Teachers as Lifelong Learners

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Editorial

‘Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born of another time’ [Hebrew Proverb]

What is a lifelong learner? Our reply may be informed by knowledge and understanding of the Roles for Lifelong Learners [Learning Framework, Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane]. I suspect that our view will be broader and richer than the descriptions found in some research which links lifelong learning to employability, citizenship, motivation and the capacity to learn over a lifespan.

Our perspective will be influenced by how we view the human person and their capacity to ‘grow’ and ‘be’ in order to shape and enrich our changing world, by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It will also be influenced by our understanding of pedagogy and how young people learn. You may immediately think of people you know as being lifelong learners. How do you identify them? They might be the teacher in the classroom next to you who is currently studying; you might think of yourself as a lifelong learner; it might be your aunt who attends the University of the Third Age; or your neighbour perhaps who is always learning about the world around them and holds an interest in current affairs and the human condition.

We asked colleagues to identify teachers that came to mind when they thought about lifelong learners and we either interviewed them or we asked them to reflect and write about being a lifelong learner. When you read the stories you can identify some common qualities or concepts threaded throughout.

Teachers talk or write about moving forward, taking risks and being positive about change. They discuss resiliency, their search for balance, and the importance they place on building relationships and making alliances with parents and professional colleagues. They are good communicators and have a high regard for professional colleagues. Certainly they are committed to professional learning and identify teaching and learning - and quality learning outcomes for students, as their central purpose for engaging with reflection and change. They build trust and empower others to move forward with them as a team toward meeting shared goals related to school improvement and student success.

As teachers they are also concerned with pastoral care, welfare and the safety of those in their care. They like being teachers and they have a vision for learners and learning in their school environment. They take time to reflect on their actions and perspectives, and celebrate when personal or shared goals are reached. Lifelong learners enjoy life and project a positive approach in everything they do.

There are a number of stories between these covers and we hope you enjoy reading them. Our thanks go to those who were willing to share their thoughts on the topic. Of course, not all lifelong learners are teachers, but we hope all teachers are lifelong learners.

‘We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change and the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn’
(Peter F Drucker)

Fran Ralston - Editor
fralston@bne.catholic.edu.au
A Positive Attitude towards Change is Central to being a Lifelong Learner

Theresa Sheen
Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE)
Curriculum Support Teacher (CST)
Our Lady of Dolours, Mitchelton

The images and posters in the foyer of Our Lady of Dolours illustrate the centrality and value of the roles of lifelong learners in this school. Theresa Sheen the APRE and CST talks about being a lifelong learner:

'It was great to think that others have identified me as a lifelong learner. I really do like new ideas and trying things out. I think a positive attitude is important when it comes to being a lifelong learner. I always try to be positive in everything I do'.

Theresa discussed the concept of being a lifelong learner and being able to apply this in relation to what you want to be as a person, educator and a leader now and in the future.

'You can apply the roles of lifelong learning to any aspect of your life as you continually seek ways to improve yourself'.

She believes that at the heart of being an educator is her commitment to professional conversations and trying to be open to change:

'I started studying in the Masters of Educational Leadership course when I was first appointed as APRE at this school – 4 years ago. It was quite a challenge to start studying again...a new ball game. I began to learn the academic language and theory associated with educational leadership. Studying formally gave me an opportunity to reflect on what I do and why I do what I do. It also gave me the opportunity to work with people who held similar roles and to realise that having different opinions is alright. It was personally beneficial to learn to listen to those holding different views and to try and understand those differences.

'The greatest learning I had as part of this course was being able to see alignment between the theory of educational leadership and current practice. It provided me with ways of reflecting on what I knew to be ‘effective ways of working’.

Theresa has participated in a number of professional learning programs in the past few years including:

- Touch the Future, Covey course, Spirit Fire and learning about self through the Enneagram program.

‘My main learnings from these professional programs can be summed up as follows:

- listening to others is important as is taking time to reflect and respond
- adding to the emotional bank account when building relationships with people; you need to be consistent and genuine in all that you say and do
- it is important that those in leadership model honesty and are able to act with integrity
- there is no need to be afraid to have discussions with people who challenge your beliefs and understandings – differences are good
- thinking time before you speak prepares you for conversations especially those that have the potential to be fiery. In fact THINK TIME is an area I constantly work on but it is a tough skill to achieve. My principal is great at encouraging and practising ‘thinking time’ in our team
- it is more important to model being a learner than trying to be ‘the expert’. Showing that you are vulnerable is not a bad thing, and finally...
- all of the professional programs in which I have participated lead me to realise the importance of reflection – not for the purpose of dwelling on the negatives in past actions, but as a means of going forward to improvement'.

Theresa spoke of learning as a continual cycle ‘That’s what lifelong learning means to me – we never stop being learners and should seek ways to improve our skills whenever and wherever possible’.

She also discussed how important she believed quiet time was for learners, as well as reflection. ‘The concepts of taking time for reflection as well as being ‘time-wise’ are areas teachers as learners need to consider, and I am no exception here’.

‘We need quiet time in our life. As a staff we are practising meditation and implementing this with the children in our classes. Our school goal is to have quiet time established in our timetable during our school week thus giving everyone permission to slow down and find some peace in our hectic lives.'
The staff at Our Lady of Dolours has reflected on what they want to achieve as a professional learning community and are keen to improve student learning by facilitating changes in pedagogy. However it does not stop there. "We are investigating thinking and inquiry as ways to deepen the learning experiences of our students. Through philosophical inquiry we can begin to explore our world in a whole new way. Thinking connects with reflection, which in turn helps to develop the roles of the lifelong learner at a deeper level."

Theresa also discussed the importance of looking after your own wellbeing and that of those with whom you interact in order to ensure that the lifelong learning process remains a positive experience.

'The ability to set realistic short and long term goals is a skill the lifelong learner has. It is also important that goals are shared among team members. This assists in establishing a support network – a professional community of care which nurtures people especially at the half-way mark of a term. The well being of our staff and students is at the heart of our endeavours.

I can, like others, be guilty of taking on too much. Sometimes it is good to recognise that change is necessary or imminent, but before introducing it immediately, to sit with it a while, planning out what it is you want to achieve, and considering if in the long run this achievement will be worth the energy and time.

As important as reflection is in the learning process, we need to take time to celebrate when goals are reached. Celebrating boosts our energy and enables us to share achievements with others. Building teacher capacity to share and articulate successes and reflections encourages a wonderful learning atmosphere in our school.

'All the lifelong learning roles actually interact as we participate in our world. You need to be actively aware of the skills involved in each role and practice those skills to ensure they are part of your repertoire. However there may be one of those roles that might provide a personal challenge more than others, and for me the role of Effective Communicator has always provided this challenge. When I became a Key teacher with ELA [English Language Arts] at my previous school – Our Lady of the Angels at Wavell Heights, way back when… I realised I had to speak the professional language of the English syllabus and share my learnings and understandings [to communicate] with others on staff. This was a different way for me to behave – as a leader and not just as a participant. I needed...
to make major changes in how I communicate and how I felt about communicating to large audiences. However, I gained confidence with experience."

Another element of being a lifelong learner is the idea that learning alongside others can be fun.

