through to shoving, pinching, hitting, and throwing objects. In each case, the intent is to harm or intimidate another human being.²

Selected school and youth violence statistics

A 2005 study, "School violence and its antecedents: Interviews with high school students", the largest of its kind ever conducted in Australia, was jointly funded by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. The following are selective summaries of the results:

1. **Frequency of attacks on school premises:** Of the 2,533 students who responded, 43.9% (1,112) reported attacking another student at least once in the past 12 months. Of these, the majority had done so only once in the past 12 months.
2. **Most recent attack: When?** Of the 43.9% of students who reported attacking another student in the last 12 months, 21.3 % reported that this occurred in the last week and over 60% indicated that it occurred in the last 3 months.
3. **Most Recent Attack: Why?** The majority of respondents said that they were provoked into the attack either physically or verbally. More specifically, 26.4% said that the other person had physically attacked first, 31.8% said that they had been bullied or teased by their opponent; 11.7% said that they did not like the person, or had no reason at all as their motivation for their most recent attack on another student.
4. **Most Recent Attack: What Happened?** Respondents who self-reported assaulting someone were asked to indicate the way they had attacked the other person as well as how they themselves had been assaulted. Compared with their opponents, respondents were more likely to push (63% vs. 54%) and

“Violence involves the intent to harm or intimidate another human being”

hit with a fist (57% vs. 37%) but were less likely to throw something, kick, bite or hit with an object. In terms of different types of violent actions across gender, proportionately more male than female students involved in a fight hit their opponents with their fist (60% vs. 40% respectively), however, more female students kicked their opponents (26.5% vs. 18.7%) and / or pulled their hair (33.7% vs. 6.9%) respectively.³

A 2004 study which investigated weapon carrying in a sample of high school students in New Zealand concluded that the prevalence of weapon carrying was relatively high.

1. Overall 27.5% reported having ever carried a weapon and 19.3% carrying a weapon in the past 30 days.
2. Weapon carry was significantly more common among males.
3. Three variables were strongly associated with weapon carrying in the past 30 days, namely: (a) being male; (b) fighting in the past 12 months; and (c) feeling unsafe in the past 30 days.
4. Those students who reported a medium level of favourable perceptions of school were 26% less likely to report weapon carrying, as compared with those having the poorest perceptions.⁴

The prevalence of bullying in New Zealand schools has been a major concern. A study done in 2004, on 1480 male and female students from eight primary and secondary schools concluded that:

1. The majority of students (63%) reported one or more experiences of bullying within the past year (50% were bullied "once in a while"; 8% were bullied "about once a week"; and 5% were bullied "more than once a week").
2. Examples of types of bullying included rude gestures, mean teasing, nasty racial remarks, offensive sexual suggestions, hitting, punching, kicking, shoving, threats, knife or other kind of weapon and receiving nasty letters.
3. In response to how often they had witnessed bullying, 46% said "once in a while"; 20% indicated "about once a week"; 20% reported "more than once a week"; and 14% said "never".⁵

Antecedents of school violence

Home influences

There seems to be a positive relationship between the stability of the family unit and the escalation of violence in schools.

Soaring rates of teens giving birth, homeless families and chemically dependent parents, contribute to the desperate plight of our children.⁶

Parenting which tends to be restrictive and punitive places firm limits and controls on the child and allows little verbal exchange. Children who experience this type of parenting tend to be socially incompetent.⁷ They may also demonstrate resentment and aggression towards others, in home, school and community environments. Indulgent parents place few demands or controls on their children. This leads to behaviours that are extreme and uncontrollable. These children may be "domineering, egocentric, noncompliant, and have difficulty in peer relations".⁸

Children of single-parent families may also be at risk for behavioural problems. Single parents are challenged by limited resources, while at the same time attempting to raise their children without the help of the other biological parent. The end result may be poor academic achievement, emotional problems, and conduct problems.⁹

School influences

The school environment, a powerful socialising agent, can also be a powerful catalyst for violent behaviour. Schools which function without a clearly enunciated philosophy, mission and vision for education and character development are hotbeds for chaos and disorder. Students within this context are more inclined to model their own system of values, morals and conduct, which may have been learned and reinforced in dysfunctional, destructive or fragmented homes and communities. The consequences are likely to be demonstrated through student violence, intolerance, impulsivity and academic failure.

The school might further contribute to behavioural disorders and academic failure in one or more of the following ways: insensitivity to students' individuality, inappropriate expectations for students, inconsistent management of behaviour, instruction in non-functional and irrelevant skills, ineffective instruction in critical skills, destructive contingencies of reinforcement, or undesirable models of school conduct.¹⁰

Media influences

Violent media are powerful contributors to undesirable patterns of conduct among children. Since the 1950s, more than 3500 research studies have investigated the relationship between violent media exposure and subsequent violent behaviour. All but 18 have confirmed that a positive correlation exists between media exposure and violent behaviour.¹¹ One of the main conclusions from

“*Schools which function without a clearly enunciated philosophy, mission and vision for education and character development are hotbeds for chaos and disorder*”

these 3500 studies is that interactive media may have a more lasting effect on violent behaviour than television and movie media. Many studies have revealed that children and adolescents become desensitised to violence, have increased levels of aggressive thoughts and behaviour, and show more hostility towards others after experiences with violent interactive media. The studies also showed that the strength of the correlation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour is larger than that of a condom non-user and sexually transmitted HIV; lead exposure and lower IQ; passive tobacco smoke and lung cancer; or calcium intake and bone mass.¹²

There is no doubt that children are continually exposed to media depictions of violence.

Such depictions pervade not only television, but film, music, online media, video games and printed material. These depictions desensitise children to the effects of violence, increase aggression and help foster a climate of fear.¹³

Intervention and prevention models

There are a number of school-based models which have been effectively utilised in curbing violence. The following models have been used successfully in reducing the incidence of violence in school and classroom environments.

The Public Health model focuses on three levels of prevention, depending on the stage to which a disease is progressing. The first is primary prevention, the purpose of which is to keep diseases from occurring. The second is referred to as secondary prevention, which involves early identification of the disease and the implementation of interventions. Tertiary intervention, the third level, focuses on the treatment of those who are severely ill. The primary objective here is to assist the individual in living usefully, in spite of the illness.¹⁴

How relevant is this model to violence prevention? The objective of primary prevention is to prevent extreme behavioural problems which may be violent in nature. This involves addressing antecedents and causes of the problems.

[It is] a complex interaction of physiological, psychological, and environmental variables, such as brain injury, mental illness, chemical abnormalities, availability of weapons, exposure to media violence, and the acceptance of violence in a particular society or culture.¹⁵

Secondary prevention highlights the risk factors associated with violence and suicide. These factors can be addressed in the home, school

and community through early intervention and therapeutic intervention. Primary consideration is given here to:

- providing for the physical and psychological safety of all students;
- ensuring that all the students learn the skills necessary for academic and social success;
- working cooperatively with parents, community agencies and public or private treatment providers;
- providing necessary and appropriate training and support for teachers and other personnel making referrals to appropriate school and community programs and to agencies.¹⁶

Using more intrusive measures to contain the problem and to protect others in the violent individual's environment is the essential component of tertiary prevention. Imprisonment and incarceration, and rehabilitation are the interventions of choice.¹⁷ It is virtually impossible for the school alone to implement these interventions. These demand a collaborative effort among parents, community organisations and churches.

The Second Step model encompasses a violence-prevention curriculum. It is widely used in the United States and Canada, and has been adapted for use in Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom.¹⁸ The primary purpose of this program is for preschool to middle school children to develop socio-emotional skills necessary for successful living. The core competencies addressed are empathy, problem solving and anger management.

Lessons include short stories which illustrate ways to recognise feelings in self and others, to consider others' perspectives and to respond emotionally to others. Students acquire perspective-taking skills through role-playing social problems and sharing personal experiences and reactions to hypothetical situations.¹⁹ In order to develop social problem solving skills students are taught to identify the problem, brainstorm solutions, evaluate solutions, try the solutions, determine if the solution works, and decide what to do next. Lessons create opportunities for students to practice problem identification by using narrative and context clues. Strategies to help students recognise anger cues in their bodies are also addressed and positive self-statements and other stress-reduction techniques are used to alleviate angry behaviours.²⁰ Although the content of lessons varies, depending on the age and developmental levels of students, modelling, practice and reinforcement of skills are integral to the success of this program.²¹

“*Positive self-statements and other stress-reduction techniques are used to alleviate angry behaviours*”

The Peacemakers Program model is a guided curriculum for Grades 1 through 12 which focuses on teaching and modelling negotiation and mediation procedures. The premise of this program is that conflicts are not the problem but part of the solution. The emphasis is on encouraging conflict and managing it constructively. Conflicts managed constructively can:

- increase achievement and long-term retention of academic material.
- increase the use of higher level cognitive and moral reasoning.
- increase healthy cognitive and social development.
- focus attention on problems and increase the energy dedicated to solving them.
- clarify one's own and others' identity, commitments, and values.
- identify areas in need of change.
- release anger, anxiety, insecurity, and sadness that, if kept inside, may contribute to mental distress and illness.
- strengthen relationships by increasing individuals' confidence in their ability to resolve their disagreements, and by minimising irritations and resentments so that positive feelings can be experienced fully.²²

There are five implementation steps for this program. Step One involves the creation of a cooperative context. This means that constructive conflict management must be nurtured in a context that is cooperative rather than competitive. Helping all students understand the nature and desirability of conflict is the essence of Step Two. Students are taught to recognise the value of conflict as a means of gaining insight, solving problems, providing opportunities for learning and supplying a source of laughter. To facilitate their peace-making functions, students are given criteria for ascertaining whether a conflict has been resolved constructively. In Step Three students are shown how to engage in integrative or problem-solving negotiations which benefit all parties involved in the negotiations. Step Four focuses on training students in peer-mediation procedures. Students are called upon to assist two or more students in resolving conflicts which they cannot resolve themselves. Steps in negotiation procedures are used to mediate the conflicts. Reinforcing and upgrading students' conflict resolution skills is emphasised in Step Five. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate activities in their lesson plans which reinforce and improve students' skills and competence in negotiation and mediation procedures.²³

Creating New Choices is a violence prevention project for schools in Australia. It began in 1994, in the northern region of metropolitan Melbourne. It was initiated by Berry Street Child and Family Services, an independent, non-government welfare organisation.

[It aims to] assist schools to develop strategic partnerships within their own community, in an attempt to develop long-term community-based strategies that address violent behaviours and attitudes.²⁴

The project goals identified for this program are:

1. To adopt a critical approach aimed at highlighting and redressing structural inequality and institutionalised violence;
2. To inform, educate and model ways for students, teachers and parents to resolve conflict and take responsibility for their own behaviour;
3. To help a school community to develop strategies that prevent violence and build on the strengths within their community;
4. To understand and respond to the needs of schools and those people that work, study and participate in the educational arena;
5. To work in a consultative manner to help schools to develop strategic partnerships within their own community; and
6. To develop long-term community-based strategies that address violent behaviour and attitudes.²⁵

Implications for Christian educators

Christian schools are not immune from the scourge of violence. There are instances of bullying, hitting, shoving and more extreme violent confrontations; however, in comparison with public schools, violent behaviour is most likely less prevalent. This should in no way convey that intervention programs are not necessary. Actually, such programs are needed in order to further de-escalate the potential for such extreme externalising behaviours. The authors of this article propose that the low incidence of violent confrontations in Christian schools may be attributed to teachers, parents, administrators and students who espouse in word and deed a philosophy and vision of teaching and learning which is Christ-centred.

It is imperative that Christian educators work collaboratively with personnel from public and parochial school systems, mental health professionals, parents, clergy and community-based agencies. The focus of such collaboration must be the design and implementation of curricular and

“**Constructive conflict management must be nurtured in a context that is cooperative rather than competitive**”

Character building is one of the most powerful antidotes able to reduce or eliminate destructive externalising behaviours

extracurricular programs for children and youth which focus on character building—one of the most powerful antidotes able to reduce or eliminate destructive externalising behaviours in children and youth. Programs which address issues such as conflict resolution, anger management, behaviour modification, social skills development, cooperation and respect can enhance the character building process.

The urgent need for character education has been espoused by parents, teachers, administrators, writers, researchers, theologians and paraprofessionals. Thomas Lickona, an authority on character development, stressed that there are ten good reasons why schools should be committed to teaching moral values and developing good character.

1. Young people are increasingly hurting themselves and others, and decreasingly concerned about contributing to the welfare of their fellow human beings.
2. Transmitting values is, and always has been, the work of civilisation.
3. The school's role as moral educator becomes even more vital at a time when millions of children get little moral teaching from their parents and when value-centred influences, such as church or temple, are also absent from their lives.
4. To provide a common ethical ground even in our value-conflicted society.
5. Democracies have a special need for moral education because democracy is government by the people themselves. People must care about the rights of others and the common good and be willing to assume the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.
6. There is no such thing as a value-free education.
7. Moral questions are among the great questions facing both the individual person and the human race.
8. There is broad-based, growing support for values education in schools.
9. An unabashed commitment to moral education is essential if we are to attract and keep good teachers.
10. Values education is a "doable job".²⁶

Lickona emphasised that character has three interrelated parts, namely, moral knowing, moral feeling and moral behaviour.

Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action.²⁷

There is an urgent need for a more relevant and meaningful integration of character education across the curriculum of public, private and parochial schools. Since character building is central to the goals and outcomes of Christian education, educators who espouse its tenets must play a leading role in its promotion, development, implementation and maintenance through workshops, seminars and continuing education activities.

A character-building program known as TAB (Taming Acting-out Behaviour) was successfully implemented in public and parochial schools in England, the United States and Jamaica. Students who participated in this program were able to demonstrate the cardinal virtues of honesty, respect, fairness, kindness, self-discipline and self-control.*

This program, which was developed in 1992 by Dr. Lenore Brantley, an educator and counselling clinician, teaches children to recognise and understand their emotions, put them into perspective and deal with them appropriately. Students learn skills which can be successfully used at home, at school and in the community.

There is also an urgent need for Christian educators to implement, and / or strengthen school-based mentoring programs. In these programs, teachers or other school personnel refer a student who could benefit from adult friendship and support. Mentors then commit to meeting with the student one-on-one for an hour a week throughout the school year. In addition, they also engage in other activities such as playing sports, exploring the Internet, or doing artwork so as to help build a strong relationship.²⁸

Christ has given us a model for working with those with behavioural and emotional challenges. Unconditional love for humankind was the hallmark of his teaching. "In every human being, He discerned infinite possibilities."²⁹ This is a powerful legacy for teachers, parents and administrators who must continually demonstrate how to love students who are disruptive, disrespectful, violent and unlovable. Christian educators can become more involved in curricular planning at the local, regional and national levels by working hand in hand with school districts, community agencies and churches in creating learning environments which engender spiritual and moral values, respect, sharing, peacemaking, self-control and character formation. **TEACH**[®]

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Maximising the potential of the ‘third teacher’

Indoor developmental play environments: 3–8 yrs

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The educators of Reggio Emilia call the environment the “third teacher” because it “speaks to children about what they can do, how and where they can do it and how they can work together” (Paiman & Terrani, 1998, p.1). They see space as an “aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes and cultures of the people who live in it” (Gandini, 1994, p.149). Curtis and Carter speak of the environment as providing the “bones of the curriculum” (2008, p.54). Bones because its function is to hold up or support the learning process. What is your third teacher saying? How are your bones functioning? This article seeks to suggest implications for practice arising from the beliefs, theories, position and vision statements of 21st century Australian early childhood and to support these implications with practical suggestions.

