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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” (Mat 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.

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.

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.
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 1970’s 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.

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. A 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 2,063 secondary students (Aird 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) 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 Firth, 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.

Cyberbullying
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 66% 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 perceptual 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…

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 system is bullying. One 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 on or 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 bullies 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, 2006). 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 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 silver of truth within.

Myth 1: Bullying doesn’t occur at our school
“Bullying occurs in all schools to a greater degree than 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.
Research by Vossekuil 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” (Vossekuil 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 (Perper 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 healthier 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 failing out... Everyone needs to feel they belong. When you denied us that, you stole something that we have spent our 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.
category. They may be still very hurtful and in need of teacher intervention, but it’s not important to over-associate 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 contribute to bullying occurring. These include developmental, genetic, environmental and social factors. It is certainly true that particular groups are over-represented among 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 cooperation 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 ways, has far different consequences. Together, these factors make 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).

A review of bullying was made by Rigby (2007, 2007) 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 to 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 (2001, 2002) identifies three groups who are over-represented in the group. First, there are the children who are inclined 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, build resilience 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 need to experience daily. They suggest that 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 serious as it is in boys. However, some believe there may be measurement concerns with the self-report questionnaires often used (Pepler et al., 2004). 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., 2000b).

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

Simmons (2003, 2003) 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 words. In this way, girls can do as well. Whether 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.

In Conclusion

Every school should recognise the extent of bullying and the need for steps to prevent it. New Zealand has written: “It is important that schools implement appropriate school intervention programs to 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 (Beatty & Alvear, 2008). We can assist you with all your personal, educational, and church travel requirements including Steps of Paul. For more information, call us for brochures or regarding all your local and overseas needs. spdtravel@adventist.org.au 02 9847 3300 08 8394 2133

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There is certainly a marked difference in the way boys and girls bully

References


Domestic violence
An important social issue for schools

Megan Cousins
Social worker, Avondale Retirement Village, NSW; Member of the Domestic Violence Taskforce for the NNSW Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Melinda Callary
Social work student, Charles Sturt University, NSW

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.

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 their 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, 2010).

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 (Bullien, 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 access to 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 (Bullien, 2003; James, 1996; Tomison, 2010; Weeks, 2000).

Despite its explosive nature, men are often not afraid of women’s violence and may mock and laugh at their victims’ 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).

Effects of domestic violence
The effects of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people are often brought to the forefront at school. Evidence has shown that exposure to 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; Lang, 2000; Tomison, 2000).

Young 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; Lang, 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 (Lang, 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, manipulate or hurt 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 things 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
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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; Tomson, 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 discussion is often attuned 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.’

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, 2003). 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; 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 intimate and control other students or teachers (bullying behaviour).
• Physical injuries.
• Changes in behaviour.
• Difficulty focusing 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).

Adolescents may display behaviors 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; Homer, 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 (Homer, 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 (Baker et al., 2002; Osofsky, 1995).

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.

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It is important that the student you feel 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.
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.

References

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 of Education. 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 EH&S issues. 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 chick 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 EH&S issues is important, our concern for the Eternal Health and Safety of our students is even more important. It is our core business.
Curbing violence in schools
Implications for Christian educators

Elvin Gabriel
Lecturer, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, Andrews University, USA

Carole Woolford-Hunt
Lecturer, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, Andrews University, USA

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. 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.

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: Where? Of the 43.9% of students who reported attacking another student in the last 12 months, 21.3% reported that the attack 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 (83% vs. 54%) and 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 by throwing objects with their fist (60% vs. 40%, respectively), however, more female students kicked their opponents (36.5% vs. 19.7%) and pulled their hair (33.7% vs. 6.9%) respectively.

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% carried 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.

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”.

Antecedents of school violence
Home influences
There exists to be a positive relationship between the stability of the family unit and the escalation of violence in schools.

School influences
The school environment, a powerful socialising agent, can also be a powerful catalyst for violent behaviour. Schools which function without a clearly articulated 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.

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. One of the main conclusions from...
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Positive self-statements and other stress-reduction techniques are used to alleviate angry behaviours.

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 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.

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. 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. 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 real life experiences and reactions to hypothetical situations. In order to develop social problem solving skills students are taught to identify the problem, brainstorm solutions, evaluate solutions, by 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. 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.

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:

- 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, by minimising imitations and resentments so that positive feelings can be experienced fully

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.