‘I think as teacher-learners we need to be comfortable with learning alongside our students. For example, as a learner in technology – I am barely one step ahead of the students – and that is OK... they see me as a learner with them.

‘It is important to know what directions in educational change are important and to ‘have a go’. There is a need to be open to not knowing everything, to model enjoyment in discovering things and to model a “let’s just have a go at this” disposition’.

Theresa’s concluding words were to reiterate the importance of reflecting on our actions and their purpose.

‘Finally, being positive about change and respectful and patient with others as we work through this... learning to be lifelong learners together, is important’.

First Steps – A staff works together at St Flannans

Kelli Phillips has been instrumental in introducing the literacy program – First Steps at St Flannan’s Primary School. She is quick to acknowledge the leadership and support of her principal in this process. The assistance of others including Kelli’s retired father who makes resources, and of course the willingness of staff to enter into a commitment of introducing First Steps over a three year period is also mentioned. Kelli talks about the background and why First Steps is seen as an important professional learning for the staff.

‘I was introduced to First Steps Literacy program three years ago whilst teaching in the Townsville Diocese and at that time thought it was an effective professional learning program that when implemented was successful in improving student literacy skills.

‘When I started at St Flannan’s I realised that a newer version of the program was being offered for BCE schools, and with the support of our principal John Parkinson and Ann Graham, the Teacher Librarian, we were keen to be involved as a whole staff for the purpose of improving student literacy skills throughout the school.

‘Pauline Chester from the Curriculum Team at Brisbane Catholic Education provided an initial in-service opportunity for the staff during pupil free days and the staff continued to plan and implement the program. We organised regular school based meeting times with checks and measures to see that it was implemented consistently across all classes. I worked with the principal to develop a matrix from the First Steps books with the intention of making it very user friendly for staff for planning and monitoring student work’.

Kelli states that the principal’s leadership and support for teachers to implement First Steps comprehensively throughout the school, is one of the reasons for its success. ‘Our principal supports it, participates in it and shows that it is valued’.

‘We earmarked a lot of time in 2008 and also in 2009 for the staff to work together on year level planning days taking one session to complete a grid for their planning’.

When asked about any changes or outcomes evident to date from this work, Kelli replied, ‘I think the biggest change is in teacher attitude. Twice a term teachers visit each other’s classroom and observe how others are implementing some of the activities. They can discuss student work, student learning, what works and what doesn’t’. Kelli made the following points:

- It is great to see how others implement activities and modify them for the different groups and for different needs of the children in their class
- Teachers had noted how beneficial it is to see a variety of other activities and how teachers modify these.
- This affects the level of professional conversations in the staff room. It empowers teachers to feel comfortable discussing their work.
- As a result, a feeling of collegiality has developed.
between teachers and they are comfortable asking one another questions about their work.
- Teachers are positive about how First Steps influences teaching.
- We use a similar language to discuss learning.
- Children are moving from one class to the next having a consistency in knowledge and skills.
- It has had a huge impact on some literacy levels illustrated through student data which is collected and analysed.

Kelli adds that resourcing is also a critical success factor in the way First Steps has been implemented, ‘My Dad, who is retired, has pulled activities from the manuals and organised them in a way that makes it easy for teachers to access and use. Also John [Principal] and I demonstrate the assessment and evaluation tools at staff meetings’.

‘It is a big project to undertake. We undertook learning in reading last year; Writing is this year and Speaking & Listening will be taken up in 2010...so we have a long term plan for professional growth.’

Kelli concluded with, The staff of St Flannan’s school are lifelong learners willing to take things on for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes. At first they needed to have faith in what we believed about this program and the way it was going to be implemented. Leadership, collaborative work, and staff commitment to implement First Steps consistently across the school, has resulted in recognition from the school community of the value of a whole school approach to change. It helps that positive outcomes in student learning outcomes are evident already. However we do realise that it may be a few years yet before significant improvements in all literacy areas across the school are shown in student literacy learning data. Change is a long term process and worth the effort for improving student learning’.

Powerful Learning Practice: fostering a global community of teachers as Lifelong Learners

Amanda Rablin
Education Officer Curriculum: Learning Management

What is Powerful Learning Practice (PLP)?

‘Powerful Learning Practice offers a unique opportunity for educators to participate in a long-term, job-embedded professional development program that immerses them in 21st Century learning environments. The PLP model is currently enabling hundreds of educators around the country to experience the transformative potential of social Web tools to build global learning communities and re-envision their own personal learning practice’.

(Reference: http://plpnetwork.com/)

This professional learning project was co-founded by Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach and Will Richardson who are internationally recognised leaders in e-learning and education.

Outcomes of PLP

“Through their participation in PLP, teachers and school leaders can expect to gain:

- Knowledge: An understanding of the transformative potential of Web 2.0 tools in a global perspective and context and how those potentials can be realized in schools
- Pedagogy: An understanding of the shifting learning literacies that the 21st Century demands and how those literacies inform teacher practice.
- Connections: The development of sustained professional learning networks for team members to begin experimenting and sharing with other team members and online colleagues from around the world.
- Sustainability: The creation of long term plans to move the vision forward in participating districts at the end of the program.
- Capacity: An increase in the abilities and resources of individuals, teams and the community to manage change.”

(Reference: http://plpnetwork.com/about-plp/)
Participating in the Australian Cohort

St John Vianney’s (SJV) Primary School at Manly has been involved in the 2008-2009 Australia cohort of this professional learning experience. Schools from around Australia have formed project teams of 5 teachers and planned a project for their school. These projects can focus on either classroom learning or whole school professional learning. The schools create a goal relating to shifting pedagogy and the impact of social web technologies on learning, and then implement a project to put this into practice. The Australian schools involved in the project also meet face-to-face twice to share their progress and learning and to build on their professional relationships with each other.

As well as the school project, the teachers involved have been engaged in national and international professional learning opportunities through the use of a variety of online tools and environments. Within these communities they have connected with other educators internationally, shared practice, learned about different online tools and engaged in rich professional conversation and reflection.

About St John Vianney’s PLP project

St John Vianney’s (STV) project focuses on whole school professional learning in ICLT through supporting teacher learning with the use of students as mentors, and reflective whole school tasks. The project links with the school’s visioning processes and aligns to initiatives of the parish and wider community. It is still in the planning phase but will be implemented throughout 2009. It’s title: “Time, Treasure, Talent: Our Community of Action”

Contextual Question: How can we make a difference to our community by giving our time, treasure and talent?

Project Question: As a community of learners, how can we use web 2.0 to shift the approaches of learning and teaching?

This project intends to:

• involve the school and parish as a community of learners in exploring the concepts of stewardship through the giving of time, treasure and talents to help others
• provide simple tasks to develop community confidence with ICLT and use of Web 2.0 tools to support learning
• model powerful learning practice
• support professional learning through empowering students in the role of mentors
• developing student leadership and building school community as lifelong learners

More information on Powerful Learning Practice is available at: http://plpnetwork.com/about-plp/

What are participants saying about PLP?