If we believe that environments should support the child to become capable and resourceful, we will provision the educational environment with a pre-dominance of hands-on, open-ended materials

Recent early childhood position statements and curriculum framework documents (C&K, 2009, ECA, 2008, NSW DoCS, 2002) use contemporary research on brain development, child development, socio-cultural theory and various curriculum models to clearly articulate beliefs about how children learn. These same documents outline the pedagogical practices that teachers should engage in to foster in children the “skills, knowledge, attitudes and sensitivities” (NSW DoCS, 2002) that will enable them to reach their full potential. These position statements can be used to shed light on the kinds of environments that support, empower and maximise children’s learning.

Beliefs that emerge from various position statements, framework documents and theories include:

- The child is a capable and resourceful constructor of their own learning.
- The teacher / carer is a facilitator and co-creator of learning.
- The child’s community, family and teacher / caregivers are partners in a child’s education and co-architects of a child’s wellbeing.
- Learning occurs optimally in social and collaborative contexts.

- The development of dispositions to learn underpin learner success.
- Each child is unique.
- Democratic practices such as diversity and social justice enable children to become active members of our society.
- Environmental sustainability is dependent on children developing a commitment to the environment and a disposition to create rather than to consume.

(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Early Childhood Australia, 2008; Epstein, 2007; NSW DoCS, 2002).

A consideration of these issues must begin with a vision for the future. What skills will children of the 21st century need to develop in order to become fully functioning adult Australians? Early Childhood Australia suggests that, “the children we are educating today will need to be resilient, flexible, innovative, clever and connected to their fellow human beings and to the natural environment” (ECA, 2008, p.3) in order to become valuable contributors to a “caring and just” society. The question needs to be asked: What kinds of environments foster the development of these skills and dispositions?

The capable and resourceful child

If we believe that environments should support the child to become a capable and resourceful constructor of their own knowledge, then we will provision the educational environment with a predominance of hands on, open-ended materials such as various lengths and types of wood, junk materials, natural materials, fabric and clay.

These materials will allow children to productively investigate, experiment, problem solve and test hypotheses without close adult supervision (Walker, 2007).

Our task as teachers is to invent, arrange, manipulate or create the context and then the children will want to learn (Lubawy, 2009, p.135).

Aesthetic presentations of materials invite the child to interact with the materials, fostering curiosity, engagement and innovation. Positioning these materials in smaller well-defined spaces will scaffold concentration and more in-depth investigation. Small

mats (1 metre x 1 metre) placed on the floor can be used to temporarily define an individual learning / working space. This space allows children to spend time in focused, individualised investigation.

Breaking up the play space into these well defined areas by using movable shelving, tables and screens has several advantages, all of which support children's independence and disposition to learn.

Well-defined, consistent play spaces help:

- children feel comfortable in the learning environment and plan their play;
- avoid sensory overload;
- scaffold positive peer interaction;
- development of self confidence;
- children readily find, use and return the materials; and
- children make choices, particularly when diverse items are stored in matching containers.

(Curtis & Carter, 2008; Epstein, 2007; Walker, 2007)

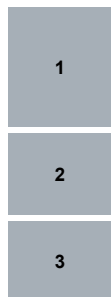
Aesthetic presentations of materials, together with the use of natural materials in discrete play spaces engages children's senses and facilitates development of their appreciation of beauty, respect for the environment, sense of wonder, creativity and problem solving skills (Epstein, 2007; NSW DoCS, 2002). The educators of Reggio Emilia have attained world renown for the aesthetic elements of their classroom environments. Their emphasis on "different forms of lighting, such as lamps, the careful use of colour and form, a thoughtfulness in the placement of any material, however small" (Millikan, 2003, p.62), focuses children's attention on the "extraordinary in the ordinary". This provokes a sense of wonder and curiosity and invites investigation. Considering line, colour, shape, patterns, texture, light and shadow as you choose and position materials and equipment draws attention to the material's aesthetic qualities. Careful use of white, cream and pastel colours can reduce aggression and stress levels and increase academic achievement (Wohlfarth, 1982 cited in Crowther, 2003). Harnessing the elements of size, scale and different levels maximises aesthetic qualities (Curtis & Carter, 2008).

Providing materials and opportunities in the environment which encourage children to record and keep track of their learning (Walker, 2007) further fosters the notion of the capable, resourceful child, that is, one who wonders, explores and develops the disposition to persist and take an interest. Having paper, clipboard, pencils, textas and marker pens for children to use to draw and record thinking and constructions helps them keep track of their learning. It also helps the child to represent their discovery and learning in a different language / medium.



- 1 Space for ongoing projects
- 2 Open-ended materials
- 3 Personal exploration

[Photography: Sandra Ludlow]



Revisiting a piece of work in this way deepens the child's investigation by "providing a basis for continuing discussion and further opportunities and possibilities for concept formation" (Millikan, 2003, p.37). Providing children with access to digital cameras and digital voice recorders to capture a construction or piece of artwork allows for this same revisiting, celebration of learning and social construction of knowledge. The discussions that emerge from these resources also enrich opportunities for language skill development.

As you plan your classroom environment, plan the layout of the space so that you minimise the need to pack away materials in preparation for the next activity. Timetabling large blocks of time also assists in reducing transitions and packing up. These two practices further scaffold opportunities for a child to think more deeply. As you consider these issues, it is wise to note that, "What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught. Rather it is in a large part due to the children's own doing as a consequence of their activities and our resources" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p.67).

Partnerships and co-construction of learning

Environments further support this notion of the capable child when they make children's learning visible to adults, peers and community visitors. Respectful documentation and display of children's completed projects and portfolios, in combination with the practice of allowing works in progress to remain up (rather than being packed up at the end of each session), shows a respect for and celebration of children's effort and processes. This scaffolds child's disposition to learn as well as their sense of self as a capable learner. Documentation highlights, to both adults and peers, the uniqueness of each child's thinking and learning. It also invites comment and participation from other peers, adults and visitors who see this work. Their comments often provoke opportunities for children to explain, clarify, refine and think more deeply about their work. Providing talking points between the children and their parents allows adults to become partners in a child's construction of knowledge.

Another element of partnership and co-construction of knowledge is found in the social and collaborative nature of young children's learning. The theories of Vygotsky and his notion of the zone of proximal development have shown educators the power of working with peers. If we value this type of construction of knowledge, then our classrooms will reflect this. Materials will be offered as both individual and shared experiences. There will be more than one painting easel, positioned side-by-side so that children can discuss their own work and comment together on their work as it progresses.

The clay table will offer enough clay and materials for a number of children to work side-by-side, sharing conversations and discoveries. There will be enough space and duplo pieces for a number of children to create and build together or side-by-side.

What language do the chairs in your room speak? The number of chairs placed around a table sends a non-verbal message to the children about how many children may use / share the materials at one time. The positioning of chairs in the learning environment has the potential to set the social landscape of the classroom. The type of chairs also sends a message, soft cozy armchairs or cushions incorporated into a reading nook tend to invite children to curl up and read or, even better, invite multiple children to share the reading experience. Armchairs invite family members to linger in the classroom to share experiences with the child and watch the child interact with the materials. They also provide adults with a place to sit and read their child's portfolio. In this way, specific aspects of the environment contribute to the co-construction of knowledge.

Diversity and social justice

Environments that intentionally support the concepts of diversity and social justice contribute to the child's acquisition of democratic principles, wellbeing and belonging. At the same time, they also have the potential to support the Christian ethos of the school / centre. To achieve these goals, environments should contain materials that reflect the cultural make-up of the children's lives and local community, e.g. religious icons and resources, cultural artefacts, books and messages in the local languages, posters, photos, figurines, dolls, eating utensils (the list is only limited by your resourcefulness).

Social justice is further supported if the environment contains a space for whole group discussions and room meetings to occur. This space is useful because it allows room for children to negotiate, plan, review and celebrate the group's thinking and investigating. It scaffolds the acceptance of different points of view and respect for others' work, thus offering opportunities for children to connect with their peers and teachers. When necessary, the environment should incorporate assistive technologies and equipment (e.g. DD dolls, communication boards, walkers, lamps, large print books) to help children with a disability feel comfortable and competent.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is fostered when children develop a sense of commitment to and ownership of the environment (Dodge et al., 2002). The classroom environment scaffolds the

“Environments that intentionally support the concepts of diversity and social justice contribute to the child's acquisition of democratic principles, wellbeing and belonging”

development of this commitment when children are permitted to take responsibility for setting up the environment, maintaining its tidiness and taking care of the equipment, materials and animals in the classroom. This has the additional benefit of fostering in children a sense of mastery, confidence and security (NSW DoCS, 2002).

Other practices that will to help foster a commitment to sustainability include: using both sides of a piece of paper; reusing glass jars to store paint, small collectables and paste; collecting fabric scraps, old buttons, shells, pine cones, stones etc. for sorting and pattern making; keeping a reverse garbage junk construction box in the classroom and accepting contributions to it from both the child's family and community members; and using second-hand pieces of furniture, baskets and wooden containers (Kinsella, 2007). Implementing such practices will foster in children the disposition to be creators rather than consumers and raise their awareness to the need to reduce their environmental footprint.

Practitioner wisdom

In preparation for this article, I asked several practising teachers for their suggestions about setting up environments for developmental play. They reported that consultation fosters ownership of the environment and that both staff and children should be given opportunities to negotiate the layout and contents of the environment. They also attested to the fact that children's engagement with materials or provisions is enhanced when the environment remains consistent. It is wise to make small changes to the provisions in learning centres rather than completely changing the centres every week. Any changes to be made to the environment should be implemented incrementally. Once the changes have been implemented, spend time during staff meetings reflecting on their effectiveness.

Conclusion

You will know that your environment is acting as the third teacher when:

- It leads children to use the provisions to confidently and independently explore, work and solve problems and to sustain engagement;
- Children are able to independently find, use and return materials;
- Children and adults are comfortable in the room;
- Children's learning is visible to adults and peers;
- Children offer their ideas for investigations and contribute materials to the classroom environment; and

- The children work collaboratively on shared interests.

When these happenings become regular occurrences, the children in your care are becoming capable and resourceful constructors of their own knowledge and you, their teacher, will have become a facilitator and co-constructor of their knowledge. Now, your classroom environment will be operating as the third teacher. **TEACH**

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“Implementing such practices will foster in children the disposition to be creators rather than consumers”



[“Teaching is...”:
Lanelle Cobbin]

Accommodating a new student with a disability in your primary classroom

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Introduction

Although legislation underpins the rights of the disabled (Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act, 1992; NSW Anti Discrimination Act, 1997) to an education in the neighbourhood school with peer and community interaction, teachers may experience anxiety when a new student with a major disability enters their class.

Enrolment and attendance

A new student may give the teacher cause for apprehension as they wonder how to ensure the smoothest transition to the new school for all involved (Wills & Jackson, 2000).

If possible, the class teacher should interact with the student and the family throughout the enrolment process. This is a time when warmth and loving acceptance are needed and appreciated. Families feel vulnerable at times of transition, possibly leading to stress and frustration. They often have a host of questions as they seek to determine whether their child will be fully accepted. Information and assurances from the class teacher are thus highly valued.

The teacher needs to project confidence, acceptance and genuine interest as they get to know as much as possible about the family and the child's disability, strengths, needs and interests. Due to funding requirements, the school may need new tests and reports for verification purposes; this needs to be handled with sensitivity.

Once enrolment has been confirmed, schools may, in certain circumstances (such as a student under the age of six), suggest a gradual attendance process or a delayed starting date. In kindergarten it is common for a student with a disability to attend mornings only to ensure a stress free transition.

A delayed start allows the teacher to adjust the environment, apply for funding, access support personnel, and give greater individualised attention to the student with a disability. Few parents resent a short delay if they can see that everything possible is being set in place for a successful inclusion.

A smooth transition for the student will minimise behaviour difficulties and reassure all concerned.

Orientation period

The student needs a thorough orientation process as familiarity and understanding of the new environment will help dispel fears and build confidence. There are a number of ways to achieve this.

- Assign a 'buddy of the week' for the student and extend this to one or two other children who may also like a capable peer to sit with them. Take the student and buddy on a tour of the school, looking at each area and the associated rules of use. Meet relevant adults, such as the teacher's aide, librarian, school counsellor and principal.
- A photographic display of all staff members makes it easier to become familiar with the new environment.
- Use photographs to make a photo book, "My new school" or "A day in our class". After the first week of daily reading, send it home, as the family will find it useful too.
- Use photographs to make a class book, "A day in our class", for each student.
- Make individual posters, "All about me".
- Play bonding games with the class. A favourite is to sit in a circle and roll a large ball of wool to a student who says something they like about another student and then rolls the ball to that person. The wool forms a patterned web, joining the class in a visual bond, emphasising that everyone is different but special and that everyone belongs and contributes.

It is crucial to maintain communication with the family in this initial period. A communication notebook that travels daily between home and school transfers information about significant things occurring in both settings and provides topics to stimulate conversation.

Adjustments in the classroom

Adjusting the environment is contingent on the type of disability. A phone call or email to the student's

The teacher needs to project confidence, acceptance and genuine interest as they get to know as much as possible about the family and the child

previous teacher could reveal information that saves hours of 'reinventing the wheel'. Following is a list of adjustments that are commonly successful.

- The layout and contents of the classroom may need to be modified. For example, a physical disability requires advice on room layout, positioning of the student and assistive technology. A student with autism requires checking the room for areas that may cause sensory stress, such as lighting, noise, and the potential for touch aversion.
- Consider where to seat the child. A student with a disability may need to sit in grouped tables to foster communication, to sit close to the teacher, or to have a second desk in a private area in order to work with other adults or a peer.
- Make a visual timetable of the week. If needed, give the student an individual timetable and one to take home so parents can cue their child on what to expect each day.
- Have predictable rules and routines. Teach these to the new student by rehearsing, demonstrating and cueing. Photo prompts and social stories may be useful.
- Prepare the child well ahead of time for any changes to routine or to their environment, e.g. assembly, scripture time, library, or a casual teacher. A negative reaction to change is common to many disabilities.

Be prepared to examine how to deliver curriculum content using strategies that cater for the new student, e.g. use a recording device to replace written answers, or fold over the lower third of a worksheet to ensure the student is not overwhelmed.

Planned accommodations should follow a three-step approach. Firstly, seek to maximise the amount of common work done with the class, secondly adapt the work, thirdly, if required, individual work should be completed in the time slot for that subject. Withdrawal from the room is discouraged, except where necessary, e.g. intense remedial sessions—ideally in a small group.

The peer group

Respect family wishes regarding classroom discussion of the child's disability. Some families want to come and talk to the class about their child's disability. If so, assist them to structure a talk suitable for the age group. Other families do not want the disability ever mentioned to the peer group. When questions arise, the teacher must handle these with sensitivity and wisdom.

A series of class lessons on similarities and differences can fit several key learning areas. Topics may include culture, gender, disability, personal likes and dislikes, or appearance. Emphasis should be on

the positives and on the fact that individuals are all unique, highlighting that class members are a team who respect and support each other. Here are a few ways that this may be achieved.

- Have a class mascot, adopt a class pet, sponsor a third world child, make a class badge or invite people with different backgrounds to come in and talk to the class.

The playground

The school will have a system to inform teachers of the playground needs of a student with a disability. Ensure, as the class teacher, that all school personnel are informed of the special needs, especially if there is likely to be communication or behavioural issues.

- A communication key ring that has laminated playground rules or communication symbols can be helpful for the student to carry.
- A buddy may smooth the adjustment for a few weeks.
- The play environment could be signed to indicate out of bounds.
- A bench with a sign saying, "Friend stop" could be set up so a child who has no one to play with can take a seat. Children are encouraged to 'pick them up' (like a bus stop) and engage them in their play.