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 compiler 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.
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 are becoming concerned about contributing to the welfare of their fellow human beings.
2. Transmitting values is, and always has been, the work of civilization.
3. The school’s role as a 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 unashamed commitment to moral education is essential if we are to attract and keep good teachers.
10. Values education is a “doable” job.24

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.25

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 tenants must play a leading role in its promotion, development, implementation and maintenance throughout 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 in 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 character education 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.26

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.”27 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.28

Endnotes
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7 Ibid., p.288.
9 Kaufmann, J.M., Characterization of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children and Youth (Mary Ann Liebert, 2001).
11 Ibid., p.2, 3.
12 Ibid., p.2, 3.
15 Ibid., p.2, 3.
16 Ibid., p.2, 3.
17 Ibid., p.2, 3.
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21 Ibid., p.2, 3.
23 Ibid., pp.324–327.
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Maximising the potential of the ‘third teacher’

Indoor developmental play environments: 3–8 yrs

Sandra Ludlow
Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

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.

Recent early childhood position statements and curriculum framework documents (C&K, 2009, ECA, 2008, NSW DoCS, 2010) 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 sensivities” (NSW DoCS, 2010) 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-architect of a child’s wellbeing.
- Learning occurs optimally in social and collaborative contexts.

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 provide the educational environment with a predominance of hands-on, open-ended materials. If we believe that environments should support the child to become a capable and resourceful constructor of their own knowledge, then we will provide the educational environment with a predominance of hands-on, open-ended materials. These materials will allow children to productively investigate, experiment, problem solve and test hypotheses without close adult supervision (Walker, 2007).

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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 engagement in 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.

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(Curtis & Carter, 2008; Epstein, 2007; Walker, 2007)
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 also enshrine opportunities for oral 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 outcomes" (Malguzki, 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. Reflection, 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 children's disposition to learn as well as their sense of self as 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 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 help foster a commitment to sustainability include: using both sides of a piece of paper; reusing glass jars to store play 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. The more 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 the mode should be made to the environment to 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:

- 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;
- 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

References


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

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

"Environments that intentionally support the concepts of diversity and social justice contribute to the child’s acquisition of democratic principles, wellbeing and belonging."

"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..."
Accommodating a new student with a disability in your primary classroom

Elva Fitzgibbon
Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

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 them to ask questions (Wills & Jackson, 2000).

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 to conduct 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 6), 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 classroom environment, apply for funding, access support personnel, and give greater individualised attention to the student with a disability.

adjustments in the classroom

Adjusting the environment is contingent on the type of disability. A phone call or email to the student’s 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 content of the classroom may need to be modified. For example, a physical disability may require 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 ways to help the child feel at home. 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. Prompt thermal 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 common work done with the class, secondly extend this to one or two other children. 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 may 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 membership is with a person who respects and supports each other.

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

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Serving and leading in schools
A discussion of leadership models and how Australian school communities can benefit

Lyndon Darko
Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

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).

Spear’s (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, describes leadership as servanthood. In this case, leadership means giving up your own rights (Shappe 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 (Rankine, 2004; 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant leadership</th>
<th>Servanthood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Good listener</td>
<td>- Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Empathetic</td>
<td>- Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Authoritative</td>
<td>- Discernment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Keen sense of awareness</td>
<td>- Awareness of the human spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persuasive</td>
<td>- Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Able to conceptualise</td>
<td>- Sense of humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Foresight</td>
<td>- Intellectual energy and curiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Steward</td>
<td>- Respect for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Committed to the growth of others</td>
<td>- Understanding of the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community builder</td>
<td>- Predictability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Breadth</td>
<td>- Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Comfort with ambiguity</td>
<td>- Presence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 situation where administrative “ministering” occurs, a culture of service then envelops 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 (Kelfly, 2006). Furthermore, when student leadership is expressive of servanthood, learning and academic performance are enhanced due to quality interpersonal processes (Edwards, 1996 cited in Keford, 2001). When you look at it from a student’s 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 individual 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 a serving becomes a natural by-product of relationships (Hill, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1996, cited in Keford, 2001).

When a school community becomes purposeful, service learning—this appears to be the most effective type of experiential education. Guided and mandatory self-reflection.

The 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.
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.

References
Crippen (2005). The democratic school: First to serve, then to lead. Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 47.