Amanda Rablin, BCE (Team Leader) says this about the project:

‘PLP has provided an amazing opportunity for us to connect with other educators around Australia and the world who are exploring the ways that ICLTs create new ways and contexts for learning. The enthusiasm for learning and for sharing ideas has been fantastic. I’m looking forward to witnessing the value that the SJV project will have on the school community as a community of learners’.
Wendy Randall, SJV (Year 4/5 Teacher):  

‘Being part of PLP has given me the opportunity to connect and collaborate with other educators who believe it is important to change our classroom practice and begin to see ourselves, along with our students, as a small community of learners within the world wide community. It is through collaboration with this world wide community that our skills and knowledge are broadened and we see a purpose for our learning’.

Amanda Marrinan, SJV (Year 2 Teacher):  

‘Being part of PLP is all about connecting with people who share your passion for enacting change. Our PLP team has already seen the transformational change that takes place when Web 2.0 tools are embedded into everyday teaching and learning. Through online professional development and discussions with ‘expert voices’ and other PLP cohorts, we have been able to share and extend our understandings about teaching and learning in the 21st Century. It’s affirming and inspiring to be part of such a passionate learning community’.

Denise Juler, SJV (Year 4/5 Teacher):  

I am very grateful to have been part of PLP. It has given me a direction in which to continue my learning journey and affirmed my efforts to encourage students and educators to be lifelong learners. It also has convinced me even more that the seamless embedding of Web 2.0 tools and resources are vital for today’s young learners. It has been marvellous to expand my PLP outside the walls of my school and classroom. I am very hopeful that our project will be transformational for our school’.

Katie Close, SJV (Year 6/7 Teacher):  

‘To me, one of the distinguishing aspects of being a Lifelong Learner is being open to ideas and constantly reflecting on your experiences. You have to be prepared to be challenged in your thinking, to change and to adapt. By continuing to build a Professional Learning Network, participating in PLP has broadened the range and depth of my reflections and is also where I gather and share new learning, particularly in the context of Web 2.0 in the classroom’.
A Culture of Professional Learning at Our Lady of the Rosary, Kenmore

David Greig
Principal Education Officer

The staff at Our Lady of the Rosary (OLR) at Kenmore has been identified by others as being typical of a group of “teachers as lifelong learners”. Their former principal Dave Greig was asked to reflect on his leadership role in this context, and he spoke of their propensity for professional growth.

“A culture of professional learning already existed at Our Lady of the Rosary (OLR) when I arrived. That is, teachers were known to ‘put their hand up’ to be involved in professional development.

‘There are a number of individuals and small groups who through their own participation in professional development radiate a kind of ‘energy’ to other staff. Also there are members of the staff you could describe as ‘driven’ to participate in professional growth. This has a positive influence on the staff, particularly when the professional activity concerns a shared issue or interest’.

Dave talked about a couple of staff members who participated in formal study through the BCE sponsorship program with Griffith University—the Graduate Certificate in Education Studies. He believes that sometimes study broadens the area of interest for the participants. ‘It opens other doors or highlights other opportunities. Study, even in a focused area such as this, tends to broaden the horizon and range of knowledge, rather than narrowing it’.

He also described one staff member at OLR who is ‘driven’ to constantly learn both formally and informally.

“She models to others the very essence of being a lifelong learner. Her learning and its application in the teacher librarian role has had an enormous influence on other teachers from this staff and beyond. She has engaged in learning about ICTs formally, but is largely self taught. She has been able to integrate ICTs into pedagogical processes throughout the curriculum. Her success and her continuing interest in this area have been

recognised widely as ‘cutting edge’ — placing the school at the forefront of many professional activities and initiatives.

‘My role as the principal was to support teachers by encouraging and enabling. One way of doing this was to bring professional learning opportunities and experiences to their attention and to facilitate their participation. I am particularly keen to see teachers take advantage of ‘acting positions’ both within the school and at other schools. Tapping teachers on the shoulder and proposing this gave them practical opportunities to apply what they were learning, and to extend their experiences in a field in which I knew they had an interest. This included leadership experiences.

Catching Fire was a program involving the whole staff. ‘It is about Spiritual Formation for Mission and supports schools with spiritual growth for the adult lifelong learner. Participation stretched people in their faith and whilst this influenced all staff, it assisted some to make some ‘life’ changing decisions as a direct outcome.

‘It gave us an opportunity to think of the ‘bigger picture’ in our lives by providing a framework — including the space and the opportunity to make decisions about what we really wanted to do and where we wanted to go. Whilst a small group participated one year and lead other staff in the school-based application of the program, we were able to send another small group the following year to provide them with a direct learning experience.

The teachers as learners themselves are excellent role models for the school community, especially their young students’.

Dave was principal of Our Lady of the Rosary Primary school 2005 – 2009. Since January he has been in the acting role as PEO Strategic Development and Support within the Student Support and Priority Programs directorate in Brisbane Catholic Education. He reports that he is enjoying the new role and the different learning opportunity it offers...Dave is a lifelong learner.
Enhancing a Community of Lifelong Learners

Jenny Davissen
St Joseph’s School
Nundah

Jenny is a teacher in the Middle School (Years 5/6/7) at St Joseph’s Nundah. When Jenny reflected on the concept of being a lifelong learner she recalled her time as an ELA (English Language Arts) Key Teacher nearly twenty years ago. This has remained a significant point in time as she remembers being on a steep learning curve both as an adult learner herself, and one who also had the responsibility of sharing her learnings with other teachers on staff.

‘St Joseph’s is a small school but the staff here work together as a community of lifelong learners who support each other – constantly sharing achievements, ideas, challenges and learning’.

Jenny has a colourful display of the roles of the lifelong learner in a newly renovated classroom. ‘When the Learning Framework was introduced I was teaching Year 2 at St Dympna’s in an open area classroom. We decided to plan a unit for a whole term based around the roles of the lifelong learner. At the end of the term, the children were able to use the terminology as well as the teachers. On an open day in the final week we invited parents to attend and observe their children at work on activities illustrating these roles in practice. We placed explanatory signs above the groups of children as they engaged in tasks focusing on a particular lifelong learner role. This was a very effective way for parents to develop a richer understanding of learning as a lifelong process’.

‘As teachers trying to educate students for the future we cannot possibly remain in the past…we need to be constantly learning ourselves in order to meet the changing needs of the children, our communities and the education system’.

Jenny discussed how these same roles are learned and applied in different contexts with Middle School students. ‘Here at St Joseph’s, my teaching partner (Anne Bergstrum) and I have made use of ThinkQuest [an online learning platform] to extend learning beyond the classroom. Students can log on, create and develop their own pages, communicate with students around the world, and visit our Middle School site to access homework, links to useful websites for current projects, learning games and information. We can respond quickly to the students’ interests and needs by adding new pages and links. The two latest ones have been a link to our Brisbane Catholic Education “Light a Prayer Candle” website in response to the devastation caused by fires and floods, and another to a site about bullying (the focus of an Arts Council visit).

‘Parents have also been learning about ThinkQuest and can see its potential as a great resource for their children’s learning. We held a parent information evening to introduce them to this resource and to address their fear of personal online-safety. When parents have access side by side with the students they are reassured that personal safety is safeguarded and technology is not a gimmick but a useful tool for learning’.

Jenny discusses how she participated in a professional program as a means of becoming familiar with technology as a learning tool.