Conclusion

An essential aspect of successful integration is gaining hands on support within the classroom. When there is a major disability, school support systems must be implemented. This may include modifications to the environment and use of support teachers, consultants and teacher aides. Additional guidance may be sought through in servicing offered by disability support groups or other teachers who have experience with the same disability.

Time is a major challenge for a teacher facilitating inclusion. Schools need to ensure that teachers have full collegial support as they build and enact a whole school ethos toward students with a disability (Konza, 2008; Westwood & Graham, 2003). **TEACH**

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“Schools need to ensure that teachers have full collegial support as they build and enact a whole school ethos toward students with a disability”

Serving and leading in schools

A discussion of leadership models and how Australian school communities can benefit

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“You no longer have the right to choose whom, when and how you serve”

History portrays leaders as people of great power, charisma and prestige. Winston Churchill or George Washington could easily exemplify these types of traits. Servants, on the other hand, are portrayed as obsequious, obedient and lacking in initiative. In recent times, a new style of leadership has emerged that appears at first to be contradictory. It is characterised by elements of listening rather than commanding, empathy rather than stoicism, awareness rather than ignorance and persuasion rather than force. Robert Greenleaf, the pioneer of servant leadership, describes this style of leadership as one where serving comes first and where you strive to meet the needs of others before your own (Greenleaf, 1977 cited in Frick & Spears, 1996).

Spears (1995, cited in Kelly, 2006) summarised servant leadership by suggesting that servant leaders enhance the personal growth of organisation members and improve the organisation through

many factors such as teamwork, shared decision making, and ethical, caring behaviour. In 1998, Spears went on to identify ten characteristics of servant leadership; these can be seen in Table 1.

Another model, first developed by Depree in 1993, described leadership as servanthood. In this case, leadership means giving up your own rights (Sharpe 2000). The characteristics of servanthood are shown in Table 1.

One can see there is some overlap between the two sets of characteristics, moreover, there are obvious links to both the heart of Christianity and Christian leadership.

While the servant leadership model described by Greenleaf and Spears is a useful model, the servanthood model has been derived from the Biblical understanding of leadership, which encapsulates the idea that you no longer have the right to choose whom, when and how you serve (Foster, 1978 cited in Bradley, 1999). In Luke 22:42 we find an example of Jesus demonstrating the most extreme model of servanthood in His attitude, “not my will, but yours be done” and in His subsequent trial and crucifixion (Bradley, 1994 cited in Bradley, 1999).

Servanthood appears to transcend the concept of organisational servant leadership to encompass eternal servanthood to the leadership of God, thus requiring a higher commitment factor. However, the comparison is not clear-cut. Due to different interpretations of Greenleaf’s work, there is considerable difficulty in defining servant leadership (Bradley 1999). While Greenleaf was not overt in his spiritual approach to servant leadership, it can be shown that his servant leadership principles are based on Biblical concepts (Flaniken, 2006; Hanna, 2006). In addition, Tucker (2006) suggests that servant leadership is the Christian leadership model of choice and that Greenleaf’s idea of a servant leader who serves first has a divine example through Jesus Christ. Although it may appear that Greenleaf’s model of servant leadership is less Christian in its orientation, both models can be shown to support Biblical principles, making them relevant to a discussion on Christian leadership.

Table 1: The characteristics of servant leadership and servanthood

Servant leadership Spears (1998, cited in Crippen, 2005)	Servanthood Depree (1993, cited in Sharpe, 2000)
good listener	integrity
empathetic	vulnerability
healer	discernment
keen sense of awareness	awareness of the human spirit
persuasive	courage
able to conceptualise	sense of humour
foresight	intellectual energy and curiosity
steward	respect for the future
committed to the growth of others	regard for the present
community builder	understanding of the past
	predictability
	breadth
	comfort with ambiguity
	presence

Schools as centres of serving leadership

The “virtuous” school is where people go beyond the call of duty, serving becomes the norm and is self-actualising (Sergiovanni, 1992 cited in Edwards, 1996). This serving transposes itself into the classroom and provides authentic modeling for students. In a school where administrative “ministering” occurs, a culture of service then envelopes the actions of all those in attendance, becoming self-perpetuating and reciprocating. The total package of parents, students, teachers and administrators all belonging to the “community of serving” enhances the richness of the service they give to each other and builds a dynamic fabric into the culture of the school.

Irrespective of whether you prefer servant leadership or servanthood, there is no doubt that schools are places where leadership is taught.

Many teachers...have sufficient latitude in dealing with students that they could, on their own, help nurture the servant leader potential, which I believe, is latent to some degree in almost every young person. Could not many respected teachers speak those few words that might change the course of life, or give it new purpose? (Greenleaf 1977, p. 5)

The ultimate achievement of a serving school culture is having students involved in the community of servants as they embrace the value of serving and are able serve (Edwards, 1996). A significant correlation has been shown to exist between servant leadership of principals, school climate and student achievement (Kelly, 2006). Furthermore, when student leadership is expressive of servanthood, learning and academic performance are enhanced due to quality interpersonal processes (Edwards, 1996 cited in Kefford, 2001). When you look at it from a student outcomes perspective, there seems to be very good reasons for schools to promote leadership based on servanthood.

This type of culture relies on the relationships of the individuals at all levels and creates a sense of connectedness that is deep, overt and authentic. In the truest sense of the word, a family is formed, a collaborative community where serving becomes a natural by-product of relationships (Hill, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1996, cited in Kefford, 2001).

When a school community becomes purposeful in its approach to relationships and to building a serving community, it transforms the school from a “secular workplace to a sacred enterprise”. (Sergiovanni, 1992 cited in Edwards, 1996). However, serving and relationship development that becomes an imposed experience rather than a natural process of community building can diminish the authenticity of this “sacred enterprise” (Hill, 1996).

Implications for Christian schools

A teacher has a unique opportunity to impact on the development of character and values in a student. While these concepts are generally not taught, they are “caught” by students through association with the teacher (Anderson, 1996). In Australia, “values education” has recently gained a prominence not enjoyed for many years via the introduction of a Federal Government initiative encouraging schools to promote values in their school communities (The National Framework, 2005).

The next step, I believe, is to examine the impact of leadership programs where values teaching is overt and explicit. There is a desperate need to understand what constitutes true leadership and to develop those attitudes, skills and characteristics in young people (Hawkes, 2005).

I believe that the ultimate leadership model is to be found in a leadership style that is based on serving. Positive correlations between participation in leadership programs and educational and personal development of the students were found in leadership programs in universities and colleges in America (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2001 cited in Tilstra, 2008).

Based on several previous studies, a framework for leadership programs has been developed. Exemplary leadership programs should have four common elements. These are:

- Theory and practice.
- Experiential education—this can take a number of forms, such as internships, campus leadership positions or community volunteering.
- Service learning—this appears to be the most effective type of experiential education.
- Guided and mandatory self-reflection.
- Additional contributing elements include: faculty involvement, student collaboration, development of critical thinking, character growth, ethical practice, vicarious learning and a multidisciplinary approach (Cress, et al., 2001 cited in Tilstra, 2008).

There are some obvious similarities between this framework for leadership programs and the servant leadership and servanthood models introduced in this discussion. Common elements include service, community, collaboration, and personal growth in character, ethics and critical thinking. Students that engage in these opportunities experience growth in personal and social values, motivation, academic achievement, civic responsibility, leadership skills, multicultural awareness, and understanding of leadership theories (Kinsley & McPherson, 1995, cited in Millar & Rieger, 2002; Tilstra, 2001). These types of outcomes transcend the classroom and develop learning, serving and leading communities.

“*In a school where administrative ministering occurs, a culture of service envelopes the actions of all those in attendance, becoming self-perpetuating and reciprocating*”

Teaching & Professional Practice

“We need to start developing leaders whose potential to lead is derived from their capacity to serve”

From my experience and after recent visits to schools with comprehensive embedded leadership programs, servant leadership and servanthood principles can be used in the development of programs.

The servant model of leadership is not new. The greatest example of this leadership style was Jesus Christ, yet educators face a challenge in trying to emulate this leadership style and develop it in their students. If we are to “be the change we want to see” (Ghandi), we need to start developing leaders whose potential to lead is derived from their capacity to serve. **TEACH**

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Teaching principals in smaller primary schools

Their issues, challenges and concerns

Daryl Murdoch

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Abstract

Limited research has been conducted into the teaching primary principalship in Australia, as the focus has tended to be on full time school principals. It has often been assumed that the principalship role in smaller primary schools is a 'scaled down' version of a full time primary principalship and that similar leadership and management challenges apply. There is limited recognition of the unique challenges of teaching primary principals who have the dual roles of school management and classroom teaching responsibilities in devolving school systems. A mixed method research design was developed to explore the current issues, challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals in three school systems in New South Wales. In-depth interviews with teaching primary principals informed the development of a Teaching Primary Principals Perception Survey (TPSPS) which was forwarded to Department of Education and Training, Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist teaching primary principals in New South Wales. This paper explores the issues challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals in New South Wales and provides recommendations to address challenges associated with the dual role of teaching and leading a small primary school.

“Teaching principals, with their dual roles of teaching and administration, find themselves caught in the “slipstream syndrome”

The context

Providing equitable educational opportunities for children in the vast rural regions of Australia has been and remains a challenge for education providers. Consequently, small primary schools have played a significant role in community life across the nation (Lester, 2001). In the 1930's there were 7000 small primary schools, with around 2000 of these in New South Wales. By 1935, nine out of every ten primary schools in Australia had an average attendance below 200 (Bessant, 1978). Teaching primary principals in charge of small schools were “the heroes in the building of the nation” (Beare, 1998, 23).

While the teaching primary principalship has always been a unique challenge, the complexity of

the role has been increased by the restructuring of both public and non-government school systems towards the end of the twentieth century (Gamage, 1998; Wilson & McPake, 1998; Wylie, 1997). School restructuring across the world, with its emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, occurred at a time when nations were moving into post-industrial, internationally oriented economies (Beare, 1995; Townsend, 1996). Governments saw education as the key to remaining economically competitive (Caldwell, 1993; Murphy, 1997).

There has been extensive research conducted into understanding the leadership role of the school principal (Leithwood et al., 1999). However, little of this research has focused on the challenges, issues and concerns of teaching primary principals in devolving school systems (Wilson & McPake, 1998). Teaching principals, with their dual roles of teaching and administration, find themselves in a situation where they are caught in the “slipstream syndrome” in which they are required to interpret and adapt changes imposed with larger school contexts in mind (Dunning, 1993, 85).

The most recent Australian research into the teaching principalship was conducted by Gamage (1998), who conducted survey and interview research with fifty government primary schools in the Hunter Valley region of New South Wales. While Gamage's research yielded valuable data into the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals, it did not explore an in-depth understanding of the 'lived' experience of a broad cross section of teaching primary principals across a range of school systems in New South Wales.

The following study investigated “a big gap” in the literature regarding the complexities of the role of the teaching principal in devolving school systems in New South Wales.

Research design

Given the paucity of prior research regarding the challenges, issues and concerns of the teaching primary principal in New South Wales, a research design was developed which was emergent, flexible and heuristic in intent (Mishler, 1990; Nielsen,

1995). Elements of this mixed-method design included semi-structured interviews, work-log journals, document examination and the subsequent development of a questionnaire (See Figure 1). The utilization of both qualitative and quantitative research methods provided insights into the research problem that individual methods may not have provided (Creswell, 1994).

Teaching principals in State, Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist schools were included in the study to provide a comparative analysis of the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals in primary schools with student enrolments between 26 and 159 students. In the NSW State School System, these schools are categorised as PP5 schools. PP5 principals maintain major classroom responsibilities with a set class of students while endeavouring to cover administration duties and educational leadership functions.

Due to the dearth of research regarding the complexities of the role of the teaching principal in the smaller primary school in Australia, the qualitative phase of the research process was designed to gain a broader understanding of these complexities. These understandings, gained from teaching principals and school clerical staff, guided the development of the TPSPS questionnaire. Patterns of relationships between school systems and intermediate and criterion variables were pursued through multiple standardised regression analysis of the quantitative data from the TPSPS questionnaire.

Research findings and discussion

This paper will focus on commonalities related to the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching principals in NSW State, Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist school systems. There was a high level of correlation between the perceptions of teaching principals interviewed and those that completed the TPSPS questionnaire. With a seventy two per cent return rate, the TPSPS questionnaire identified four attitude scales: The Positive Perception Scale, The Teaching Principals' Role Concerns Scale, The Classroom Learning Focus Concern Scale, and The Community and Professional Support Scale. These attitude scales are now considered.

Positive perceptions of the teaching principalship

While teaching primary principals face many challenges, there are aspects of their role that they find enjoyable. The sense of community that comes from working closely with children, parents and staff members was a dynamic that many teaching principals found rewarding. Working collegially with a staff team, knowing each child personally and being able to chat informally with parents was important to them. They felt that they were able to make a

tangible difference in the lives of children, as typified by this comment:

Small schoolies can say at the end of the day, "I made a difference". (Catholic 2)

Teaching primary principals also enjoyed maintaining their teaching role and found this to be one of the most rewarding aspects of their role. As one informant commented, "The joy of the job is being in class". (State 1)

Many full time principals regret having to leave the classroom behind (Lyll, 1993; McPake, 1998), whereas teaching principals feel that they have the best of both worlds.

The Positive Perception Scale (See Table 1) confirmed the positive perceptions that teaching principals hold regarding their role.

Challenges of managing their dual roles

Teaching primary principals are finding it difficult to balance the demands of teaching and management responsibilities, especially since the introduction of school based management and associated accountability requirements. On one hand, they feel a strong sense of responsibility to their class of students' and their learning needs, knowing that the parent community will judge them according to student well-being and progress. At the same time, they are attempting to meet the growing list of accountability requirements required by system authorities who tend to view them as managers rather than as teachers. It is a difficult and never-ending juggling act. As one beginning teaching principal put it:

“It is a difficult and never-ending juggling act”

Figure 1: Research design: Teaching primary principals' issues, challenges and concerns

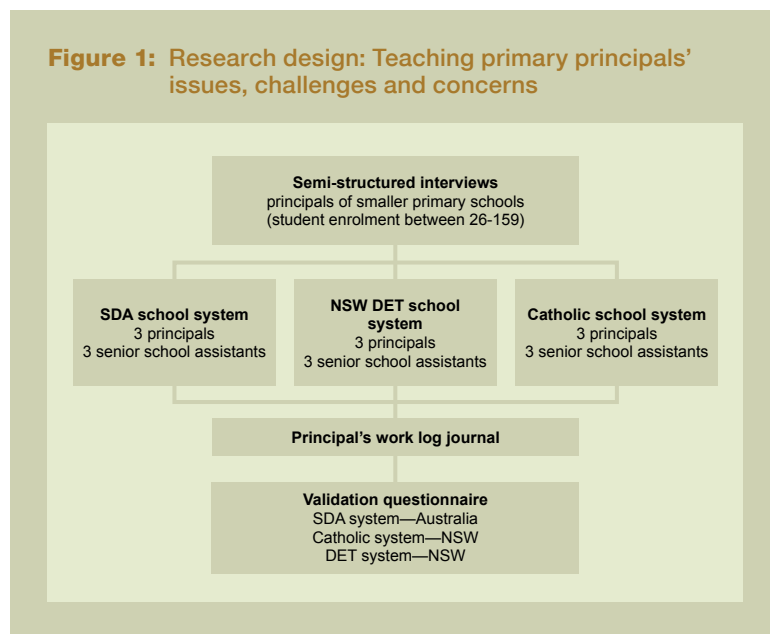


Table 1: Teaching primary principals' perceptions of individual items on the Positive Perceptions Scale

Item	Description	Number	% disagree	% agree
50	Small schools are great, they do a lot more for children who are at risk than anywhere else	132	6	94
31	In a small school you can arrive at a collaborative decision much easier	133	14	86
2	As a teaching principal it is easier to be an instructional leader because you're in touch with the reality of life in the classroom	132	8	92
1	Small schools offer a kind of family community that large schools can't offer	133	3	97
37	Parents like the size of the school, they know all the staff and they feel they can approach any staff member	133	3	97
14	Small schoolies can say that at the end of the day, "I made a difference"	132	5	95
8	I like being in control—management and leadership wise	132	11	89
42	The joy of the job is being in class	131	15	85
47	Parents have the opportunity to raise issues and to discuss school policy at Parent and Friends meetings	133	7	93

It is like a clown on a stage who is juggling all the balls and he is dropping some of them. Well I haven't got to the point, I don't think, of dropping anything major, that anyone would notice, but I can tell you that the clown is getting a bit tired, you know, and some balls are going to drop soon if there is not something that comes up and says "long term you can handle this". (SDA 3)

“*Teaching principals often resent the intrusion of management issues into the classroom realm*”

Teaching principals often resent the intrusion of management issues into the classroom realm and endeavour jealously to guard the classroom environment while 'on class'. The increase of management and accountability responsibilities associated with devolution has detracted from the time and energy that teaching principals are able to give their class. This is a source of considerable frustration and concern as the following comment illustrates:

I get a lot of job satisfaction being a teaching principal but I think that it is gradually eroding because I do feel guilty that I just don't get enough time doing my core business. (State 3)

The Teaching Principals' Role Concerns Scale (See Table 2) confirmed a range of challenges, issues, and concerns faced by the teaching principals interviewed. In terms of educational management, these included: insufficient time to manage their dual roles, meeting accountability requirements, policy development and paperwork, and student welfare and behaviour management issues. Additional concerns related to school system appreciation and support included: a sense that they were being given more work but no additional

time allocation, feeling undervalued in terms of remuneration, rarely seeing District Office leaders or support staff and at times not feeling valued by their school system.