We need to start developing leaders whose potential to lead is derived from their capacity to serve.
Teaching principals in smaller primary schools

Their issues, challenges and concerns

Daryl Murdoch
Associate National Director, Adventist Schools Australia, Vic

Abstract

Limited research has been conducted into the teaching primary principaship 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 principaship 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 Principaship's Perception Survey (TPPS) which was forwarded to Department of Education and Training (DET) school systems and the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) school system 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. While teaching primary principals in charge of small schools were 'the heroes in the building of the nation' (Beare, 1998, 23), there have 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 primary 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 by 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. Gamage's research yielded valuable data into the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals, but it did not explore an in-depth understanding of the 'slipstream' 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.

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, as the 'heroes in the building of the nation' (Beare, 1998, 23), 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 primary 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 by 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. Gamage's research yielded valuable data into the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching primary principals, but it did not explore an in-depth understanding of the 'slipstream' experience of a broad cross section of teaching primary principals across a range of school systems in 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 'slipstream' experience of a broad cross section of teaching primary principals across a range of school systems in New South Wales.

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

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 (Mintzler, 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 school systems 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 PPS schools. PPS 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 end 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 Principal's Role Concerns Scale, The Classroom Learning Focus Concern Scale, and The Community and Professional Support Scale. These attitude scales are now considered.

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:

Small schools 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 (Lyall, 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.

Community and Professional Support Scale. These 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:

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Community and Professional Support Scale. These
Table 1: Teaching primary principals’ perceptions of individual items on the Positive Perceptions Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% disagree</th>
<th>% agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Small schools are great, they do a lot more for children who are at risk than anywhere else</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>In a small school you can arrive at a collaborative decision much easier</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Small schools offer a kind of family community that large schools can’t offer</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Parents like the size of the school, they know all the staff and they feel they can approach any staff member</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Small schools can say that at the end of the day, “I made a difference”</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I like being in control—management and leadership wise</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The joy of the job (being in class)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Parents have the opportunity to raise issues and to discuss school policy at Parent and Friends meetings</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 down is getting a bit tired, you know, and some balls are going to drop soon if there is nothing that comes up and says “long term you can handle this”. (S3A 1)

Teaching principals often resent the intrusion of management issues into the classroom realm and endeavour prudently 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. (Stage 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 the 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.

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 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; Villalp & Webb, 1999). 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. (Stage 3)
### Table 3: Teaching primary principals’ perceptions of individual items on the Classroom Learning Focus Concern Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% agree</th>
<th>% disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Other teachers are working on different curriculum levels so you have no chance of sharing with anybody</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I’m compromising the classroom environment and I don’t know what to do about it</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>I have to trust my staff that they are doing the job because I just don’t have the time to visit their classes</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I don’t have anyone to talk to regarding management issues so there is little that is done about it</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>If you want to go to an in-service you’re affecting your class and I hate that</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>I don’t have time for curriculum planning, training, monitoring, evaluating, and replanning, and getting the cycle going</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I think that an area that does definitely suffer is instructional leadership</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>I don’t have the right to take any more of my teachers’ time even if I had the time to introduce new initiatives</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In a bigger school you could lob things off to another member of the executive team, but here there isn’t anyone so you do it yourself</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% agree</th>
<th>% disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>There is this expectation that you will be a community leader</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>You’re an integral part of the local community</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Isolation is definitely a factor in our area when it comes to participation in professional development activities</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I think that a mentoring program is essential and not just the odd day here and there</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Professional Association meetings are very important for networking and getting ideas</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I think that peer networking is very important for small schools</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

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

Generally, it is a matter of being “thrown in the deep end” (Catholic 2) or as one Catholic principal put it:

“Factors restricting the ability of teaching principals to participate in professional development and support activities at their disposal included 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)"

PPS 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 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 importance that teaching principals 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 encourage higher education institutions to provide school leadership programs tailored to the needs of PPS principals. (TEACH)

References

Cosmology and Design

Lynden Rogers

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Avondale College, NSW

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 intractable, 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 that seems to be acceptable to thinking Christians and then by presenting some cosmological arguments within this framework. Some of these would 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. However, it was widely assumed that, over time, the attacks by Hume and Darwin finally 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 complexity and Dembski’s three-stage causal filters. Two other well-known authors within this movement are Johnson and Wells.

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. As science advances, providing more natural explanations, the room for such a Designer will be reduced until, like the Cheshire Cat, only His benevolent 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. In other words, a Christian actually does not have to be an ID supporter to practice science.