‘To get kick-started we participated in the AGQTP on Digital Literacy with Kate O’Neill [Kate is an Education Officer Curriculum Learning & Teaching Technologies] and began by learning how to access and develop learning objects and multimedia resources. We also began to utilise easily accessible programs like Microsoft Producer, Photostory and MovieMaker. Later; with assistance from Paul Shaw [formally BCE Curriculum Team] we got interested in using ThinkQuest as a fairly simple means of acknowledging that our students are technology ‘natives’ and we were able to switch them onto using technology in our classroom learning environment in responsible and safe ways’.
Jenny said that she found the move from an early years classroom to a middle schooling situation very affirming as the “philosophies” were similar. ‘When you work with colleagues who share a similar perspective on pedagogy, an understanding about how students learn and a positive attitude towards life and learning, it’s easy to feel energised and enthusiastic each day.’

‘Here at St Joseph’s we have a constant stream of information being shared between staff members. Each has a strong commitment in following up with other teachers when they attend in-service and in sharing learning outcomes over morning tea and at lunch times. There are lots of opportunities for talking one-on-one or in small groups and we make time at our staff meetings to have professional conversations. Because we have a small staff, we are also able to use one another as mentors and problem solvers, thus making us a genuine community of lifelong learners’.

Teachers as lifelong learners – the religious dimension

Graeme Barry, Education Officer- Religious Education

Overheard recently in a Catholic school near you:

Teacher: Are you the AP…..what is it?
APRE: APRE – Assistant Principal Religious Education. Do I know you?

Teacher: I’m new.

APRE: Oh?

Teacher: is that BCE Learning Framework on your wall – next to the bloke with the beard and long hair.

APRE: Yes that’s the framework. The bloke with the beard is Jesus. He’s the point of the framework.

Teacher: Yeah?

APRE: [reads aloud] “Empowering learners of all ages to shape and enrich our changing world, by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Teacher: That’s the bit they sent me to see you about. Go see the God botherer they said.

APRE: Not my official title. [laughs]

Teacher: The thing is I can see the relevance of the roles and the beliefs about learners and learning. It’s the ‘living the Gospel stuff and the Catholic Christian tradition business that have me scratching my head. Fine for religion teachers but I’m strictly SOSE and Science.

APRE: Perfect.

Teacher: How do you mean?

APRE: Well for a start you need to need to know the rudiments of Catholic social teaching. Otherwise how can you integrate a Catholic perspective into a subject that focuses on society and the environment? Have you ever read anything on the social teaching of the Church?

Teacher: I’ve never had the need to.

APRE: I’ll lend you the Compendium of Catholic Social teaching on my shelf. Send me an e mail and I’ll forward you a couple of websites where you can search out themes and topics that connect with what you are doing in your SOSE classes.

Teacher: We’re doing climate change and global warming….. oh and living sustainably.

APRE: The Judaeo-Christian tradition is right into God’s creation! I’ll send you a couple of short articles. Have a look on the BCE public website. Click the “Creation we care” icon. Also……

Teacher: Whoa that’s enough for the moment.

APRE: We’ll talk about Science some other time. It’s the International Year of Astronomy and the Vatican backs that. They’re also celebrating Charles Darwin. It’s a good year to explore what religion has to say to science and what science has to say to religion and how they
both contribute to our understanding of the way things are in our world.

The Roles for Lifelong Learners are an integral part of the BCE Learning Framework. They apply to learners of all ages in the school community. They are significant for the professional learning of teachers. The document Religious Education Years 1-10 Learning Outcomes, Brisbane Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane 2003 articulates a religious perspective in relation to each of the roles. It may be thought that these perspectives only have relevance for teachers of religion. However all teachers in a Catholic school are expected to bring to their teaching a specifically Catholic Christian dimension. If such an expectation is to be given some reality in practice the professional learning of teachers in specifically Catholic Christian knowledge and insights related to what they teach is a priority.

Some practical ways forward in promoting teacher professional learning in relation to the Catholic Christian perspective on curriculum areas could include:

• Identify points of connection and include background material for teachers.
• Identify for teachers websites and other resources that provide accessible material.
• When units planning is taking place include a presentation and discussion of relevant information and insights.
• Utilise background material from Religious Education modules or texts that has relevance in other areas of the curriculum.
• Make use of programs on the radio, on TV in newspapers and other media that can stimulate relevant and focused discussion and sharing among teachers.
• Engage presenters who have expertise in theology, spirituality, scripture and have them address topics, issues or focus areas.
• Identify short articles that address relevant topics, issues or focus areas.
• Make use of resources from the Brisbane Catholic Education Centre, from school and local libraries and online.

Translating Professional Learning into Classroom Practice

Kathryn Downing
Year 7 Teacher
St Joseph’s School
Bardon

Colleagues have identified Kathryn as a teacher who demonstrates the qualities of a lifelong learner. When asked why she thought she might be identified by peers as such Kathryn replied:

‘When I participate in professional development programs I ALWAYS promise myself that I will put into my classroom practice one of the learnings I recognise as meaningful for student learning. I also record my learnings and make them available for others’.

After applying in 2007 for the Federal Government Summer School for History and being accepted, Kathryn found herself mixing with professionals and teachers from around the country. The mix of people, their backgrounds, interests and fields of expertise was she found, both rejuvenating and inspiring.

‘A mandate from the Summer School was to design and complete a project and I chose to create something suitable for my classroom. This project, ‘In a Digger’s Boots’ has since been circulated in a number of schools around the Queensland- State, Independent and of course Catholic schools.

My learning from the summer school was to discover new ways young adolescent students could be exposed to primary sources of information, how they could learn from these sources and produce another way of sharing their knowledge and understanding. At my school (and at others now), parents too have become engaged in their children’s learning and want to do their own research. The wider community has also been included and emails of support have come from Courier Mail readers, soldiers serving in East Timor, Armed Forces families, Bardon R.S.L. and a local historian.

‘This project is on-going as small groups of teachers from State and Catholic schools have approached me
The AGQTP is a federally funded program of professional learning for teachers and school administrators. It has been running since 2001 and in 2009 is in the final year of the present quadrennial cycle.

Since the program’s inception in 2001, approximately $5 million has been distributed to the Catholic sector in Queensland. Each diocese is responsible for the activities it runs under the guidelines established by the Australian Government.

The objectives of the AGQTP are to:

1. equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed for teaching in the 21st Century
2. provide national leadership in high priority areas of teacher professional learning need
3. improve the professional standing of school teachers and leaders.

The AGQTP is designed for primary and secondary teachers and activities managed under the AGQTP are designed to create longitudinal changes in professional learning. Usually this requires participants’ attendance at several workshops per year and often involves an event at the end of the year to showcase what each participant/school has achieved. In some cases, this would be a one-off activity, in others a week-long residential program and everything in between.

Feedback provided to the Australian Government annually from each participant is consistently positive about the benefits of the professional learning each has received under the AGQTP. In addition, a number of teachers involved in the program in the Archdiocese have been invited to showcase their work each year in Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra.

The eight major activities for 2009 in Brisbane are:

• Building an Inquiry Culture (two strands)
• Digital Literacy for the 21st Century (five strands)
• Gifted and Talented Education (three strands)
• Cyberia: Cyberbullying in Schools
• Consumer and Financial Literacy
• First Steps in Mathematics: Number (two strands)
• Targeted Schools Proposals in ICLT
• Leadership in a Catholic School (inter-diocesan)

It is estimated that the above activity strands will involve

The AGQTP is a federally funded program of professional learning for teachers and school administrators. It has been running since 2001 and in 2009 is in the final year of the present quadrennial cycle.