In Stage One of the study, teaching principals maintained a work-log for a seven day period. Teaching principals reported working 59 mean hours. Respondents to the TPSPS questionnaire reported working similar hours. They were typically spending 59.5 mean hours on school related activities, while they perceived that they required 74.4 mean hours to do justice to all aspects of their dual roles of teaching and principalship.

All teaching principals, regardless of their experience, were finding it a major challenge to do justice to their dual roles. The consequence was feelings of guilt and frustration. Prolonged feelings of guilt and frustration are a recipe for high stress levels and burnout. The teaching principalship has been shown to be particularly prone to these conditions (Cross, 1992; Enever, 1997). The majority of principals in this current study, regardless of experience, commented on the impact that the teaching principalship was having on their health and well-being. The following comment is indicative:

The small school principalship is a burn out field waiting to happen. (Catholic 2)

Given the heavy workloads of teaching principals, the support of an experienced clerical assistant was greatly appreciated. When present in the school, they were able to reduce the number of interruptions faced by the principal and handle

Table 2: Teaching primary principals' perceptions of individual items on the Teaching Principals' Role Concern Scale

Item	Description	Number	% disagree	% agree
15	I think the bottom line is they're giving us more work but don't want to give us more time	131	8	92
3	I think that the system support personnel are too thinly spread	133	12	88
36	I do not feel valued by my system	132	55	45
13	I think that the teaching principal is grossly underpaid for what they put in—the time and the effort	133	4	96
21	There are those who look down on a small teaching principalship because they are not seen as a prize catch	132	17	83
48	They won't pick small school principals for a larger school principalship because they haven't had the exposure in a bigger school environment	132	33	67
16	A lot of small school principals feel they are going to be trapped in their schools for a long time no matter how good they are	132	31	69
28	Student welfare issues have taken over from pure educational issues	132	16	84
27	I rarely see the District Superintendent	131	34	66
22	It is ludicrous expecting this little school to have the same policies and all the paperwork as a school with a thousand students	132	24	76
9	There has been more and more work as far as accountability goes	132	2	98
44	Unfortunately, behaviour management issues are becoming more of a concern in our school	133	37	63

a wide range of 'administrivia' that would normally distract the principal from classroom responsibilities. Many were seen to be an integral part of the staff team, sharing the additional management responsibilities associated with devolution.

The amount of time allocated for a clerical assistant significantly impacted on their ability to support their principal. In schools where clerical assistants were part-time, they were sorely missed on the days when they were not present in the school. As one principal put it,

In a small school, the school secretary is invaluable, if they are not here you're really up the creek. (Catholic 2)

Being 'up the creek' means that the principal or other staff members are required to answer phones, care for sick children, contact parents, follow up parental requests and deal with visiting sales personnel.

Maintaining a focus on instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is a key aspect of a principal's role. Teaching principals are perceived to be more involved in instructional leadership than their non-teaching peers, by virtue of the fact that they are still intimately involved at the classroom

level (Williamson & Galton, 1998; Vulliamy & Webb, 1995). Their credibility as a classroom teacher strengthens their position as an instructional leader (Wylie, 1997). As one teaching principal in the study noted,

You're in touch with the reality of life in a classroom. (Catholic 2)

However, it would appear that the intensification of the teaching principals' workload, due to the growing range of management and accountability responsibilities, has negatively impacted their ability to function as instructional leaders.

Factors such as, limited out of class time, no executive staff, a small teaching team, isolation and thinly spread advisory staff, make it difficult for the teaching principal to keep up with curriculum implementation and documentation, let alone new educational initiatives. While it is generally easier to gain consensus and ownership of new initiatives leading to their smooth implementation, there are only so many initiatives that a small teaching staff is able to handle within a given timeframe. As one principal observed,

We have a really good staff here but we find it very difficult to get everything done. (State 3)

“*Their credibility as a classroom teacher strengthens their position as an instructional leader*”

Table 3: Teaching primary principals' perceptions of individual items on the Classroom Learning Focus Concern Scale

Item	Description	Number	% disagree	% agree
35	Other teachers are working on different curriculum levels so you have no chance of sharing with anybody	132	42	58
33	I'm compromising the classroom environment and I don't know what to do about it	132	36	64
53	I have to trust my staff that they are doing the job because I just don't have the time to visit their classes	133	31	69
32	I don't have anyone to talk to regarding management issues so there is that personal isolation factor	133	39	61
54	If you want to go to an in-service you're affecting your class and I hate that	133	22	78
45	I don't have time for curriculum planning, trialling, monitoring, evaluating and replanning, and getting the cycle going	133	17	83
10	I think that an area that does definitely suffer is instructional leadership	132	21	79
41	I don't have the right to take any more of my teachers' time even if I had the time to introduce new initiatives	132	30	70
6	In a bigger school you could lob things off to another member of the executive team, but here there isn't anyone so you just do it yourself	133	7	93

It seems ironic that while school-based management was designed to ensure that systems were more responsive to the needs of individual schools and in turn enhance student learning, it appears that it has undermined the teaching principals' ability to be an instructional leader. The following comment by a teaching principal is illustrative:

I have to trust my staff that they are doing the job because I just don't have the time to visit their classes. (SDA 1)

The Classroom Learning Focus Concern Scale confirmed that teaching primary principals are struggling to maintain their focus on the classroom and instructional leadership. (See Table 3)

Community and Professional Support

Principals interviewed from the three school systems in the study consistently reported that their induction programs were inadequate. The majority had no induction program and those who did felt that it was very general and not targeted to meet the unique leadership dynamics of a small school. A State principal summed up systemic preparation,

Nobody prepares you for the teaching principalship because nobody understands it. People out there just close their eyes to it. (State 2)

Generally, it is a matter of being "thrown in the deep end" (Catholic 2) as one Catholic principal put it.

Factors restricting the ability of teaching principals to participate in professional development and support activities at their disposal include limited professional development funds, lack of time due to

class responsibilities and distance from professional development sites. State principals in particular, commented on the lack of funds to participate in professional development activities, while Seventh-day Adventist principals found their system provided very limited opportunities. All teaching principals struggled with taking time away from their class and the expense that their absence generated, as illustrated by a Seventh-day Adventist principal,

One of the problems of small schools is if you want to take a day off to go to an in-service you're affecting so many areas. You're affecting a whole group of kids and you've got to get someone in and it tends to be expensive for the school. (SDA 2)

PP5 schools are often located in small towns or in isolated rural locations. Community expectations are high in these areas. Challenges regarding community expectations identified in the interview phase of this study included: meeting parental expectations regarding quality educational outcomes, implementing change in conservative community contexts, maintaining an objective and balanced approach to community problems, presenting a public persona, being available at all hours, and maintaining a community profile through involvement in civic life.

The Community and Professional Support Scale confirmed the challenges associated with accessing professional support and the unique realities related to working in small communities. (See Table 4)

Recommendations of the Study

The perceptions of teaching principals in the three

“There are only so many initiatives that a small teaching staff is able to handle within a given timeframe”

Table 4: Teaching primary principals' perceptions of individual items on the Community and Professional Support Scale

Item	Description	Number	% disagree	% agree
12	There is this big expectation that you will be a community leader	133	14	86
19	You're an integral part of the local community	133	8	92
11	Isolation is definitely a factor in our area when it comes to participation in professional development activities	133	24	76
18	I think that a mentoring program is essential and not just the odd day here and there	131	7	93
26	Professional Association meetings are very important for networking and getting ideas	133	6	94
34	I think that peer networking is very important for small schools	132	3	97
4	Some people think that they own you and they expect you will be on tap twenty-four hours a day	133	15	85

school systems showed variation regarding their issues, challenges and concerns. However, the following recommendations were perceived to be applicable to all three school systems.

1. That in order to enhance the morale of teaching principals, school system authorities recognise, support and affirm the achievements of small schools and the important role they play in the lives of children and the local community.
2. That in order to maintain a focus on educational leadership, school system authorities address the disproportionate amount of time spent by teaching principals on school management.
3. That in order for teaching principals to manage their dual roles, school system authorities provide increased levels of administration release time and clerical assistance and greater flexibility to arrange their role in a manner that suits their leadership style.
4. That in order to attract and retain teaching principals, school system authorities consider a range of incentives to increase length of tenure.
5. That in the interests of providing quality induction and ongoing professional support for teaching principals, school system authorities and higher education institutions provide school leadership programs tailored to the needs of PP5 principals. **TEACH[®]**

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Cosmology and Design

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Abstract

Over the past decade, controversy over Design has centred on biological complexity and the origin and diversification of life. This is understandable, since molecular biology is advancing rapidly, and also because the most visible exponents of design have been those in the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, many of whom, like Michael Behe, are biologists. Interestingly, many high-profile Christians within the scientific community have rejected the ID package, but have strongly endorsed a more cautious design argument. Although certainly not insurmountable, these differing views present considerable challenges for Christian teachers attempting an honest, carefully nuanced discussion of the design implications of the biosphere.

Another hot area which has significantly informed the modern Design argument is that of astrophysics and cosmology. There has been much less controversy among Christians participating in this discussion, largely because the ID movement has not focused on this data.

This paper attempts to assist teachers by briefly articulating a form of the design argument which is generally accepted by thinking Christians and then by presenting some cosmological arguments within this framework. Some of these should be accessible to senior secondary Science students.

Introduction—The modern design argument

Arguments using the complexity and apparent purpose within the universe to justify belief in God go back as far as scripture, for example Psalm 19. They have also featured throughout the Christian era, with the high point of the genre often seen as the 1802 publication of Paley’s, *Natural Theology*.¹ However, it was widely assumed that, over time, the attacks by Hume and Darwin fatally compromised such arguments. It has therefore come as a surprise to many that, due particularly to discoveries in molecular biochemistry and cosmology, a significant revival of Design has taken place over the last few decades. Such thinking urges that more has been claimed for naturalistic evolutionary mechanisms than could be demonstrated. Understandably, such revelations have been embraced by theists of every

persuasion, giving rise to a burgeoning literature on “Design”.

A plausible design argument

Although all theists obviously acknowledge God as the cosmic Designer and Originator, there is considerable disagreement over the sense in which this is so and over the optimal formulation of the contemporary Design argument. This has given rise to a substantial range of approaches to the Design argument, the most visible variant currently being Intelligent Design. Perhaps the two most significant ideas advanced by ID are Behe’s irreducible complexity² and Dembski’s three-stage causal filters.³ Two other well-known authors within this movement are Johnson and Wells.⁴

While Intelligent Design clearly regards natural law as emanating from the designer, it also insists that these laws provide an inadequate explanation for some phenomena, and hence that the designer had to intervene in order to bring them about. Thus this agent is seen as acting contingently as well as through natural law. According to ID, the strongest evidence for a designer is seen in cases of contingency, that is, in those circumstances for which no natural explanation appears to be forthcoming.

For this reason, most Christians in the scientific community see the ID movement as straying perilously close to the old “God of the Gaps” argument.⁵ As science advances, providing more natural explanations, the room for such a Designer will be reduced until, like the Cheshire Cat, only His benign smile will remain! While endorsing ID opposition to the philosophical naturalism of contemporary science, they maintain that it is possible, in fact essential, to practice science as methodological naturalists.⁶ In other words, a Christian actually does coal-face science in a manner indistinguishable from that of his / her secular colleagues, in that they search for explanations *within* natural law.

As these Christians look at the universe, they do not expect to find objects stamped ‘made by God’, in the ID fashion. John Polkinghorne takes the view that the Creator’s activity can be reasonably expected to be more subtle than that, just as His divine presence on earth was not so commanding of belief as to compel allegiance. In other words, while

“We might anticipate that we will find God to be neither totally hidden nor totally revealed in His works”

it would be “perplexing to theistic belief if there were no footprints of the Creator found at all, it would be surprising if they were of so unambiguous a kind as to overwhelm the free exploration of the human mind into the nature of reality”. On this basis, we might anticipate that we will find God to be neither totally hidden nor totally revealed in His works.⁷

In order to aid this discussion, the terms “natural” and “supernatural” may themselves require fundamental critique. John Polkinghorne suggests that what we interpret as natural laws is simply the continual outworking of God’s will in the universe. While this “Divine Will” is constant enough upon which to build science, it can be, and indeed has been, differently manifested in what we have commonly but misleadingly called miracles. In fact, all reality reflects God’s ultimate causality and can be regarded as either “natural” or “supernatural” as one chooses. Accordingly, God is as surely the Creator today as He ever was.⁸ Clearly, Polkinghorne’s suggestion effectively removes the divide upon which ID is based, the idea of “special” Divine intervention. A more detailed discussion of the taxonomy of the design landscape has been presented elsewhere.⁹

Cosmic design evidences

It is within this context that most Christians discern a valid design argument emerging from the compelling order and structure we observe in our cosmic tapestry. The richness of this tapestry is seen as most coherent and comprehensible when understood as the artistry of a Being of overwhelming power, morality, intelligence and aesthetics. It is to the examination of five of these cosmic footprints that we now turn.

1. The anthropic nature of the universe

It is almost 100 years since aspects of the fine tuning of our universe for life were highlighted by Harvard’s Laurence Henderson.¹⁰ A little later, following his discovery of the delicately balanced nuclear resonances giving rise to useful amounts of carbon, the basic building block of life, Fred Hoyle observed:

A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me to be so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.¹¹

Since then, and particularly over the last three decades, many others have built on this foundation.¹² Denton’s *Nature’s Destiny* essentially updates Henderson’s earlier work and contains a great deal of data on the fine tuning of the universe for

life which is very accessible for secondary science students.¹³ Interestingly, most of these writers are non-Christian. The apparent customisation of the universe for life, and even for human existence, has become known as the *anthropic principle*. Martin Rees, the astronomer royal, has recently written a book elaborating on six of these securing coincidences.¹⁴ Let me mention the three most accessible of these examples, although there are many more such serendipities that could be noted.