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 discerned as activity within the natural laws and natural forces. He also 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 tuning of the universe for life which is very accessible for secondary school students. Interestingly, most of these writers are not even 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 security coincidences. Let me mention the three most non-Christians who have written a book elaborating on six of these security coincidences. 6

1. In our universe the ratio of the strength of the electrical force to that of the gravitational force is $10^{8}$, a staggeringly huge number. Stars are held together by gravity but radiate their energy by electromagnetic radiation: visible light, x-rays, radio waves etc. 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 (dimensions) is 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. This seems to be the actual density of our universe is $3$ parts in $10^{5}$ 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 reman 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 $1,000,000$, without clumping?
up too much? This turns out to be another
moment that is incredibly fine balancing.

Clearly, our universe is unexpectedly bio-friendly,
which by no means necessary, compatibility with carbon-based life. It appears that
the Big Bang was initiated 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
e.g., Olozol’s suggests a rather unpleasant
thought experiment in which one imagines a firing
square of 100 highly trained marksmen, all with
cross-hairs of their sights fixed on one heart! One
sees 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
case with parallel universes, all with different
dis, in which our scenario just happens to be the
“winning ticket”, as if were, in a gigantic cosmic
lottery. However, this rather prodigal replication of
universe 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
seems to be in a state of flux, as a leading discussion, in that
interactions through multiple feedback loops involving
bottom-up causality is operating in nature has already
been clarified 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
  motor, 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 production 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 basic 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 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 seemed to
  involve very specific outcome states for incredibly
  complex systems. Different hierarchical levels
  interact through multiple feedback loops involving
  many different bottom-up and top-down causations.
- 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.

3. The highly relational nature of our universe

Somewhat related to the preceding point, the
last 100 years has revealed a fundamental and
previously unexpected relational depth to physical
reality. Classical Physics had simply assumed
a classical Euclidean 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
bipolarisation between matter and energy, 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 frightening
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
expression of general relativity: “Matter tells
space how to curve and space tells matter how to
move,” beautifully illustrates this symbolism. 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
e.g., 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
quantum mechanics. However, this “non-locality” of a universe, 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 by experiment we find that if you paint yours 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! 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 crisis 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! Dirac demonstrated the truth of his maxim by an astonishingly fruitful piece 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 physics.

Speaking of mathematical comprehensibility, Einstein remarked that the “most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.” Science is just glad that things are that way, but a deeper metaphysical instinct, not created.

In this sense, pi, the Pythagoras law, and Mandelbrot sets were waiting there to be revealed. Many scientists believe in a moral order, and Mathematics strong enough to believe that any other civilisations existing within our universe must surely have discovered such mathematical entities. Thus, in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, they look out for such signals; hence, the search for primes, Julia sets and Fibonacci series in 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 created; we are creatures in the image of its Creator?

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 the green or the red of an apple. He goes on to say that while he does not rejoice in our current ignorance, neither does he wish to dwell on it at the expense of our ability to puzzle out some dimensions of the mind, that is, the seat of consciousness.

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 inaccessible 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 an eternal moral code emanating from a moral Creator. God is much more than just 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 air waves. 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. 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 Queen was once alerted to Alice that she had once done!
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).

Understanding is a function of working memory and begins at the word level (Just & Carpenter, 2000; Kirby, 1988). Strings of words create ideas that are given context and meaning through the involvement of structured knowledge (schemas) already coded
Reciprocal teaching (RT)  
From a review of the literature in relation to reading comprehension, Palincsar and Brown (1986)  
measured metacognitive strategies of reading and reasoning. Metacognitive strategies of reading  
were 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 based on predictions, interpretations and conclusions.

A number of authors have commented on the strategies for effective reading. Krashen & Yemi (1990; Carter  
1997; Ellis, 1988; Hart & Speece, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Moore, 1998). Firstly, it is an open process. The  
skills of effective reading comprehension are usually covert and sometimes can be unaware of  
the 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.

Reciprocation occurs as each team-member successively assumes the responsibility of the teacher  
and one way of teaching young readers to be metacognitive is to employ the procedures of RT (Biggs & Moore, 1993; Brown & Palincsar, 1986). Even so, teachers continue to provide feedback to student-teams about their implementation of the process.

Research questions:  
- Is there evidence to suggest that, when the RT strategies are applied to reading passages used  
with a Year Four class in the NSW subject of HSIE without impeding the learning that should  
take place?