Since the program’s inception in 2001, approximately $5 million has been distributed to the Catholic sector in Queensland. Each diocese is responsible for the activities it runs under the guidelines established by the Australian Government.

The objectives of the AGQTP are to:

1. equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed for teaching in the 21st Century
2. provide national leadership in high priority areas of teacher professional learning need
3. improve the professional standing of school teachers and leaders.

The AGQTP is designed for primary and secondary teachers and activities managed under the AGQTP are designed to create longitudinal changes in professional learning. Usually this requires participants’ attendance at several workshops per year and often involves an event at the end of the year to showcase what each participant/school has achieved. In some cases, this would be a one-off activity, in others a week-long residential program and everything in between.

Feedback provided to the Australian Government annually from each participant is consistently positive about the benefits of the professional learning each has received under the AGQTP. In addition, a number of teachers involved in the program in the Archdiocese have been invited to showcase their work each year in Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra.

The eight major activities for 2009 in Brisbane are:

• Building an Inquiry Culture (two strands)
• Digital Literacy for the 21st Century (five strands)
• Gifted and Talented Education (three strands)
• Cyberia: Cyberbullying in Schools
• Consumer and Financial Literacy
• First Steps in Mathematics: Number (two strands)
• Targeted Schools Proposals in ICLT
• Leadership in a Catholic School (inter-diocesan)

It is estimated that the above activity strands will involve
the professional learning of about 1500 teachers this year at a cost of around $400,000. Apart from the activities listed, some of the professional learning provided in previous years has included Literacy and Numeracy, Science, Vocational Education, Values and Information and Communication Technology.

The number of teachers affected by the AGQTP since its inception is difficult to estimate but would be in excess of 10,000. Many of them are continuing learners, and some activities such as Building an Inquiry Culture and Gifted and Talented Education permit participants to return for several years at a more advanced level.

In addition, it is possible to obtain tertiary credit for work completed under the program. The fact that such teachers are lifelong learners is self-evident. An attempt has been made where possible to link activities in the AGQTP with other initiatives at Brisbane Catholic Education, assisting to fulfil the requirements of the Strategic Renewal Framework and the schools own Self-Renewal Cycle.

A number of the articles in Curriculum matters are written by teachers who have participated in various elements of the AGQTP.

Digital Literacy for 21st Century

Kate O’Neill
Education Officer: Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy for the 21st Century is concerned with developing and supporting the digital literacy of teachers in both Brisbane Catholic Education and Religious Institute schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. It is one of the AGQTP priority funded professional learning activities.

Over the past three years a series of professional learning opportunities have helped to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively utilize learning and teaching technologies with their students.

The professional learning opportunities offered to teachers in the area of Digital Literacy provide them with an environment where they feel confident and comfortable enough amongst other colleagues to ask as many questions as they need to. They are given the opportunity to practise the skills they are being taught then and there.

As well as attending these hands-on workshops participants are asked to engage in ongoing activities such as resource development and to share their knowledge and skills with colleagues.

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn. Alvin Toffler

It has become evident that the building of competence and confidence for a critical mass of teachers requires sustained engagement in the development of an understanding of digital literacy and the skills required to engage effectively with the technology. Developing sustainable leadership and professional learning in this area is one of the greatest challenges of this role.

I am constantly reflecting on how professional learning can be developed and delivered to support the co-construction of knowledge and skills as a sustainable model of leadership.

My vision for this role over the past three years has been:

To empower teachers to develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support and enhance:

• life-long learning
• collaboration
• student engagement and
• personal pursuits

in authentic, challenging, creative and ethical ways.
Jo Kimmins
Education Officer: Curriculum

Jo has joined the Brisbane Catholic Education Curriculum Team in the last 12 months. She has a strong interest in pedagogy and has been participating in the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme (AGQTP) for Gifted and Talented Education over the past two years, continuing this year in a third strand.

Jo was asked how she would identify teachers as lifelong learners.

‘Lifelong learners are people who keep up with and like change. It is much to do with disposition. Change comes from refinement and reflection on what and how teachers do their work’. A lifelong learner is one who seeks new understandings and is not satisfied with ‘well, that’s it!’ A lifelong learner is a risk taker.

What interested you in participating in the AGQT programme on Gifted and Talented Education (G&T)?

‘I had a little girl in my Prep class who was identified very early as being ‘gifted and talented’. It was obvious she had particular needs and I wanted to be able to address these and assist her in the learning process. The program supported me by providing a deeper understanding of ‘gifted and talented’ education and the nature of a gifted and talented student. I also had a unique opportunity to implement different strategies and processes in the classroom whilst at the same time reflecting on these in terms of what I was learning’.

What were your learnings from participation and the implementation process?

‘I became aware that the definition of ‘gifted and talented’ varies. The program gave an insight into what it was to be a gifted and talented student. I gained practical ways for identifying students, and an opportunity to respond to their needs in the classroom. I was also uncomfortable with the term Gifted and Talented and my participation in the program, including the practical experiences, helped to clarify my understandings’.

You continued with the second strand of this program in 2008. What was your reason for this?

‘The second strand of the program had a different focus. It was also project based and I participated and completed the course in partnership with my co lifelong learner; a staff member from the school. We wanted to focus on futures and problem solving with Yr 4-7. I was also interested in extending my learning from the reflections on knowledge, understandings and practical experience gained from the first strand’.

You discuss your learning in terms of its relevance and application to you both personally and professionally and for the student in your class. Were there benefits for the school?

‘We did implement a Gifted and Talented [G & T] program at the school where I was teaching, and although not directly involved, I became a mentor to the teacher who had the leadership of the program, and with teachers.

‘My learnings from the program and personal reflection lead me to see that ‘withdrawal’ of students assessed as gifted and talented was not necessarily the only way of meeting their needs – or the most effective. I also believed that the identification of children for withdrawal needs to be very thorough and in collaboration with the class teacher and parents. A commonly applied process of relying on the student undertaking a series of tests to determine their ‘giftedness’ for instance, may not give a whole picture of the child for this purpose.

‘The validity of assessment is compounded by ‘gifted and talented’ children in withdrawal feeling under pressure to catch-up with the work being undertaken by their peers in their regular class. They also miss the interaction with classroom friends and are made to feel ‘different’. My view is that it is preferable to ‘depth’ teacher understanding of gifted and talented students and to provide a range of strategies which support and improve learning in the usual classroom environment, rather than placing students in a special class.

‘What I found was that the lecturers in the program – Carmel Dietzman and Jim Matters [QUT].

Continuing Learning about Gifted and Talented Students in the Classroom
encouraged us to challenge the generic ideas we held regarding Gifted and Talented students and the common ways we were using to identify them. I realise that in identifying students – a diverse spectrum of gifted and talented existed and students should be assessed with this diversity in mind….'

And, what now for you Jo?