1. In our universe the ratio of the strength of the electrical force to that of the gravitational force is 10^{36} , a staggeringly huge number. Stars are held together by gravity but radiate their energy by electromagnetic radiation: visible light, x-rays, radio waves etc. It transpires that if this ratio were slightly different on either side, stars would either not ignite as nuclear furnaces, or burn up far too quickly, in either case being unable to support life in the way our sun does.
2. Another of the six (dimensionless) numbers noted by Rees is the ratio of the actual density of the universe to the so-called critical density. The explosive force of the Big Bang tends to dissipate the fragments, hence the current expansion of our universe. However, this is opposed by the force of gravity, which tends to pull everything together. Sufficient mass density in the universe would just halt the expansion and turn it back on itself. It seems that the actual density of our universe is within 1 part in 10^{50} of this critical density. If the universe were not so finely balanced, it would have concluded well before this, with insufficient time to produce the higher elements in the fusion furnaces of stars and to scatter them around by supernovae, eventually to form planets such as ours, on which life could be nurtured. For, to the best of our understanding, we are made of the ashes of dead stars.
3. When, in 1963, Penzias and Wilson discovered the cosmic microwave background radiation, understood to be a vestigial remain of the Big Bang, it was thought to be completely even (or isotropic). This, however, presented a problem. If the mass was so evenly distributed within the early universe, how could galaxies have ever begun to form? Recent observations by the COBE and WMAP satellites have detected small lumps (or anisotropies) which answer this question, but present another. Why did the universe develop this small unevenness, at the scale of 1:100,000, without clumping

“*The apparent customisation of the universe for life, and even for human existence, has become known as the ‘anthropic principle’*”

up too much? This turns out to be another incredibly fine balancing act.

Clearly, our universe is unexpectedly bio-friendly, displaying an exquisite, and by no means necessary, compatibility with carbon-based life. It appears that the Big Bang was ignited in such a way as to produce just that universe which would allow the later nurture of life.

The secularist response has often been to dismiss the intrigue by claiming that since we wouldn't be here to wonder about it if it hadn't happened, retrospective evaluation of probabilities is pointless! This is sometimes called the *weak anthropic principle*. However, the weakness of this response has been frequently pointed out. For example, Ozolins¹⁵ suggests a rather unpleasant thought experiment in which one imagines a firing squad of 100 highly trained marksmen, all with the cross-hairs of their sights fixed on one's heart! One hears the signal to shoot, only to be astounded to find oneself still standing as the sound of firing dies away. While it is true that one would not be wondering anything if the outcome had been different, this does not obviate the need for an explanation. A firing squad of that size and expertise simply does not miss. Somebody important must have intervened.

Alternatively, some secularists have claimed a vast portfolio of parallel universes, all with different laws, in which our scenario just happens to be the "winning ticket", as it were, in a gigantic cosmic lottery. However, this rather prodigal replication of universes is pure metaphysical speculation and is currently beyond scientific verification.

2. The existence of complexity within our universe

Studies over the last two decades have considerably advanced our understanding of the nature and

emergence of complexity in our universe. Reality appears to exist as a tiered, somewhat fractal hierarchical structure which may be represented as shown in Figure 1, where only the right hand side contains life and sentience.

Each of these levels has an appropriate symbol set and syntax. At the lowest level, both matter and radiation are not only quantised but exhibit significant ontological uncertainty and unpredictability. As we ascend the hierarchy scale, we find more regularities emerging, although, as chaos theory has revealed, uncertainties persist even at higher levels. Although each level is clearly causally dependent on lower levels, considerable de-coupling between levels arises from what are called "emergent properties" where, in a sense, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Atoms exhibit quite different behaviour to quarks. Molecules can have very different properties to their constituent atoms, for which reason most of Chemistry requires no deep knowledge of atomic physics, and almost none of particle physics, which is rather an advantage for Chemistry students! For example, explosive and corrosive sodium and chlorine become safely ingestible salt. Similarly, the reactive gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form liquid water. Wetness is an emergent and macroscopic property. One cannot say that each water molecule is just a little wet. Indeed, it seems most reasonable to regard life itself as an emergent phenomenon. There is no evidence to support older vitalistic notions whereby "the little bits" are "alive".

Further, we find that lower levels of the hierarchy contain quite small symbol sets. At the level of particle physics the subatomic 'particle zoo' is continually growing but still quite manageable. At the level of atomic physics there are only a few hundred naturally occurring atomic isotopes, grouped into just 92 chemical elements. However, at the next level the number of combinations of these basic entities becomes huge. For example, it is estimated that the number of possible bio-molecules is 10^{121} , i.e. more than the number of particles in the universe. In a similar manner, the entire ecosphere is based on endless variants of a single molecule, DNA. Clearly, genuinely complex systems are only possible at levels characterised by large possibility landscapes.

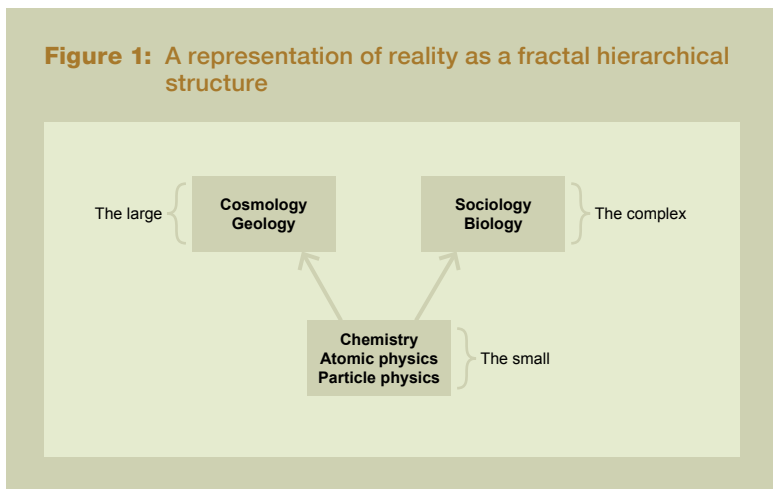
Further, it seems that complexity is closely related to chaotic dynamics, in that genuine complexity is only possible at the interface between uninteresting and sterile stability and wild and destructive chaos. Waldrop has explored the historical emergence of this realisation.¹⁶

Another apparently essential feature of complexity is the interplay between what are called bottom-up and top-down causalities. An underlying

“Genuine complexity is only possible at the interface between uninteresting and sterile stability and wild and destructive chaos”

”

Figure 1: A representation of reality as a fractal hierarchical structure



bottom-up causality operating in nature has already been identified in the preceding discussion, in that each level of the hierarchical structure just discussed is obviously causally dependent on the adjacent lower level. However, the concept of bottom-up causality may be considerably broadened. Examples include:

- any response to natural law, such as a falling motion due to gravity;
- the expression of the genetic code, resulting in a particular cellular function or the development of a particular organ; and
- the death of an individual due to heart failure induced by clogged cardiovascular arteries.

Such bottom up causality might be expected from a universe developing from a Big Bang. However, our universe also displays top-down causality, in which action at a higher level changes the nature of components at all lower levels. Examples of top-down causality include:

- nucleo-synthesis in the early universe, where the H / He ratio was determined by the effect of the expansion rate on the cooling of the primordial gas;
- the extension of the 111 minute half-life of free neutrons to a much longer time when the neutrons are bound in nuclei;
- the alteration of the predominant ongoing genetic code by the adaptive processes of natural selection in response to environment;
- the quantum measurement process, in which the act of observation collapses the quantum wave function onto a single basis vector; and
- the effect of the mind on the body, e.g. volitional movement of the hand.

The simultaneous interplay of both types of causality produces cybernetic systems, in which bi-directional feedback alters system states. Interestingly, the outcomes or end-states of such systems are determined not by the initial conditions but by the specific nature of these feedback systems, which are designed into the system from without, usually in our experience, by an intelligence who must first conceive of the desired end-state. In this sense, end-states must first exist in the abstract before they can be physically realised in a complex system. This is very different to classical, bottom-up causality, the rather closed domain of classical Physics. (Interestingly not even Physics can completely characterise its own nature and activity within its own paradigm. It cannot, for example, predict what the next experiment will be!)

Ellis notes that much of the fine tuning of our universe for human life noted earlier seems to involve very specific outcome states for incredibly complex systems.¹⁷ Different hierarchical levels

interact through multiple feedback loops involving many different bottom-up and top-down causalities. If, as noted above, the end states of such systems depend more on these linkages than on the initial conditions, and if the linkages follow from an abstract conception of the end state, it seems reasonable to suppose that an intelligence sufficient to the task wanted us here and set up the required algorithms. This would seem to be one of the main messages of the Biblical creation account.

3. The highly relational nature of our universe

Somewhat related to the preceding point, the last 100 years has revealed a fundamental and previously unsuspected relational depth to physical reality. Classical Physics had simply assumed a classical Euclidian geometry, in which the absolute and independent nature of space and time were axiomatic. This realm provided location for interactions of matter and energy, each of which was understood to be absolutely conserved. However, Einstein's introduction of special relativity in 1905 and general relativity in 1915 revealed a deep nexus between space and time, such that physicists now speak of the four dimensional continuum of "space-time". Further, in such a relativistic universe there is no intrinsic difference between matter and energy: rather they are related by the famous equation $E = mc^2$. Even more breathtaking is Einstein's realisation that matter-energy cannot exist independently of space-time and vice versa. There is no such thing, for example, as empty space-time. John Archibald Wheeler's famous encapsulation of general relativity: "Matter tells space how to curve and space tells matter how to move," beautifully illustrates this symbiosis.¹⁸ It also articulates an unexpected relationship between the fundamental bottom-up effect of matter on space-time and the top-down effect of space-time on the motion of matter. The relativistic world is indeed much less absolute and much more relational and interdependent than the Newtonian.

It is the same for Quantum Theory. We find, for example, that in most instances the mechanism by which atoms are bonded together to form a molecule is through cooperatively sharing electrons. The "atomic orbitals" give way to hybridised "molecular orbitals" in which it cannot be said that every electron belongs to just one atom.

The subatomic world has even stranger linkages, such as the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) effect, in which any change to the state of a particle which has been earlier associated with another particle, produces instant ontological change in that second particle. Einstein felt that this effect was so spooky that he thought there was something wrong with

“It seems reasonable to suppose that an intelligence sufficient to the task wanted us here and set up the required algorithms”

“*Could it be that such cosmic relational richness is simply a reflection of a Creator so intrinsically relational as to be best pictured as three in one?*”

quantum mechanics. However, this “non-locality” or “entanglement”, as it is sometimes called, has now been convincingly confirmed by experiment. As Polkinghorne points out, this is quite different from simply an epistemological effect. Suppose, for example, that both of us take a ball unseen from a bag known to contain two balls, one white and one black, and go our separate ways. If you later look at your ball and find it to be black, you at least then know that mine is white, and there is nothing remarkable about that. The EPR effect, however, is more akin to my ball spontaneously changing colour to black if you paint yours white, no matter how far we may have separated!¹⁹ This non-locality is intrinsically relational: it is not something wrong with quantum physics. In so many ways, nature seems to fight back against a crass reductionism. Could it be that such cosmic relational richness is simply a reflection of a Creator so intrinsically relational as to be best pictured as three in one?

4. The unexpected intelligibility of the universe

It has been pointed out that our understanding of our universe far exceeds any conceivable survival necessity. We can penetrate both the subatomic world, down to the smallest particles, and the vast reaches of space-time. Although many features of the small and the large may be considered counter intuitive, nevertheless, we can understand them.

Since the time of Galileo, we have increasingly realised that Mathematics is the key to such an understanding, both for the microcosm within and for the cosmos without. Indeed, the Nobel prize-winning physicist, Paul Dirac, told his students that if they had to choose between a theory that had no obvious factual support but possessed great mathematical elegance, and one that seemed compatible with the facts but was mathematically clumsy, they should always choose the former. The facts would appear in due time!²⁰ Dirac demonstrated the truth of his maxim by an astonishingly fruitful life of scientific discovery. Now, it may be true that such mathematical beauty is easier to recognize than describe, also that Mathematics is a rather austere form of aesthetic pleasure; nonetheless, it is one of the manifestos of modern Physics that Mathematics is a reliable guide to physical reality.

Speaking of mathematical comprehensibility, Einstein remarked that the “most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible”.²¹ Science is just glad that things are that way, but a deeper metaphysical instinct within us asks, why?

Ellis, with Penrose, takes the view that Mathematics is essentially discovered, not created. In this sense pi, the Pythagoras law, and Mandelbrot

sets were waiting there to be revealed.²² Many scientists believe in this transcendent aspect of Mathematics strongly enough to believe that any other civilisations existing within our universe must surely have discovered such mathematical entities. Thus, in their search for extra terrestrial intelligence, they look out for such signals; hence, the search for primes, Julia sets and Fibonacci series in our SETI.

A related and most interesting question is whether Mathematics controls or simply describes Physics. Both options have problems. If Mathematics controls, then how? If Mathematics simply describes, then why so well? For the theist a comprehensive and satisfying synthesis comes through the recognition that these two realities have a common origin in the rationality of God, who is the ground of both our rational thinking within and our discovery without. Polkinghorne observes:

The universe is shot through, in its rational beauty, with signs of mind. Could it be that science is only possible in this deep way because the universe is a creation and we are creatures in the image of its Creator?²³

5. Our universe being the realm of consciousness, values and aesthetics

Without doubt, the most amazing feature of our universe is consciousness, particularly self-consciousness. Through humanity, the universe is now aware of itself. We are stardust contemplating the stars. Although they are bigger, we have no trouble persuading ourselves that we are more significant. Size and significance are certainly not the same thing! Of course, although we come to consciousness at least once a day, and have been studying it for years, we have little understanding of it beyond identifying its seat in the brain. Sometimes we speak of this ignorance as the mind-brain problem. Polkinghorne notes that we really do not know much about even the simplest mental sensation, such as seeing green or feeling hungry. He goes on to say that while he does not rejoice in our current ignorance, neither does he wish to capitulate to premature reductionist claims that we are just computers made of meat. It seems clear that we are something more interesting than that and thinking is much more than computation.²⁴ In this sense, humans are causally effective in a different way to machines.

In a similar way the existence of moral values cries out for explanation. We intuitively know that it is not right to betray our national interests or to torture children. The physical world is inescapably the arena of such moral imperatives and ethical choices. Once again, these innate instincts go well beyond any demonstrated evolutionary necessity. Theistic belief,

however, provides an intelligible explanation in terms of a universal moral code emanating from a moral Creator. God is much more like father than like force. Thus the bringing into being of humanity in God's moral image, although relatively late in the timescale of the universe, yields a vital clue to the nature and purpose of evolving natural history.

Our universe is also the carrier of beauty. We have a very persuasive sense that our experiences of beauty are encounters with reality at a deep level. Music, for example, is more than a neural response to airwaves. The same is true of religious experiences, which are widely attested. These cannot be simply dismissed as epi-phenomenal curiosities or incredibly happy accidents.

