“Yipee! It’s nearly Easter. Then Jesus will come and die for us again.” I was quick to correct my 5-year-old’s misconception but on later reflection, I wish I had taken time to share in her excitement about Jesus’ death. Where has my excitement gone? It seems all too easy to become busy, focused, or tired but these are simply ‘excuses’ that allow us to ‘just make it through the day’ rather than find delight in the day. “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).

Delight is a feeling of pleasure, excitement and extreme satisfaction. An experience that brings delight is not only enjoyed at the time but leaves positive memories that are recalled and shared in the future. A child finds delight in so many things: a pretty flower, a puddle, a broken butterfly wing, a spider web, the way a slater curls into a ball, ice cream cones, giving handcrafted cards, and so much more. Children are adept at noticing things that don’t even register on the radar of an adult. We tend to have agendas, outcomes and schedules that place blinkers on our daily experience. The problem with this is that a typical classroom has at least twenty students who need to experience a little excitement, wonder and delight in their day.

Is it possible to create delightful classrooms? There is a lot we can learn from market research into what creates a delightful experience for customers; this ten-step recipe for delightful customer service can easily be applied to the classroom experience.

1. In advance, find out who your end customers [students] are, and find out what they want and expect.
2. Understand what you have to offer them that matches their wants.
3. Provide the goods and / or services to the customers [students] in a manner that is enjoyable.
4. Be sure that the customer [student] perceives value from the experience.
5. During the process, make sure that the customer [student] feels important and cared for.
6. Study their actions, facial expressions, tone of voice, hand gestures and analyse what your interaction should be.
7. Ask them if they would like some more of this or another product or service [activity or approach].
8. When completed, ask them how they enjoyed the experience.
9. Analyse their answer and “brainstorm” how to make it better the next time. Everything can be made better. Think hard!
10. Be ready for the next experience.¹ Jesus cared about those around Him. Jesus made people His priority. He wasn’t too busy for children. He wasn’t too focused to pass by Zaccheaus in the tree. He wasn’t too constrained by social rules to talk to the woman at the well. He wasn’t too involved with the crowd to be aware of ten lepers needing His attention. Jesus took the time to notice people and care for their needs. Jesus found delight in loving people and in caring for their needs.

A large percentage of teachers say they chose the profession because they want to make a difference. Jesus is the perfect example of how to make a difference. He knew how to care for individuals in a crowd. John Goodman, vice chairperson of TARP Worldwide, a leading customer experience research consultancy, says that one of the primary ways to create delight in a customer is to reinforce the feeling that he or she is unique.² In today’s world of mass production, information overload and time scarcity, your students want to know that you think they are special, that you notice them and that you care.

An ethic of caring is pivotal to fostering delight in others. When we care, we elevate the needs and desires of others to a level where they affect our decision-making. When we care, we are in a position to more naturally foster delight, wonder and excitement, and convey the knowledge, skills and values we seek to share. TEACH

Endnotes


[Photography: Ann Stafford]
Culturally relevant approaches to classroom management

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Summary
Students from various cultural backgrounds may experience cultural dissonance when teachers and educational administrators from the mainstream culture misconstrue, misinterpret or simply disregard their cultural patterns of learning, behaviour and communication. Due to changing demographics worldwide, cultural diversity is the norm for many schools today. It is therefore imperative that teachers and educational administrators become aware of the variances and unique qualities and characteristics of the groups, cultures and languages represented in their schools. This article specifically highlights important sociocultural issues in classroom management and presents effective strategies for managing multicultural classes. Implications for Christian teachers are addressed.

Changing world demographics
It is evident that we are living in an ethnically and culturally diverse world. Pluralistic countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, France, Australia, Holland and New Zealand are continuing to experience an influx of immigrants. These countries are therefore faced with the challenges of providing opportunities for these groups to be meaningfully included in the sociopolitical, cultural and educational systems and structures, while at the same time, creating avenues for maintaining the uniqueness of each group’s cultural patterns. Diversity also demands further restructuring and modification of educational systems and processes, and further revision of educational policies and philosophies to reflect multicultural parameters and contexts.

One of the most challenging issues in multicultural education concerns classroom management. Techniques and approaches to classroom management, which in the past have reflected the values, norms and beliefs of dominant cultures must be modified to meet the academic, sociocultural, developmental, moral and ethical needs of ever-increasingly ethnically diverse school populations.