‘I want to continue with the third strand of the AGQTP – Gifted and Talented Education because I can see how this will assist me in my current role as an Education Officer Curriculum. Hopefully I will be able to assist teachers when they ask how to provide opportunities for children perceived as gifted and talented in the classroom or school’.

Learning and Change – A Focus on the Arts

Terry Druery
Arts Teacher
LiNCS Co-ordinator
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School
Sunnybank

I met Terry when he was a member of the team that designed and lead a program of professional learning on computer technology skills for teachers during the 1990’s. This was CLIC (Computer Literacy In-service Course). Since that time he has lead technology based professional learning workshops for teachers during ‘people free days’ for Brisbane Catholic Education. He teaches at Our Lady of Lourdes Sunnybank where he has held roles concerned with Computer Education coordination, LinCs coordination and is now taking a leading role on staff in Arts Education.

This is Terry’s story about being a lifelong learner. (Editor)

I am currently undertaking study in the Post Graduate Certificate Education (Arts) at ACU which is sponsored by Brisbane Catholic Education. This has initiated a complete overhaul in the way I think about my teaching. I have been able to take a step back and look at how I implement curriculum and how I plan learning experiences in my classroom. It has certainly influenced the way I approach planning and teaching – most recently around the Essential Learnings. In fact, without my participation in the Arts course I think I would have just kept doing what I always did in the classroom

I have reorganised the design of my teaching area to better ‘fit’ with what and how I am now teaching. It has been a complete mindset change and my teaching skills have altered in ways that I believe more effectively support the students as they learn new knowledge and skills.

Professional learning in the Arts through this course is having a two-fold outcome for me at least, i.e.

- it is increasing my knowledge and skills as I learn about the strands – Visual Arts, Drama, Dance and Music, and
- it is challenging my views of why particular things are taught in the classroom. It is giving me the chance to think about my philosophy of teaching.

Good professional learning should enable people to
step back and look at why they are teachers. You can pick teachers at my age who have engaged with professional learning throughout their career...the lifelong learners. You can also see those teachers who continue teaching they way they have always done.

I chose the Arts as I have loved being involved in aspects of it at school both as a student then as a teacher. My family also had a strong interest in the Arts, especially in music. Unfortunately I was more-or-less forced to give up study in the Arts in Year 10, but took it up again in Teachers College and of course when teaching. I believe that every student needs a broad range of learning experiences to develop fully and the Arts provide development in the aesthetic areas including an appreciation of creativity and beauty. Studies show how learning in the Arts has a positive impact on learning generally. I also see that students need to learn how to be an audience – to be critical consumers of the Arts rather than just “consumers”. This is why areas such as Media Studies are also important and related to learning outcomes in the Arts.

In 1988 I became interested in technology and computers and could see the potential for opening up different ways of learning for teachers and students alike. As teachers we were often fearful of new technology and taking risks. However, students did not experience this same fear. They could actually teach their teachers about using computers in ways that introduced different pedagogical processes for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. As a teacher, it is important though to be open to learn every day...

Our school is looking at the design of an Arts Performance and Learning Centre as central to its building extension program. This is to be a place for staff and specialists to teach the Arts, to conduct performances and to engage with all areas of the Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Drama. It might have rehearsal rooms and an outdoor courtyard with a kiln. It is such an exiting prospect and should really boost interest in learning about and through the Arts for students, parents and staff alike. It will have the potential to be a wonderful community learning space for the Arts – a centre of creativity, performance and appreciation.

I have been fortunate in that my principal has supported my learning and continually encourages the implementation of this in the pedagogy of the school. I have had opportunities to work with groups of teachers in ways that encourages them to learn and try things out. Our school sees three models of professional learning in use:

- the informal in-house professional growth with teacher as leader working with staff
- the model that has an external 'expert' coming in to work with staff, and
- teacher participation in the more formal courses.

Members of the staff are involved in all three models as participants or as presenters so they experience the role of ‘adult learner’ and the role of ‘learner-leader’. Our school budget is designed to enable teacher ‘leaders’ to work with staff in meaningful ways, and not as a 5 minute input at a staff meeting for instance.

The formal learning through the Post Graduate program at ACU has forced me to apply academic rigour to what I do, and through this, expanded my pedagogical repertoire with the confidence to design and deliver diverse learning experiences in the Arts for the students in this school.
Three common themes emerged as they spoke about their professional and personal journeys. Firstly, Maree, Kevin and Eve all identified that possessing an inquiring mind was important for a lifelong learner - working from the premise that the more you know, the more you don’t know. They also identified the need for professional renewal as a motivation to help maintain focus. The third theme centred on achieving a work-life balance; balancing family and work commitments with study and assignment deadlines.

Kevin identifies three things that inspire him to continue his learning. He has a willingness to continue to acquire knowledge; he is eager to improve his skills and he enjoys the application of knowledge in practical learning and teaching situations. Wanting to pursue future possibilities within Brisbane Catholic Education, Kevin began his Master of Educational Leadership in 2007 and will complete this at the end of 2009.

While study continues to be a successful and satisfying aspect of Kevin’s professional journey, he spoke about the need for balance. Keeping the balance with work, study and family is essential, as well as having the collegial support of peers within the process.

The last 8 years of study in areas of both professional and personal interest has given Kevin the drive to continue possibilities that create opportunities for the upskilling of teachers and school communities in order to assist with student access to learning, in particular students with hearing impairment.

Kevin began his tertiary study in his mid-twenties. He graduated as a primary teacher and worked for a number of years in Brisbane Catholic Education primary schools. It was during this time that Kevin was given the opportunity to teach a student with a hearing impairment. After attending the annual professional development day for teachers working with hearing impaired students (2002), Kevin was inspired to increase his knowledge in this area. Motivation for study also stemmed from the reputation of Melbourne University and the acknowledged reputation of the service offered to schools by the Visiting Teachers: Hearing Impairment. During this time, Kevin was able to join the Visiting Teacher Team while completing his Masters.

In 2006, Kevin graduated with a Masters in Hearing Impairment. This initiative was co-ordinated by Dr Mary Lawson through Melbourne University. A highlight for Kevin after completing his study, was presenting his masters research paper – Phonological Awareness of a Student with a Cochlear Implant Compared to Hearing Peers - at the Australia and New Zealand Conference for Educators of the Deaf (ANZCED) held in Hobart in 2007.

From 2008 Maree has been the Support Teacher: Inclusive Education at Our Lady of the Rosary School, Kenmore. Prior to this she taught at Wooloowin and Darra-Jindalee primary schools. Maree has been identified as a talented and innovative teacher but once she took up the challenge of the support teacher role, she realised the need to increase her knowledge base about the ways students learn in order to assist and support class teachers and their students.

Over the last 7 years, Maree has successfully completed a Master of Educational Leadership through Australian Catholic University and a Master of Special Education through the BCE sponsorship program at Griffith University. She identified the primary motivation to commence her study was to enhance her ability to offer support and guidance to class teachers in programming for the diverse needs of students. Maree believed that furthering her knowledge on disabilities...
and learning difficulties commonly experienced in the mainstream classroom could help achieve this.

Through her study, Maree experienced personal growth as well as acquiring knowledge in a number of educational areas. She learnt about her own preferred learning styles and synthesising information. This helped her to stay focussed and it was this understanding about her preferred learning style that she could have put to good use in her very first year of study as an undergraduate. Maree has gone from someone who struggled with success in her first semester as an undergraduate to being invited in 2008 by Griffith University to enrol in an educational doctorate.