Conclusion

As Paul Davies has pointed out, this universe, like the little bear's porridge, seems to be just right.²⁵ When Robinson Crusoe saw the footprints on the sand he knew he was not alone. I suggest that although perhaps not as definitively, we too can discern footprints in the features and complexities of our environment and infer that we have company. At the very least, this paper demonstrates that the Christian worldview does not necessarily involve believing six impossible things before breakfast, as the White Queen asserted to Alice that she had once done! **TEACH**[®]

Endnotes

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“We have a very persuasive sense that our experiences of beauty are encounters with reality at a deep level”

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The effectiveness of the methods of reciprocal teaching

As applied within the NSW primary subject *Human Society and its Environment*: An exploratory study

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Abstract

Reciprocal teaching (RT) is a process involving four distinct activities (questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting) employed in a student-led, team approach to develop reading comprehension skills among primary students. In this study a series of readings were prepared for a topic taught within the NSW key learning area of Human Society and its Environment (HSIE). The readings were used in a study comparing the effects of RT with those of a more traditional approach to reading. A mixed-method procedure was employed with 25 Year Four students who were divided into two groups (control and experimental) balanced for age, sex and ability. Both groups were pre- and post-tested for their knowledge of information supplied within the readings. An analysis of variance of the results indicated no detriment to the use of the RT procedures in comparison to the effective traditional approach taken by the home-teacher. Further, exit interviews with, and journal entries of students from both groups suggested that while the students in the control group viewed reading as a decoding process, the students from the RT group had begun to internalise the questioning and clarifying strategies and viewed reading as a process of dealing with ideas (comprehension).

Introduction

The average worker of the future will need the ability to gather, organise and interpret information of all types (Rowe, 2005). In order to prepare students for their future roles in life, teachers need to ensure that cognitive and metacognitive reading skills are explicitly taught to their students (Rowe, 2005). Research indicates that poor readers evolve into poor thinkers who lack the strategies needed to think

and write well (Afassi, 2004). The ability to read with discernment and write with clarity contributes greatly to academic success and teachers who fail to teach effective literacy skills to their students are not preparing them for their future (Stefani, 1998).

This paper reviews the broad detail of the reading process and introduces reciprocal teaching (RT) as one means of developing sound literacy skills while at the same time developing students' ability to think critically (Biggs & Moore, 1993; Carr, 1990). The paper presents the results of a mixed-method pilot study with a Year Four class within the subject, Human Society and its Environment (HSIE), in which the RT strategies were compared with those of an effective but more traditional approach to reading text appropriate to the subject.

The reading process

Successful reading depends upon the simultaneous occurrence of two basic processes—text decoding and the comprehension of the resulting string of words (Kirby, 1988). Text is the collective name for the symbols that code elements of word-sounds (phonemes). Initial decoding involves the feature-identification of letters and their association with the essential phonemes that compose words (Grainger & Ziegler, 2008). By running these sounds together in their sequential order, the reader recreates the coded words. While early decoding requires concentrated effort and working memory involvement, practice permits skilled readers to automatically identify words from the sequential clustering of their constituent letters and ultimately from word shape itself (Seymour, 2008).

Comprehension is a function of working memory and begins at the word level (Just & Carpenter, 2002; Kirby, 1988). Strings of words create ideas that are given context and meaning through the involvement of structured knowledge (schemata) already coded

“Successful reading depends upon the simultaneous occurrence of two basic processes—text decoding and the comprehension of the resulting string of words”

into memory through prior experience. Thus, structured prior knowledge provides the guide as the basic ideas, gleaned from the text, are built into main ideas and themes. Because of the involvement of prior knowledge, comprehension is a top-down process and in order to ensure the efficiency of the comprehension process, the bottom-up decoding process needs to be made automatic so that working memory is free to throw its entire capacity into making sense of the text (Just & Carpenter, 2002).

Successful decoding alone is insufficient to ensure that readers understand text (Biggs & Moore, 1993). During early reading development many young readers can quickly learn to decode the appropriate word-sounds while understanding little of what they have read. Simply put, comprehension can fail even when decoding is successful. Teachers can compound this problem by focusing on decoding skills at the expense of the skills of comprehension.

One way of promoting early development of reading comprehension and critical thinking skills is to teach primary students a metacognitive approach to reading. Metacognitive practices combine three components of reading knowledge: a general knowledge of the reading process; awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses; and knowledge of the purpose for which the reading is being undertaken (Kirby, 1988). Metacognitive readers are aware that: focused attention is required in order to comprehend text; attention wanes over time; attention is greater if the reading material is interesting; and comprehension is greater if the material is familiar. Metacognitive readers are aware of their own proclivities and maximise their strengths and minimise their weaknesses. Metacognitive readers approach reading with a purpose and seek only the information that is relevant to this purpose. Finally, metacognitive readers create a record of the information necessary to their purpose. As a result, metacognitive readers plan for reading, monitor the process and judge the results of reading (Krause, Bochner & Duchesne, 2003). Metacognitive reading strategies can be taught at all levels (Center, 2005; Laverpool, 2008) and one way of teaching young readers to be metacognitive is to employ the procedures of RT (Biggs & Moore, 1993; Brown & Palincsar, 1985; Palincsar & Brown, 1983).

Reciprocal teaching (RT)

From a review of the literature in relation to reading comprehension, Palincsar and Brown (1984), concluded that effective reading comprehension was related to the following six key points:

- understanding both explicit and implicit meanings within text;

- activating appropriate and related background knowledge;
- focusing on prime content and excluding trivia;
- critically evaluating the content for internal consistency and comparing the content with existing knowledge;
- using periodic reviews as a part of ongoing monitoring of comprehension;
- drawing inferences to test predictions, interpretations and conclusions.

From this foundation, Palincsar and Brown (1986, p. 772) developed the RT process that, in their design, occurs within a social setting in which students work in teams numbering four or five students. Members of these teams are to take turns in reading the text aloud while other team-members follow the passage. Reciprocation occurs as each team-member successively assumes the responsibility of the instructor / coordinator for the team. The role of the instructor / coordinator is to lead out and ensure that the four strategies of RT, as listed below, are appropriately implemented. Firstly, these strategies are taught and modelled by the teacher who progressively passes responsibility for their implementation to the teams while monitoring and scaffolding the function of each successive instructor / coordinator within each of the teams. The four strategies are:

Questioning: The text is read and questions are posed about the content. When questioning the text, students are to concentrate on the main ideas and check their immediate level of understanding.

Clarifying: While the text is being read, students are to critically evaluate the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases and to draw upon the collective knowledge of the team members. In addition, they are to seek the essence of ideas, main ideas and themes contained in the text.

Summarising: When summarising, students are to re-state the main ideas and themes in their own words to ensure that they have fully understood them.

Predicting: At critical points in the reading of the text students are to pause to draw and test inferences from the text about future content.

Initially, teachers closely monitor the implementation of the four strategies, stepping in to correct and scaffold student-efforts. Over time, the student-run teams are to take increasing responsibility for the process, permitting the teacher to progressively remove him- or herself from team mechanics and to concentrate on facilitating and managing the process (Brown, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1986). Even so, teachers continue to provide feedback to student-teams about their implementation of the process.

“*Reciprocation occurs as each team-member successively assumes the responsibility of the instructor / coordinator for the team*”

A number of authors have commented on the strengths of RT (Biggs & Moore, 1993; Carter, 1997; Emms, 1988; Hart & Speece, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Moore, 1988). Firstly, it is an open process. The skills of effective reading comprehension are usually covert and poor readers can be unaware of strategies employed by the successful readers among their peers. RT makes the basic skills of effective reading comprehension visible to all. Since the process is open the teacher is able to evaluate each student's development of the strategies and provide specific feedback. Secondly, devolving team-leadership upon the students themselves increases the likelihood that basic reading skills will be internalised. Rotation of the leadership means all team-members will have the opportunity to internalise these skills. Thirdly, the social nature of the process makes it enjoyable and age-appropriate. In addition this social aspect reinforces the internalisation of skills. Fourthly, the RT process can be adapted and taught to almost any age-cohort and can even improve the reading skills of learning disabled students. Fifthly, the RT process operates within the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development of each student. Here, both the teacher and peers are available to scaffold individual student-efforts. Thus each student is permitted to develop reading skills at their own rate. Finally, there is strong evidence that RT is an effective teaching method that produces notable improvements in reading comprehension (Hattie, 2009).

Extending RT processes beyond literacy classes in English

For the most part, the exploration of the effectiveness of the RT process has been limited to literacy skills in the subject of English. Despite this, there have been occasional extensions into other subject areas. For example, Palincsar and Brown (1986) demonstrated that RT could be successfully employed with text arising from the disciplines of Science and Social Studies. In view of this, Hashey and Connors (2003) argued that the processes of RT should be regarded as a means of supporting curriculum implementation of literacy skills in subjects other than English.

This study examines the use of RT methods with a class of Year Four students using text prepared for the NSW subject of HSIE.

Research questions

- Can RT be applied to reading passages used with a Year Four class in the NSW subject of HSIE without impeding the learning that should take place?

- Is there evidence to suggest that, when the RT strategies are applied to reading passages employed in the subject of HSIE, students internalise and benefit from the skills involved?

Research method

This study was conducted with a regular Year Four class during the first author's practicum internship in the fourth year of his degree program. The study had the approval of a Human Research Ethics Committee and permission to conduct the study was sought and received from the respective authorities, including the parents of the Year Four students. Data were collected by a combination of quasi-experimental and qualitative methods.

Quasi-experimental approach

The initial plan involved the use of Raven's progressive matrices to provide a measure that would permit the students to be divided into two groups (an experimental group and a control group) that were balanced for sex, age and ability. However, the class teacher employed her prerogative to choose the two groups based on her knowledge of their backgrounds, abilities and social interactions. Her objective was not only to have two groups of roughly equivalent spreads of age, sex and ability, but two groups that were socially cohesive and easy to manage.

Both groups were exposed to the same set of prepared readings in the topic, 'Notable Events and Places in Australian History', within the HSIE Key Learning Area. The control group was taught by the class teacher who used her normal mode of instruction. Her reading strategies involved: directing the students to read aloud; using silent reading; teacher-led questioning; requesting re-reading of elements of text where she deemed this to be necessary; requiring the students to highlight elements of the text; and completing written exercises related to the readings. The experimental group was taught by the first author who employed RT procedures in handling the same readings. The RT method was explained and modelled. The students in the experimental group were divided into three teams of four students who initially employed the questioning and clarifying strategies and later added the summarising and predicting strategies.

Both the experimental and control groups were pre- and post-tested for their knowledge of the information contained in the readings. The objective was to compare the learning that took place in the experimental group with that of the control group.

The pre-test and post-test included a common core of questions in which a rubric was used for the purpose of marking. The quantitative data arising

“RT makes the basic skills of effective reading comprehension visible to all”

Table 1: Group membership by sex and age in years and months

	Control group	Experimental group	Total
Sex in each group			
Female	8	9	17
Male	5	3	8
Subtotal	13	12	25
Age in years and months			
8y 0m – 8y 5m	0	1	1
8y 6m – 8y 11m	3	2	5
9y 0m – 9y 5m	6	7	13
9y 6m – 9y 11m	4	2	6
Subtotal	13	12	25

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the ages of students and for their scores on the Ravens Matrices test as set against their group membership

Grouping	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Standard error mean
Age in months					
Control group	13	111.38	4.33	18.75	1.20
Experimental group	12	110.42	5.25	27.56	1.52
Ravens Matrices					
Control group	13	37.85	4.02	16.14	1.11
Experimental group	12	37.50	9.23	85.17	2.66

from this component of the research was subjected to descriptive analysis and the pre-test and post-test was subjected to statistical analysis.

Qualitative approach

The qualitative data was generated from student interviews, classroom observations and individual journal entries. Four representatives of varied abilities (as determined by their score on the Ravens Matrices test) were chosen from the control group and from the experimental group to participate in the semi-structured interviews. These were conducted following the completion of the unit and the post-test. Questions were neutral in nature and designed to avoid leading the participants. The key questions included:

- What did you enjoy?
- What did you learn?
- What was important to you?
- Has this unit helped improve your reading skills?
- How were you able to answer the questions?

Data was recorded in field notes by the first author.

In addition, all students were given four opportunities to make journal entries about their respective experiences. Three of these came during

the teaching of the unit and the fourth was made at the completion of the unit but prior to the post-test. These were based on a set of stimulus statements and were followed by a free response section. The stimulus statements included:

- Things I found interesting;
- Activities I enjoyed;
- Things I want to know about;
- My comments.

Results

It can be seen from Table 1 that there were twice as many girls as boys in the Year Four class and that the control group contained two more boys than the experimental group. The table also indicates a fairly even distribution of participants by age. Table 2 provides the mean ages and the variances for age for the two groups and the means in measures of ability of the two groups (using Ravens Matrices). T-tests indicated no significance in the means for age ($t = 0.51$; $p = 0.65$) and in the means for ability ($t = 0.12$; $p = 0.91$).

These results permit the assumption that, for the purposes of the study, the control group and the experimental group were alike in terms of their ages, sex and ability. There is another implication here as

“All students were given four opportunities to make journal entries about their respective experiences”

Figure 1: Representation of the pre-test and post-test scores for the control and experimental groups

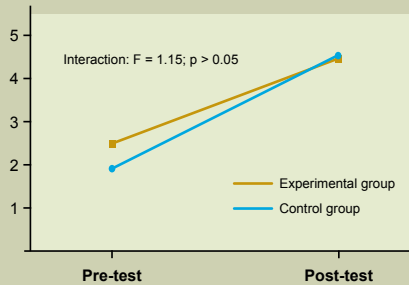


Table 3: Mean scores for the control and experimental groups as measured by the core-items included in the pre-test and post-test of knowledge gained from the set readings

Grouping	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Core items—pre-test				
Control group	13	1.92	0.760	0.578
Experimental group	8	2.50	1.195	1.428
Mean / Total	21	2.14	0.964	1.00
Core items—post-test				
Control group	13	4.54	1.330	1.77
Experimental group	8	4.50	1.195	1.43
Mean / Total	21	4.52	1.250	1.60

Table 4: Tests of significance in the differences in mean scores for the control and experimental groups as measured by the pre-test and post-test of knowledge arising from the set readings

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Pre-test					
Between groups	1.881	1	1.881	1.343	0.260
Within groups	29.423	21	1.401		
Total	31.304	22			
Post-test					
Between groups	0.108	1	0.108	0.068	0.797
Within groups	33.631	21	1.601		
Total	33.737	22			

well. The class teacher chose the members of the two groups based on her knowledge of her students. These results also indicate that this knowledge was both intimate and accurate.

Implications of the quantitative data

Table 3 indicates that the average of pre-test scores for all students was 2.14, while the mean scores on the pre-test for the control and experimental groups were 1.92 and 2.50 respectively. Analysis of variance (see Table 4) indicated that the mean scores for the control and experimental groups on the pre-test can be regarded as equivalent ($F = 1.34$; $p = 0.26$).

The intervention involved the use of the readings by both the control and experimental groups. In the control group, the class teacher employed her traditional approach to reading. In the experimental group, the first author employed the procedures of RT. In each team, the role of leader rotated as each new reading was introduced.

The post-test was administered at the conclusion of the intervention period. The mean score for all

students in the class was 4.52 while the mean scores for the control and experimental groups on the post-test were 4.54 and 4.50 respectively (see Table 4). Again the ANOVA (see Table 4) indicated no difference between the post-test mean scores for the control and experimental groups ($F = 0.68$; $p = 0.80$). These results are represented in Figure 1.

In relation to the pre- and post-tests, the questions to be answered are:

- Did learning take place in both the control and experimental groups?
- How did the learning in the experimental group compare with the learning in the control group?

A ‘mixed between—within subjects’ MANOVA was used to test these questions using the SPSS General Linear Model with repeated measures (Kinnear & Gray, 2008). The main effect (see Table 5) indicated that the post-test scores were significantly greater than the pre-test scores for both groups ($F = 64.5$; $p < 0.00$) suggesting that learning took place in both groups. The measure of effect size (partial eta squared = 0.77) suggests that these

“The main effect indicated that the post-test scores were significantly greater than the pre-test scores for both groups”

learning gains were meaningful. However, there was no interaction between group membership and the pre-test and post-test scores ($F = 1.15$; $p = 0.30$) suggesting that group membership had no effect on the learning that occurred.