Reciprocal teaching (RT)  
From a review of the literature in relation to reading comprehension, Palincsar and Brown (1986),  
reciprocal teaching (RT) is a method of teaching students to become more effective readers. RT  
developed from the work of Vygotsky (1978), who emphasised the importance of social interaction  
in the learning process. The basic idea of RT is to use small groups of students to engage in  
teaching and learning activities that promote the development of metacognitive skills. RT involves  
students working together in pairs or small groups to teach each other understanding of text,  
through asking and answering questions, summarising, predicting, and evaluating.

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  
subjects other than English.

Research method  
This study was conducted with a regular Year Four class during the first author’s practicum  
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.

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?

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 each group that were socially cohesive and easy to  
manage.

RT makes the basic skills of effective reading comprehension visible to all.
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?
- How did this unit help 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 (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 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 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?
- What 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...
that the clarifying strategy had helped them learn new words. Student 3 said, “Yes, through clarifying. I had 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 these 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 same interview, supplementary questions led to an in-depth understanding. From the nature of the exchange within the interview, it appeared that neither the question nor comment was made in the control group session. However, both question and comment would have had a legitimate place within the RT strategies, and Student 8 would have benefited from this interaction. In fact, 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 “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 depicted 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 had 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 full understanding of the process of summarisation when she stated that “Predicting was helpful. Summarisation means going through the paragraph and remembering what happened.”

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>III sum of squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>Partial η² squared</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.484 72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.6134</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test / post-test (main effect)</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>6.400</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test / post-test (group interaction)</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>2.654</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

This pilot study was undertaken to explore the benefit that the use of the four RT strategies 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 student’s increased the depth and quality of the processing of the information.

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.
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**

**References**


Loving the ‘unlovely’
Teachers share their response

Yvonne Judd
Teacher, Lilydale 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 unlovable 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 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 loves. “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.
- Ask for Divine guidance. Pray with and for those we care.
- Ask Him for guidance to know what each child needs.
- Discipline in private.

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 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.

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

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

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
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.

What's so jolly about phonics?

Coralie Fraser
Kindergarten teacher, Avondale School, Cooranbong, NSW

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.
Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

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 whirlies 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!

Jolly Phonics fun fair letter stations
A — Curly whirlies 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 quibbles
R — Rocket launch
S — Sand play
T — Tea party
U — Useful box
V — Vegetable prints
W — Water play
X — X hunt
Y — Yo-hos & yo-yos
Z — Zoobs & zoos

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

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.

To celebrate our achievements 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 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.

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

Sanitarium Nutrition Service
We are a team of nutritionists and dietitians passionate about helping people enjoy healthy foods and the benefits of a healthier lifestyle.

Ask a Nutritionist:
We are able to answer any questions on food or nutrition — call us on 0800 100 257.

Good Food News:
Our FREE quarterly newsletter features articles on food and health as well as recipes and the latest news from Sanitarium.

Resources:
Nu-Force 5:
A dedicated teacher’s and children’s resource comprising of seven characters each with food related names, whose mission it is to explore nutrition and help children in making healthy food choices. www.nuforce5.co.nz

Sanitarium Website:
For articles and information on health and wellbeing as well as a wide variety of recipes visit www.sanitarium.co.nz. You can also email any questions about health and nutrition to our team of nutritionists and share your views on our fortnightly poll.

Healthy Steps Programme:
An easy to follow step-by-step programme to help you on your journey to achieving health and wellbeing. We’ll send you a pedometer and a CD ROM that can be used in conjunction with the website to help you achieve your health and wellness goals. You’ll also receive helpful tips from the Sanitarium Nutrition Service along the way. www.healthysteps.co.nz

Recipe of the Week:
Receive a FREE delicious recipe via email each week – complete with a detailed nutritional breakdown.

Contact us on 0800 100 257
www.sanitarium.co.nz
We’d love to hear from you.

introducing
the Sanitarium Nutrition Service
New Zealand
RESOURCE REVIEWS

The New Start program
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, Pust 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 convenience 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 gives us more than just practical tools for SOSE and Science: it provides 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.

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

Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

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.

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

New Start students Caleb Stephens and Olivia Simpson
(Photography: Timothy Rogers)
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 correspondence 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. 29). 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–
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, 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.

References
"I look at teaching as a ministry."

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"I will have a part to play in the development of human beings that will be inputting into future societies..."