Maree attributes the intrinsic values of self-esteem and self-discovery - two aspects of her growth - to her openness to learn. A quote from Touch the Future professional development that Maree attended has stayed with her - if nothing changes, nothing changes. Her journey has given her the confidence and competence to work with teachers, students and parents to improve learning outcomes.

This year Maree is taking time to enjoy her weekends with family and friends. Her parting words – Everyone can learn, we just have to tap into students’ preferred learning styles to assist them in their journey as life long learners.

Eve Brown
Support Teacher: Inclusive Education
Our Lady of the Assumption
Enoggera

Eve is currently the support teacher at Our Lady of the Assumption School, Enoggera. She grew up in New Zealand and it was here that she undertook her undergraduate studies completing both a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma of Teaching [Primary]. As well as the two qualifications mentioned, she has a Master of Education [Religious Education], a Bachelor of Education and is currently a member of the Griffith cohort studying for the Graduate Certificate in Education Studies. Eve will complete this at the end of 2009 and then intends to enrol in the Master of Special Education program.

When asked the question, what keeps you focused? Eve identified a personal drive for knowledge and the enjoyment she receives through the practical application of this knowledge. One of the many benefits of being a member of the Griffith cohort is the collegial support offered by her peers in the Graduate Certificate of Education Studies. While acknowledging this benefit, Eve has been very careful to maintain a work/ life/ study balance. To this end, she is a member of two orchestral groups, plays in Queensland Musical Theatre productions and is a member of the BCE Music Fire group. Her involvement in these groups helps to maintain an essential balance while providing a creative outlet for her musical talents. Eve also enjoys spending time with friends and family and has regular visits to the gym.

Study has helped Eve on her personal journey. In 2007, she was a participant in John Mc Ardle’s consultancy training program and her practical application of consultancy was enhanced in 2008 by completing the Griffith subject, Consultation and Collaboration in Special Education. She has always had the ability to creatively problem-solve and her study has provided an increased awareness of the importance of boundaries and collaboration. An example of the practical application of knowledge was working with a class teacher to improve the learning outcomes for students. It was a positive experience for both teachers and students. Eve used the opportunity to apply her acquired mentoring skills and put theory into practice. Through the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills, she has the ability to look differently at situations, to accept ideas and to confidently work in teams.

Eve enjoys working with parents, teachers, school officers and consultants to assist with the support of the diverse needs of students. Her primary motivation for continuing to deepen her knowledge is to increase her understanding of the spirit of the children who require support. Working collaboratively with other team members to creatively meet the needs of all learners, Eve is energised by the fact that she has a role to play in the developing of independence and confidence in the students with whom she works.

There are many possibilities for Eve’s future directions as a lifelong learner. Her plan is to eventually complete a Master of Special Education and then perhaps move into the Educational Psychology area where she has previously completed some units of study. Although she is a highly motivated professional, she does not lose sight of the importance of balance in her life.
Learning about Life and Lifelong Learning

Jo Murphy
Campus Minister
Our Lady’s College, Annerley

I have always had a passion for discovering why some people do not fit into society and how this could be addressed through the curriculum. This is perhaps the reason why I have pursued learning and different life/career experiences.

In recent years – when I was an Art teacher at Mary McKillop Parish School Birkdale - I participated in the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme over a period of two years. The programmes were - Inquiry Learning and Building a Culture of Enquiry. A specialist teacher in a primary setting may experience projects which have a life and an ending. Often you do not have an opportunity to witness a building on or transfer of knowledge and skills from the ‘project’ into general practice. I was looking for a change away from ‘projects’ per se and found an opening to become a campus minister at Our Lady’s College. This position frees me to move with students and their needs as they go from class to class and year to year. I can follow up with them and my work can be integrated to become part of a whole cultural learning experience in tandem with curricula objectives.

Recent study has lead me to the writings and philosophy of a number of people including Harry Broudy a philosopher and educator who stated, ‘What is good knowledge?’ and ‘What is knowledge good for?’ The first question is about the nature of good knowledge - the subject matter of scientists, artists, historians, biologists and others. The second question is a matter of values education which he claimed should be taught and learned through the Arts.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest known for his writing on ego-spirituality, peace, justice and community building, has also been a strong influence on my learning and actions. His work on acceptance of responsibility and commitment to absolute rigorous truth and honesty resonates with my vision for education and working with others.

I am interested in the concept of ‘epiphany’ – something experienced that causes one to stop suddenly and realise the world could easily be other than it is. At this time the certainty of identity or place within society becomes fragile and the person becomes a seeker. There are a number of people in history that experience an ‘epiphany’ - and others who have travelled, changed country, experienced upheavals on a monumental scale and the like. So, after what seems a lifetime of trying to work out how we learn how to learn, I have finally come to settle at a school in Annerley because for me, it affords the best space within which to investigate this phenomenon further.

I changed from being a teacher to becoming a campus minister perhaps as a response to this wonderment at how fertile learning can be when we as educators and learners place ourselves in an ideal space for cultural cross fertilization.

I retain a passion for project based education such as Maths Through Art and writing plays in order that literacy is embedded in social research incorporating artistic expression. The change from teacher to campus minister was not only a response to my understanding of a justice based curriculum which is eco literate as well as environmentally oriented, but I wanted to be more fully focused on learning with students.

I also chose to study further in the Arts. Being a visual artist and a self trained musician, my knowledge and skills in Dance and Drama were poor. My participation on the BCE sponsored program at ACU , the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (Arts) has given me strategies for scaffolding learning in the Arts in ways that are not threatening for the learner. Experiencing Art is a way that for some, helps make sense of their own experiences – of what has happened to them. This also builds on my skills as a cognitive therapist and at times that learning becomes part of spiritual awakening.

As a Campus Minister and as I continue to engage in learning in Arts, I find that I must constantly upgrade my skills and face new kinds of knowledge as I am challenged in my writing and in what I do as an educator. This gives me a reason to keep reading, seek solutions and growth in my knowledge and upgrading of skills.

So, yes, through choices to learn more, to up-skill and extend my own experiences, I see that learning is for me, lifelong.
Jo is currently taking drum playing lessons from Tunde Solanke. She is learning about other cultures for their relevance in her teaching and being with students from Africa.

Tunde conducts music and culture workshops for school groups where they may learn to make and play a Djembe, Talking or Bongo Drum. It is a workshop that exposes students to culture, history and geography. Read more about this by logging onto the following website for more information:
http://musicappreciation.suite101.com/article.cfm/african_music_and_culture_workshops_for_schools

Around the Corridors

All of us are lifelong learners. We may not necessarily be studying, or undertaking a course in car mechanics. We might be learning about the necessary ‘stuff’ of taking on a new role, a new job, a new hobby, or exploring a new interest – something we have been wanting to do for a long time.

I spoke to colleagues ‘around the corridors’ to see what they might be learning. Here are some brushstrokes…

Dennis Harvey
Senior Education Officer: Curriculum

The rumour went around that Dennis was learning the piano.

‘Music was always an important part of my life. I love listening to it and get so much enjoyment from the music created and presented by others.