Sociocultural issues in classroom management
In order to avoid problems of culturally irrelevant classroom management techniques, teachers must be culturally sensitive and culturally literate. Cultural literacy may be achieved through a thorough knowledge of the history, social patterns, customs, mores, family characteristics, values and educational challenges of ethnic and racial groups. Cultural illiteracy may pose serious threats to the health and well-being of students. Teachers may be attempting to solve problems which do not exist, or may fail to notice problems which do exist, or may use culturally ineffective strategies to deal with problems which may arise. Such teacher attitudes may be attributed to ethnocentricism, cultural tunnel vision, racism, prejudice or ignorance. These attitudes may trigger feelings of alienation, anger, helplessness, normlessness and distrust among affected students. These feelings may ultimately lead to externalising behaviours (i.e., overt aggression, destruction of school property, violence towards others, defiance) or internalising behaviours (i.e., depression, anxiety, withdrawing from school and classroom activities, extreme fears).

Cultural sensitivity is achievable through an empathic grasp of how each group feels, thinks, acts and reacts.
acts and reacts. Teachers may accomplish this task by developing an awareness of their cultural assumptions, values, prejudices and biases, and in so doing, seek to eradicate stereotypical behaviours, attitudes and responses. In this connection, it is especially important that teachers remain open to learn as much as possible from their interactions with students. Teachers are the foundational building blocks in the construction of a strong classroom and school community, where respect and tolerance for cultural and ethnic differences are demonstrated and valued.

Prerequisite skills for managing multicultural classrooms
Addressing the management of diversity in the classroom starts with the training and education of the teachers. Teacher education programs need to place a greater emphasis on embedding multicultural applications and implications in professional and practical courses and activities. This will increase knowledge and understanding of how culture strongly influences children’s and teachers’ behaviours, attitudes and thought processes. In turn, this may ultimately motivate them to construct and implement culturally relevant instructional and management strategies.

An essential component of the training and education of teachers is an exploration of their own cultural and ethnic background. A cultural self-assessment, such as the one listed below, is strongly recommended. Such an exercise gives teachers an opportunity to critically analyse and evaluate their prejudices and their scope of knowledge concerning culture and diversity.

Cultural assessment questionnaire
- What is my definition of diversity?
- What is my ethnic background?
- What is my cultural background?
- Do the children in my classroom and school come from diverse cultural backgrounds?
- What are my perceptions of students from different racial and ethnic groups, with language or dialects different from mine, or with special needs?
- What are the sources of these perceptions (e.g., friends, relatives, television, movies)?
- How do I respond to my students, based on these perceptions?
- Have I experienced others making assumptions about me based on my membership in a specific group? How did I feel?
- What steps do I need to take to learn about the students from diverse backgrounds in my school and classroom?
- How often do social relationships develop among students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds in my classroom and in the school? What is the nature of these relationships?
- In what ways do I make my instructional program responsive to the needs of the diverse groups in my classroom?
- What kinds of information, skills and resources do I need to acquire to effectively teach from a multicultural perspective?
- In what ways do I collaborate with other educators, family members, and community groups to address the needs of all my students?

Armed with the increased sensitivity this self-knowledge brings, teachers can then move forward to the next step of getting to know the cultures of the students in their classroom. The kinds of cultural context knowledge that are essential for teachers to learn include the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, which can serve to promote the “multilingualism and multiculturalism of all the students and the teacher”.

Knowledge and awareness of the social, cultural and religious practices of the countries from which their students have emigrated can aid teachers in understanding how these practices have influenced students’ behaviours, attitudes, lifestyles and thought processes. Teachers should take the opportunity to know each country’s geographical location and have some knowledge of the languages spoken since country of origin and language are so important to children’s sense of identity.

Teachers and administrators can even go the extra step and learn to greet children in their native language. This type of cultural context knowledge may be used by teachers as a way of demonstrating an openness and willingness to learn about aspects of culture that are important to students and their families. Additionally, cultural context knowledge should also be considered essential in the development of curricular innovations and applications that are culturally inclusive.