These results indicate that there was no disadvantage in terms of the acquisition of content knowledge from the readings to the students placed in the experimental group where they undertook instructional activities involving RT as compared to the control group where students received teacher-focused reading instruction. This parity is doubly significant, given that the class teacher was experienced and had an intimate knowledge of her students while the first author was an internist who was new to the school. Further, the class teacher employed an array of effective teacher-focused direct teaching strategies. Thus, it can be argued that RT strategies in the hands of a teacher still gaining experience were comparable to a more traditional approach under the direction of an able and experienced teacher.

A further question now needs to be asked:

- Is there evidence to suggest that Year Four students in the experimental group internalised and benefited from the processes of RT?

The answer to this question lies in the qualitative data collected in the study.

The qualitative data

Research data was gathered from teacher-observations, student comments during the interviews and statements written in the student journals. The data suggests the following in relation to reciprocal teaching:

- Students from the experimental group appeared to engage enthusiastically with the RT process and reported enjoyment of it.
- The RT strategies provided a structured place for the expression of curiosity.
- Interviews and the students' journal entries gave evidence that the strategies of questioning and clarifying were generally internalised by the students in the experimental group.

- Through questioning and clarifying, students in the experimental group engaged with ideas arising from the text.
- The strategies of predicting and summarising appeared to be more difficult to master and the evidence suggests that the internalisation of these latter skills takes more time than for questioning and clarifying.
- The RT strategies changed the way students of the experimental group perceived the reading process.

Each of these six points will be addressed in turn.

Once the reading teams in the experimental group caught the intention of the questioning and clarifying strategies, they appeared to assume ownership of the process and were observed to enter into the activities with considerable enthusiasm. They scoured the text in a purposeful manner in order to create questions, locate points to be clarified or find answers to questions and explanations for obscure points. To the intern teacher, the nature of student involvement had a different feel to it than did their involvement in those sessions in which they responded to teacher-initiated activities and questions.

The RT framework provided a structured means of helping the students interrogate the text. Students gave evidence of mastering the questioning and clarifying strategies and used them to involve each other in the information included within the text. For example, the ancient roots of Aboriginal culture and the long occupancy of the Australian continent by Aboriginal peoples captured the attention of all the reading teams and there was prolonged discussion with conjectures of amazement. Six students from the experimental group commented on this fact in their journals. In comparison, only one student from the control group made reference to the ancient roots of Aboriginal culture. A second example of the value of the structured place for student-initiated questions within the RT strategies comes from an interview with a student from the control group. During this interview Student 8 asked the question, "Why did Charles deGroot cut the ribbon for the

“They scoured the text in a purposeful manner in order to create questions, locate points to be clarified or find answers to questions and explanations for obscure points”

”

Table 5: 'Mixed between-within groups' MANOVA providing main effects and the interaction for the pre-test and post-test

	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	Partial eta squared	F	Sig.
Intercept	448.72	1	448.72	0.93	261.34	0.00
Group	0.72	1	0.72	0.02	0.42	0.53
Pre-test / post-test (main effect)	52.75	1	52.75	0.77	64.50	0.00
Pre-test / post-test* group (interaction)	0.94	1	0.94	0.05	1.15	0.30
Error (pre-test / post-test)	15.54	19	0.82			
Error	32.62	19	1.72			

opening of the Harbour Bridge?” Later during the same interview, supplementary questions led to a discussion of Aboriginal culture and she made the statement, “I would like to hear one of their stories and see one of their dances.” Her query and statement indicate the kind of curiosity that leads to in-depth understandings. From the nature of the exchange within the interview, it appeared that neither the question nor comment was made in the control group class session. However, both question and comment would have had a legitimate place within the RT strategies, and Student 8 would have benefited from the discussions that her questions and comments would have provoked within an RT reading team.

During the end-of-activity interviews the students from the experimental group either directly referred to or implied benefit from the RT strategies. For example, Student 23 stated that through clarification she “had learned different words and how to pronounce them.” Student 24 said that questioning and clarification had “helped my concentration” and Student 6 indicated that questioning and clarification had improved her reading skills because “we were reading and spelled out [and talked about] the words we didn’t know.”

There is evidence that the strategies of questioning and clarification stimulated the students of the experimental group to engage with the ideas within the text. For example, in response to the journal stimulus statement, ‘Things I found interesting’, all members of the experimental group listed a minimum of two items covered in the unit. In contrast, five students from the control group offered no response at all. Further, in response to the stimulus statement, ‘Things I found interesting’, eight participants from the experimental group listed items of information and three of these eight listed two or more items of interest. In contrast four students from the control group listed one item of interest each. Observation indicated that the students in the experimental group reading teams actively processed information gleaned from the text as they questioned and clarified points of information. It can be argued that the use of these two RT strategies by the students encouraged them to engage with the ideas described in the text. Further, there is the suggestion that placing the responsibility for the employment of these two strategies upon the students themselves increased the depth and quality of the processing of the information.

The descriptions above indicate that the two strategies of questioning and clarifying were more fully utilised than were the strategies of predicting and summarising. For example, questioning and clarifying were mentioned or inferred by all students of the experimental group in either the journal or the interviews. In particular, Students 3, 7 and 16 stated

that the clarifying strategy had helped them learn new words. Student 3 said, “Yes, [through clarifying] I have learned different words and how to pronounce them.” In contrast, only one student, Student 23, described the usefulness of all four strategies. It appeared that she was the first student to gain a real understanding of the process of summarisation when she stated that “Predicting was helpful. Summarisation means going through the paragraph and remembering what happened.”

There is evidence that the RT process broadened the perception that students of the experimental group had of the reading process. For example, during the interviews three students from the control group responded to the question, “Has this unit helped improve your reading skills?” with a simple “No.” Of these, Student 8 (who scored highly on the Ravens Matrices test) asserted that she was already “a good reader”. Of the experimental group, three students indicated that their reading comprehension had improved and indicated that the clarifying strategy helped them most. As indicated above, Students 3, 7 and 16 indicated that the process of clarification had helped improve their vocabulary. The implication here is that the students of the experimental group began to link reading with the process of understanding, where as, it is likely that Student 8 perceived the reading process as one of decoding.

The foregoing paragraphs described the beneficial effects of implementing the four RT strategies. While they do not describe the teaching procedures of the home teacher, evidence suggests that she was highly competent and experienced. From her knowledge of her students, she was able to divide them into two groups that were balanced by age, sex and ability and in addition, the two groups were socially cohesive. In response to the specific question about enjoyment of the unit, all students indicated that they had enjoyed the unit content, the activities and the assignments.

Conclusion

This pilot study was undertaken to explore the benefit that the use of the four strategies of RT might bestow upon a class taught by a preservice teacher. In answer to the first research question, the results indicate that, in terms of the knowledge of content of the prepared readings, the students in the experimental group performed as well as the students from the control group. Hence, the students exposed to the RT strategies were not disadvantaged in relation to the knowledge of content. In other words, it can be argued that the RT strategies provided a structure that permitted an inexperienced preservice teacher to function in the manner of an experienced and knowledgeable teacher.

“*Placing the responsibility for the employment of these two strategies upon the students themselves increased the depth and quality of the processing of the information*”

“**Students’ involvement with the RT strategies changed the way they viewed the reading process**”

In response to the second research question, there is evidence that the students of the experimental group benefited from the use of the RT strategies in ways other than knowledge of the content of the readings. They gave evidence of finding the process interesting and were enthusiastic in their involvement. The RT process provoked curiosity and caused them to engage with the ideas within the readings. They also gave evidence of internalising particularly the strategies of questioning and clarifying. Finally, students’ involvement with the RT strategies changed the way they viewed the reading process. They appeared to implicitly see the process of reading as more than the decoding of text; it had become a way of deciphering the meaning implied by the readings.

Finally, the study indicates that RT strategies, which are intended to develop the skills of reading comprehension, can be extended to readings in subjects such as HSIE. As such, the RT process can be extended to all other subject areas that include subject-specific text, such as Science, Technology, History and so on. It must be remembered that RT is not a short-term process, but one that can be and should be continued throughout the years of primary and secondary education. Its use over time will also permit students to master the skills of summarisation and prediction. Most importantly, the RT process becomes a means of making literacy skills a major focus of education. **TEACH[®]**

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Loving the ‘unlovely’ Teachers share their response

Yvonne Judd

Teacher, Lillydale Adventist Academy, Vic

The Christian teacher’s response to ‘Loving the unlovely’ barely differs from that of teachers of any belief or non-belief system. All teachers regard the individual as paramount to their creed of providing equitable access to educational resources. Enabling students to capture a sense of their intrinsic worth regardless of stereotypical propaganda serves to establish an environment where learning can at least attempt to flourish. In that respect, the Christian teacher really has no differentiating approach to interacting with those who, for whatever reason, do not easily integrate into our societal norms of behaviour, appearance or demeanour. But there are some compelling reasons for the Christian teacher to seriously consider this issue.

By permitting the adage of ‘unlovely’, we are admitting that a standard of ‘loveliness’ exists. Charging an individual with ‘unloveliness’, we are referring to some stated or unstated criteria of ‘loveliness’. This standard can only be based upon subjective and idiosyncratic agendas. There is no collective standard as to what constitutes ‘loveliness’, or for that matter, ‘unloveliness’. It is our personal response to another that enables us to assess the extent to which that individual is inculcated into the norms we hold dear. This assessment of another’s behaviour or appearance fails to present as a valid measurement because the aspects being tested cannot be identified, measured or objectively clarified.

As Christian teachers, we are bound by another creed which states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It is the Christian dogma which highlights that all of us are indeed, ‘unlovely’. Regardless of our status, age, gender, education or presentation of societal norms, Christians believe that in the sight of our Creator we are all equal. Therefore, even if Christians adhere to the existence of ‘unloveliness’, according to our beliefs, the label applies to ourselves. Loving the ‘unlovely’ takes on a different slant when we perceive that we

are the ‘unlovely’. It is always a different outlook when we adopt the aspect of the other. Biblical teaching also denounces judgement of others (Luke 6:37). It does not stipulate or qualify the judgement; it is simply a command not to judge.

Christian teachers cannot differentiate between the ‘lovely’ and the ‘unlovely’. Biblical truth does not expound the norms that society holds dear; it only asks that we “love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves” (Mark 12:30–31). Simple but all encompassing. Our creed also presents us all as in need of serious correction, none of us can afford to ‘point the finger’ because we are all ‘unlovely’.

Craig Vogel

Teacher, Avondale School, NSW

The old saying, “To err is human, to forgive divine”, may influence us to believe that true forgiveness is impossible for mere mortals. Is “loving the unlovely” also impossible for mere mortals and thus educators?

It is the end of a long term, two days before holidays and the students have already been on vacation mentally for several days. You are under pressure to complete a unit of work that has gone overtime. The lesson has been meticulously planned, with strategies and activities all focussing on the prescribed outcomes. Students arrive in a festive mood more suited to celebration than learning. You gain control of the class and proceed with the lesson. You are highly focussed. One student then proceeds to sabotage everything you do and destroys the tone with rude and inappropriate comments. You remove the student from class. The student begins to argue irrationally and make personal comments about you and your anatomy, using language borrowed from the local building site. Truly an unlovely moment, but is this student unlovely and undeserving of our love?

1 John 4:7–21 speaks directly to the question of whom we should love and why we should love. “We love because God first loved us” (v. 19). In



“*Loving the ‘unlovely’ takes on a different slant when we perceive that we are the ‘unlovely’*”

verse 21 it clearly states, “The command that God has given us is this: whoever loves God must love his brother also.”

It is clear then that we must “love the unlovely”. However, we don’t have to accept the unacceptable behaviours. Often the line between a student’s unacceptable behaviour and that student as one of God’s children gets very blurred. Our greatest task is to maintain a clear vision so that the person can be loved whilst the unacceptable is dealt with. To achieve this, I believe we need a continuing relationship with our God, a God of love.

Neva Taylor

Principal, Hurstville Adventist School, NSW

To love a student who is labelled as “unlovely” ... What does this mean?

Many things could cause educators to classify their students as unlovely. This category may include those that are unattractive, have a behaviour problem, have a physical or intellectual disability, have pushy parents, are from a disadvantaged family, are from a different cultural or religious background, lack confidence or are simply obnoxious. All these labels can influence a teacher’s feelings of love for a child.

It was in Year 3 that I decided I wanted to become a teacher. Why? I wanted to help children feel loved and cared for and to have confidence in themselves. I wanted them to enjoy school and have a love of learning. As a young student, I had a love of learning but never had confidence in myself and never felt valued by the teacher. At the tender age of nine, I was determined to show the world how to teach with love and compassion for my students! Well, I don’t know whether I have truly achieved that, but I try, and it is something that is foremost in my mind each day as I deal with children.

One thing I have told myself for the past 30 years as an educator is that all my students are equal and all are loved by Jesus, even those whom we may think are unlovely. As Christian teachers, our mission should be to love all students that God makes a part of our lives. His love is unconditional and He doesn’t choose which of us He will love. “We love because God first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

We can make a difference in the lives of our students by going out of our way to help those whom we consider unlovely. Why might a

particular student be unlovely? Maybe they have never experienced love so do not know how to show love to someone else. Maybe a lack of confidence hinders them from participating in class activities and forming friendships.

Students need to feel our love now more than ever. Who knows, school may be the only place they feel secure and the teacher the only example of love. How might we show our love for the unlovely?

- Have a spirit of forgiveness—give them chances and opportunities to prove themselves rather than demean them.
- Discipline in private.
- Show a spirit of acceptance.
- Give praise and respect where and when it is due. My father would always remind me that if I wanted respect from my students, I would have to earn it by showing respect to them.
- Nurture confidence so they can progress through life with a feeling of achievement.
- Ask for Divine guidance. Pray with and for those we find unlovely in our class and ask God to help us love the unlovely so that His love can shine through us to those in our care. Ask Him for guidance to know what each child needs.

In conclusion, the impact and success that we as Christian teachers have on these students may not be seen in the short term. Furthermore, success is not necessarily witnessing a change in the students’ lives, although we pray it will be, success is doing what God wants us to do. By grasping God’s unconditional love and continually demonstrating it to all our students, success will be ours.

“The way you give to others is the way God will give to you.” (Luke 6:38). TEACH



“Our greatest task is to maintain a clear vision so that the person can be loved whilst the unacceptable is dealt with”



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"I pray that your love... will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on **growing** in your knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters..."
Philippians 1: 9-11



What's so jolly about phonics?

Coralie Fraser

Kindergarten teacher, Avondale School, Cooranbong, NSW

What is Jolly Phonics?

'Jolly Phonics'!?... I had never seen anything remotely 'jolly' about phonics. A friend from a sister school had been waxing lyrical about it and I was sceptical.

After viewing how it worked in her classroom, I was left feeling overwhelmed about where to start to put it into practice in my classroom—something I was sure I wanted to do. With a plethora of aids available but limited funds, we decided to buy only the textbook at first. From there we wanted to work out how to make it our own.

Jolly Phonics was started in England by Sue Lloyd and is, simply stated, a multi-sensory way of quickly and efficiently learning the alphabet. The 26 letters, in addition to 16 digraphs, are included, making a total of 42 sounds. Sue Lloyd maintains that all 42 sounds can be taught in nine weeks by doing a new letter or digraph every day.

Teaching the letters and sounds

Children learn each letter and sound through a variety of multi-sensory activities and a simple action for each.

Sue Lloyd introduces letters and digraphs. We choose to disregard her letter order and introduce our own. In the first term, we cover all the letters of the alphabet—approximately three a week. We do them in the following order and give each group our own title.