I had heard that the piano was the easiest instrument to learn, but the most difficult to master. I was keen to take it up’.

Dennis takes formal piano lessons once a week and is starting with some classics…Elvis’ “Love me Tender” and Mancini’s “Moon River”. His goal is to play Elton John’s “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road” before the end of the year.

‘I was wanting to tap into my creative spirit as I find my working life evolves strongly on those aspects with a more strategic practical focus’.

A balance is sought between lifelong learning roles as they apply to the “work” aspect of life, and the nurturing and growth of one’s creativity in the life journey.

Danielle Carter
Education Officer: Curriculum
Information Communication Learning Technologies

Danielle has just this year joined the Curriculum Team as Education Officer Learning and Teaching Technologies.

In her teaching career Danielle has blended classroom teaching with an interest in the integration of ICTs in the learning process. Both at Santa Sabina (Sydney) and Trinity Lutheran College in Brisbane, she has been a leading teacher and ICT Coordinator.

Priorities in this role include working with teachers as they embed technology in their teaching and learning practices and providing strategic directions for the use of ICLTs within schools.

‘I am looking forward to working with colleagues to discuss the potential in using ICLTs in classrooms. I have a real passion for technologies as a tool for learning in the 21st century. You can never say with technologies that you know it all. I am continually motivated to see the potential of how technology is and can be used in the classroom to enhance student learning’.
Marie Previte
Education Officer: Curriculum

Marie has recently joined the Curriculum team as an Education Officer Curriculum for the Secondary area. She has comes from St Aidan’s Anglican Girls school and has taught at both St Laurence’s and Gregory Terrace schools. Marie has a particular interest in data analysis and how it relates to teaching and learning.

As a lifelong learner Marie has always used review and reflection processes as a means to think about how one can work to improve student learning outcomes. She believes that one can always learn by listening to others and by observing the different ways learning and teaching are approached in these times of rapid change.

Chris Thomas
Education Officer Religious Education

Chris started in his new role in January.

“Since I have been here, I am learning about my work and the expectations within the role. I am also learning how I might best serve, lead and support those working in schools. During the past few weeks I have had an opportunity to reflect on the different dimensions of the role. I have been clarifying expectations and sharing knowledge with my colleagues in APRE positions in schools. The time ahead will be interesting for me and I am looking forward to learning more, meeting teachers and growing in my professional life. I do miss the regular contact with my previous colleagues at Christ the King School, Graceville; however, I am thoroughly enjoying my new team of dynamic religious educators!”

Lorraine Tunn
Secretary Curriculum

I am learning to accept myself and be more tolerant of others. I am enjoying the antics and unconditional love that my two new kittens have brought into my life. I am also interested in growing in my role here as a secretary to the Curriculum Team. There are always new techniques and new programs to learn with the computer. The goals I have set myself this year include learning ‘indesign’ and ‘photoshop’.

Judy Duffy
Education Officer: Curriculum

As a lifelong learner... ‘I have almost completed my Masters and certainly coming into the Curriculum Team has placed me in a situation where I have gone from working with 2 schools, to working with teachers across 25 schools. Now, that is an arena for continuing learning. Also as a parent of 3 boys – one who is about to be married, I find myself continually having to learn new things and develop new understandings...’
DANCE FOR YOUR BRAIN

Dance in schools has changed dramatically from the days of the waltz, the heel-toe polka and the Macarena. Today, Dance education is now an exciting adventure that combines students’ own choreography with presentation skills and analysis. The journey is sometimes more important than the destination.

Negotiating Dance in the Arts curriculum requires respect for the art form and an awareness of where active learning can take your students. For the teacher no dance experience is required to address dance in the classroom. Through movement students’ imaginations are ignited and creativity is allowed to form. But this can only happen if you take a risk and invite dance into the classroom.

On March 16th a group of teachers from Brisbane Catholic Education schools took up a professional learning opportunity to further their experience in Dance education. Some already used dance processes in their classrooms, but for others, this was a completely different concept.

The group engaged in a range of practical activities, which included the integration of Maths and Dance, addressing anti-bullying strategies through movement and literacy strategies that use dance elements. The participants were delighted with the day and excited by the prospects for using dance in their own classrooms.

‘It was a great workshop’ said Jill Russell of St Kevin’s school Geebung. ‘I really enjoyed it and have already started to try some of the ideas’.

The next workshop will be on Drama Education and will be lead by the same presenter, Rachael Jacobs of ACU. It will be held at the O’Shea Centre on Wednesday 20 May. Teachers of all year levels are encouraged to attend and registration is via the BCE PD Calendar.

Further professional development in Dance and other art forms is available through participation in the Post Graduate Certificate of Education [Arts] held in partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU). Classes are held during school holidays or on weekends and the course is paid for by BCE to approved applicants. The course comprises half of a Masters degree, and students wishing to go on to complete this qualification can complete extra studies through ACU. This exciting opportunity will soon accept enrolments. Please contact Fran Ralston (fralston@bne.catholic.edu.au) or Gemma Pulman (gpulman@bne.catholic.edu.au) for more information.
CTJ 2009 Information Kit

The Information Kit 2009 for Consistency of Teacher Judgement (CTJ) was completed and distributed to schools in March. In 2009, resources in the Kit focus on the key learning areas of English and Science.

CTJ Coordinators and teachers will find the resources invaluable in supporting their teaching and preparation for intra and interschool moderation.

The kit contains guidelines and processes for moderation, data collection forms for 2009, and specific resources for English. Resources for Science will be available in April.

The section on English Resources provides material for teaching the Expository genre, planning an English inquiry and using a model of standards. Planning for learning and assessment is organised as per the phases of learning: Early Years P-3, and Middle Years: Years 4 & 5, Years 6 & 7, and Years 8 & 9. The kit contains annotated samples of student work, criteria sheets based on a model of standards and guiding questions for analysing student texts.


For more information please contact the members of the Curriculum Team.

Professional Learning Programs in Term 2 and Term 3

1. Literacy and Numeracy Coaching Project
Building on coaching projects held in 2007 and 2008, participation will have a number of benefits for the school including having a closer match between personal and community vision for literacy/numeracy learning.

2. Learning to Read, Reading to Learn
Reading to Learn is a literacy methodology and professional learning program designed to integrate reading and writing with teaching the curriculum at all year levels, closing the gap in the class at the same time as accelerating learning for all students. Dr David Rose (University of Sydney) and Dr Sarah Culican (Reading to Learn consultant CEO Victoria) will lead the training program.

More information about both programs will be forwarded to schools in Term 2.

Changes to the Editorial Team for Curriculum Matters.

Congratulations to Danielle Long and her family on the recent birth of Thomas. Danielle is the Graphic Designer for the magazine and we thank Melissa Diaz for taking over this task while Danielle is on leave.

Best wishes to Rochelle Cox, a member of the Editorial Team. Rochelle leaves to give birth to her first child. All the best and thank you Rochelle. Annette Macan is sitting in for Rochelle during this time. Thanks Annette.

Welcome to Mark Elliott who has taken over from Graeme Barry on the Editorial team. Mark is the PEO for Religious Education. We thank Graeme for his contribution over the years in article writing [which we hope he continues] and for his expertise in editing.