1. Straight down letters—i l t j f
2. Across the top letters—c o a d g q
3. Down, up and over the hill letters—r n m p h b k
4. Down in the valley letters—v u y w
5. No relation letters—e s x z

Generally speaking, this order allows each new letter to build on the shape of previously learned letters.

At the beginning of Term 1, we test the children to see how many letters they can read and write. At the end of the Term, we repeat the test. The results are placed in each student's portfolio. We place the

Here's an example of how we teach 'Tt'

We introduce the letter with a story about going to watch a tennis match. We pretend we're following the ball with our eyes from left to right and we make a 't' sound each time the ball lands. This is the action associated with the sound 't'. We also eat tiny teddies while we pretend to watch the tennis.

After our initial story introduction, we break into groups to do rotation activities.

1. Children stick toothpicks on a large 't' shape.
2. They roll play dough and place it over 't' laminated cards.
3. They use play dough to make objects that begin with 't'.
4. They practise writing 't' (and previously learnt letters) on whiteboards.
5. They draw pictures of things that start with 't'.
6. They trace a sand letter 't' with their fingers and sing T says 't' to the tune of 'Skip to my Lou'.
7. They load teddies on trains with ten in each carriage.
8. They crawl through tunnels of chairs in a 't' shape.

“Children learn each letter and sound through a variety of multi-sensory activities and a simple action for each”



[Photography:
Coralie Fraser]

Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

pages next to each other so the parents can see the progress made in one Term.

At the end of Term 1, we send home a bound book that contains a craft or activity to match each letter of the alphabet. It has the child's photo on the laminated cover along with the title, 'Tyson's amazing alphabet book'. This production is highly prized by its owners. In Terms 2 and 3, we choose to introduce one digraph a week. At the same time, we spend a revision week on each alphabet letter, reinforcing our Term 1 learning and enriching it with a variety of language experiences.

Jolly Phonics and reading

Jolly Phonics deals with words that cannot be sounded out by referring to them as 'tricky' words, which are learnt as sight words. We refer to them as 'disobedient' words, that is, they don't obey our sounding out rules.

At the same time as we are learning our letters in first Term, the children also take home flip cards with their sight words to learn. Children are able to work at their own pace. Additional words are added to the ring when the child demonstrates competency with the current word list.

Jolly Phonics fun fair

To celebrate our achievements at the end of Term 1, we have a Jolly Phonics Fun Fair. We ask that each child bring a parent, special relative or friend with whom to enjoy the special event, which runs for the whole morning.

Our fair has 26 stalls, one for each letter of the alphabet. These stalls range from A for curly whirly apples to J for jumping castle, and P for painting plaster moulds to F for face painting. The groups spend 6 minutes at each stall, changing over when the bell rings. A leader is assigned to each group to help the children fully participate in the activities.

Each student receives a paper bag to hold special things collected throughout the morning and to carry their alphabet book. Each paper bag has

a letter printed on it to indicate the station at which the child should start. When they first get to a stall, students need to find the appropriate letter in their alphabet book and have the page stamped. This gives additional visual reinforcement of the letter.

The fair is a great way to round off a term of fun experiences and yes, I have to agree, it has been 'jolly!' TEACH

Jolly Phonics fun fair letter stations

- A — Curly whirly apples
- B — Ball pit
- C — Crazy critters
- D — Dress-ups
- E — Decorating eggs
- F — Face painting
- G — Gator rides
- H — Hat decorating
- I — Ice cream
- J — Jumping castle
- K — Fruit kebabs
- L — Lego
- M — Marshmallow mice
- N — Noodle necklace
- O — Obstacle course
- P — Plaster painting
- Q — Quiz and quoits
- R — Rocket launch
- S — Sand play
- T — Tea party
- U — Useful box
- V — Vegetable prints
- W — Water play
- X — X hunt
- Y — Yo-yos & yo-yos
- Z — Zoobs & zoos

“To celebrate our achievements at the end of Term 1, we have a Jolly Phonics Fun Fair”



[Photography:
Coralie Fraser]

For further information or jolly phonics resources, contact Coralie Fraser: cfraser@avondaleschool.nsw.edu.au

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RESOURCE REVIEWS

The New Start program

(2008). Beacon Media.

A health and nutrition curriculum for the primary school

Lorraine Nagayah & Timothy Rogers
Teachers, Lighthouse Christian College, Vic



Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Toxin-free, Air, Rest, Trust in God.

You are what you eat—brain food promotes learning and junk food stymies academic attainment and interferes with athletic and social performance. These are the starting premises of a nutrition program that draws on the Bible and modern research for its application. Critics say students will choose confectionary and soft drink over healthy foods; the advertisers have it all their way. Is there good reason to bother with a concerted effort to promote a healthy lifestyle in the face of such a deluge of processed foods and fast junk food?

In 2008, Lighthouse Christian College, introduced the *New Start* nutrition program in the primary school. This program provided the topics for our SOSE and Science programs for Term 2.

Topics covered over the course of 9 weeks included the following:

- Prep—Healthy food choices; the human body and its needs for growth
- Year 1—Foods from the farm and factory; shopping for healthy food
- Year 2—Foods from around the world; safety in the kitchen
- Year 3—Planning a healthy meal; taste buds; exercise and fitness

- Year 4—Seeds, plants and plant foods
- Year 5—Processed food and unprocessed food; alternatives to junk food
- Year 6—A balanced diet; a study of body systems

New Start provided us with material for a whole term's work, including student work sheets and ideas for hands-on activities.

A student food and fitness diary provided home-school communication as parents worked with the children on challenges that encouraged them to try new healthy foods. Many students were delighted to have their taste buds invigorated by the taste of fresh whole foods. One student commented: "Fast food just doesn't taste so good any more."

Art activities were integrated with the food theme. Children enjoyed making "vegetable men", vegetable prints, as well as charming seed and pasta collages. "My celery stick man reminds me to always eat green things every day and I love his cheeky face, don't you? (Prep student) Some classes grew vegetable seeds and used drawings to record the progress.

At Lighthouse Christian College, we integrate our devotional themes with classroom topics as part of our God-centred curriculum. *New Start* gave us more than just practical tools for SOSE and Science; it provided us with integrated Biblical material. Examples of Biblical principles are as follows: God is our Provider as evidenced in the loaves and fishes story (Matthew 14); God is our Creator, creating the elements to sustain life (Genesis 1); God is Wisdom, evidenced in the wisdom of Solomon (Proverbs). Taking responsibility for our own health and making right choices has its roots in God's Word.

Responsibility, thankfulness, appreciation, integrity, honesty and self-control are amongst the leading behaviours and attitudes observed as students at our school responded to this program. These are some of the Christian values that are the outworking of a true understanding that God is a loving provider who has created the foods that keep our immune systems strong and healthy.

We have noted positive changes to our academic performance and we enjoy a harmonious community within the multicultural student body. This is partly due to the implementation of this program. The *New Start* program has been very beneficial and we will continue to make it an annual focus at our school. **TEACH**

For more information on this resource, go to www.beaconmedia.com.au/health.htm



New Start students Caleb Stephens and Olivia Simpson
[Photography: Timothy Rogers]

Wacky...but true!

A children's magazine

Barbara Fisher

Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

"I want to subscribe to a magazine for my primary school that has quality content, a Christian focus and preferably no advertising."

That's a tall order these days. Just a quick look at children's magazines in your local newsagent is enough to make you realise there is not much available in Australia that fits such stringent criteria. As a lecturer at Avondale College, teaching literacy and language to our future primary teachers, I am continually on the lookout for quality reading material to recommend to our schools and teachers. Not long ago I found a magazine entitled *Wacky...but true!*, and instantly knew I had found a gem.

The name itself is enough to make kids want to delve into it—after all, they love to read about the wacky side of life and this is a magazine that makes them WANT to read. Each factual story or article is short, compact and just the right length for reluctant readers to tackle. In addition, paragraphs are separated by colour or style to break the stories into manageable sections on each page.

The magazine has 76 pages of full colour fun, with a glossy cover and attractive illustrations or

photographs throughout. It is aimed at 8 to 14 year olds, but children as young as 6 years old have been known to enjoy reading it.

The magazine is edited and published by Michelle Down, a primary teacher / librarian. She says she loves doing the writing and research and feels the magazine is filling a gap in providing children with reading material that increases their general knowledge in a fun way. The magazine includes articles from history and nature, stories about people who have done great things for God, and wacky facts from everywhere.

Michelle has recently begun the *InkRoom*, which is an avenue for budding authors to submit their work. Children send their stories and poems to the *InkRoom* website for others to read and comment on, and the best are then published in the *Wacky* magazine each month. Prizes are awarded for winning submissions.

FREE comprehension question sheets are provided with the magazine each month, making it easy for teachers to use the stories.

There are 11 issues each year, with Dec / Jan combined.

I think Michelle is to be highly commended for providing our children with a quality magazine that I can recommend to every Christian school.

TEACH

For more information on this resource go to www.wackymag.com.au and www.inkroom.com.au



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Matthew 25:40 NIV



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An experience in teaching Christian philosophy

Elainie Coetzee

Lecturer, Mission College, Thailand

How does a Christian teacher teach Christian philosophy to a group of teachers of whom nearly half are Buddhist, Hindu, Animist, agnostic or atheist whilst the other half are Christians from various denominations?

I was dreading the experience of teaching this group from widely diverse backgrounds, culturally, experientially and philosophically. The students were required to take the subject in order to obtain education credits towards a teacher's license in Thailand. Previous groups had levelled much criticism at the Christian approach to philosophy and particularly the Christian philosophy itself. This particular group had some very outspoken students who were not afraid to challenge the teacher and who were openly antagonistic towards anything Christian.

Preparation

Much prayer, thought and study was done in an effort to prepare for the class. Christian philosophy needed to be approached in a neutral manner. Yet addressing metaphysical issues like the origin of the universe, the nature of humans and whether or not there is a God can be very controversial. The epistemological question of 'what is truth?' is highly debatable, particularly in a group where some people acknowledge no God and no absolutes. Wading through axiological issues of ethics, morals and aesthetics can be like walking in a field strewn with landmines. How can any of these issues be addressed in a neutral way that still provides a true picture of Christianity and Christian philosophy?

A way forward: The Bible as a source of knowledge and truth

First, the Bible was introduced as a source of knowledge based on revelation (Knight, 1998, p. 21). Naturally, the non-Christians had reservations, perhaps serious ones, about using the Bible as a source of knowledge, so it was necessary to present evidence that this is possibly a reliable source.

Philosophers have developed at least three theories for testing the validity of knowledge that can be applied to the evaluation of a source of knowledge. The coherence theory looks at how

consistent and coherent the content and reasoning is, in other words, internal validity (Knight, 1998, pp. 23, 24). The Bible, despite being written over a period of approximately 1600 years (Ball, 2007, p. 28), is remarkably consistent in its theme of "redemption and reclamation of the human race by a loving God" (Ball, 2007, p. 38). It is also remarkably consistent in its teaching regarding all major doctrines, like the character of God, humans being sinful by nature, the relevance of the moral law, and so forth (Ball, 2007, p. 39). Furthermore, there is cohesion in the symbolism used throughout the Old and New Testaments, for example blood representing life and the lamb as a sacrifice (Ball, 2007, p. 40). Lastly, there is internal consistency between the Old and New Testaments, as Hamilton (cited by Ball, 2007) says, "It would be absolutely impossible to understand and interpret the New Testament without the aid of the Old" (p. 41).

Another philosophical theory to test the validity of knowledge or a source of knowledge is the correspondence theory, "which uses agreement with 'fact' as a standard of judgment" (Knight, 1998, p. 23). Biblical archaeology has made many discoveries that support the facts in the Bible about people, events, places and customs (Ball, 2007). Archaeology uses empirical methods often trusted by scientists and even sceptics. Furthermore, although the Bible is not a science textbook, it provides information and guidelines regarding diet which are supported by modern nutrition and medical science, for example it teaches that people should not eat meat with the blood in it (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17, 17:12, 19:26) because it is life. Today we know that blood carries not only oxygen and nutritional elements; it also carries other forms of life like bacteria and viruses that cause disease. The Bible, Psalm 8:8, stimulated scientific research into ocean currents by Matthew Maury who wanted to understand what is meant by "the paths of the seas" (Gish, 2004).

Some people doubt the validity of the Bible due to the multiple translations and possible mistakes made in copying it. However, the Bible has more surviving ancient manuscripts than any other ancient document and they are remarkably consistent in supporting the Bible translations (Ball, 2007, pp. 74–

“How can any of these issues be addressed in a neutral way that still provides a true picture of Christianity and Christian philosophy?”

Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

85). Current translations have been done by teams of scholars from many different denominations using multiple manuscripts and strict guidelines (Forum of Bible Agencies, 1999).

Another test used by philosophers to determine validity of knowledge, or the source of knowledge, is the pragmatic theory where the test of truth is seen in its usefulness and how well it works by looking at the results of its application (Knight, 1998, p. 24). When people live according to what the Bible teaches, it has a profoundly positive effect on their lifestyle and behaviour and even on whole communities (Ball, 2007, pp. 42–47). Bible prophecies can also verify the validity of the Bible as a reliable source of knowledge when a person sees how many prophecies have been fulfilled, including time-based and Messianic prophecies (Ball, 2007, chapters 5, 6). The Bible itself encourages people to test for themselves whether it is true or not, in other words, to acquire experiential knowledge (Psalm 34:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22).

Group work

Once evidence had been provided as to the reliability of the Bible as a source of knowledge, the students were shown how to use the Bible and how to find specific verses. The students then worked in groups for a two-hour workshop where they responded to philosophical questions by finding the answers in the Bible itself.

The discussions in the various groups were interesting, lively and at times heated but always in a good-humoured and positive way. As the teacher moved from group to group and became involved in various discussions and debates, it was wonderful to hear comments like, “I didn’t know this is what the Bible said about this” or “Teacher, did you know that it is the first time my friend here has ever held a Bible in her hands and read it?” It was encouraging to see how actively engaged the non-Christians were in the discussions about the meaning of a verse or verses and how the Christian students used the opportunity to explain Scripture. After previous negative remarks by some students, I had not imagined that it was possible to foster such a positive experience. The Holy Spirit was truly present (John 16:7–15).

Presentation of Christian philosophy

The lecture on Christian Philosophy was given the next week, using a Bible-based approach. The students were encouraged to look up the various Bible verses used to present the philosophical content of metaphysics (nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge and truth) and axiology (what is of value) (Knight, 1998). The content was presented in a neutral way, without the teacher providing value judgments, thus

allowing the students to think about the content. This same approach had been used in presenting all the previous philosophies and theories of education. Since the class is about the philosophical foundations of education, we looked at Jesus as the Master Teacher: how He defined the role of the teacher and the follower (student), His methods, His curriculum/content and the purpose of His teaching.

Student reaction and teacher’s reflection

A number of students, including many of the non-Christians, expressed appreciation for the way in which Christian philosophy was presented. Some said that it had been truly thought provoking to engage in the group discussions and the presentation and to realise that they wanted to go home and think more about what they had learned in this process. There was no negative feedback after the group-work or the presentation or in the final evaluation of the subject itself.

What did I, as the teacher, learn from this experience? I learned that it is possible to connect with both Christian and non-Christian students in a meaningful and positive way when one tries, with God’s help, to approach a controversial subject in an impartial way. The experience I had been dreading had turned into the most positive experience of the entire semester. Using a wholly Bible-based approach and letting the Bible speak for itself was clearly successful. TEACH

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“The Holy Spirit was truly present”

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Jack Ryan

My interest in teaching started because of my interest in teaching art. The longer I stayed at Avondale, I came to realise how much I enjoyed the connection with people, and that's what kept me at college. 21 years later, this remains one of the most important reasons why I love teaching. I am the Principal at Brisbane Adventist College.

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