Useful strategies for managing multicultural classes
The special feature in managing a multicultural class “is the heterogeneity or multiplicity of students’ cultural background”. This is evident in schools in Australia and New Zealand where many students from varied ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds attend. Such diversity of students’ backgrounds demand that teachers become enlightened about how
A supportive, nurturing classroom environment enhances relationships among teachers and students, and is a strong antidote to indiscipline, intolerance, indifference, prejudice and bigotry. This type of environment can be created from the first day of school by teachers “greeting students at the door with a smile and a warm, welcoming comment and communicating with second language learners with a phrase from their native language”. Teachers can also instil in students’ minds that they all can succeed. Such expectations, with encouragement, will help students feel that they are being supported in their efforts.

When students know that you care for them and that you are looking out for them, it makes all the difference in the world. Students then feel valued regardless of their characteristics and are more likely to participate actively in the classroom.

Respect and tolerance for culturally diverse groups may be enhanced by the physical design of the classroom. Classroom displays could include a map of the world that identifies the countries from which the students or their parents emigrated, and signs and banners welcoming students in their language. Arranging desks or tables in clusters creates opportunities for students to work together in small groups on class assignments and activities. This type of interaction creates an atmosphere in which interpersonal relationships are conceived and nurtured. Bulletin boards should contain books, magazines, DVDs, CDs and videos that highlight multicultural issues, experiences and traditions.

**Instructional relevance** enhances the classroom management functions of teachers. This is achievable when teachers become culturally responsive in their classroom interaction and instruction strategies. Children who do not belong to mainstream middle-class culture are at risk of educational failure if their teachers do not have the cultural sensitivity, knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate their learning.

The process of infusion, which integrates content and process, involves using ethnic and cultural materials to develop mastery of general academic and subject matter skills. For example, teaching reading skills such as comprehension, vocabulary and inferring meaning may be achieved through ethnic novels, poetry, stories and folklore; patterns of ethnic migration and settlement might be used in teaching geographic directions, and locations; and mathematical skills such as ratio, percentages, proportions and probabilities may be derived from looking at ethnic and gender employment trends.

In addition to instructional approaches, teachers must also learn about the brilliance the students bring with them ‘in their blood’.

Until they appreciate the wonders of the cultures represented before them—and they cannot do that without extensive study, most appropriately begun in college courses—they cannot appreciate the potential of those who sit before them, nor can they begin to link their students’ histories and worlds to the subject matter they present in the classroom.

Teachers cannot successfully implement culturally responsive classroom management techniques without effective support systems. Collaboration among school and community personnel is vital. Teachers can assist each other by establishing instructional and classroom management guidelines that are culturally and ethnically relevant. They can also enlist the support of professionals, such as school psychologists, counsellors, social workers and behavioural intervention specialists who clearly understand the contexts and dynamics of multicultural education and diversity.

School administrators can also be involved by working with teachers to create a school environment that emphasises respect and tolerance for cultural differences.

Administrators are the primary role model for the teachers and the students; having them participate in what the students are working on validates the importance of the work that the students are doing.

Communicating with parents is essential to the success of any classroom management system. Teachers can send “newsletters to all families providing an overview of culturally-responsive curriculum goals, classroom activities and selected student-written stories and poems”. Through parent-teacher conferences, teachers can gain additional insights from parents on how students’ families influence and / or shape their behaviours.
and attitudes. Parents can learn from teachers how their children are adjusting to the demands of school.

**Implications for Christian teachers**

Christian teachers who operate in culturally diverse school environments must be ever conscious of the opportunities and challenges presented as they seek to integrate their faith with learning and instruction. This goes beyond adopting teaching techniques that are facilitative of learning outcomes that predispose students to respect and embrace diversity as a God-intended reality. It requires that teachers be intentional and explicit about identifying particular Bible-based principles that guide their management techniques and strategies.

Specifically, because Christian schools are worldview driven, with specific philosophical and theological claims undergirding such a worldview, Christian teachers will do well to justify their pedagogic and management styles against such claims. Not only will this approach facilitate faith / subject integration, it will also aid in helping students make the connection between their learning, behaviours, attitudes, and their faith.

Cultural diversity presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Christian teachers. The challenge arises from the fact that attitudes and behaviours are culturally driven, and can trigger differences, which may lead to conflict and misunderstanding in learning environments. With this challenge comes the opportunity for teachers to aid students in the cultivation of Christian virtues, which will be evident in behaviours and attitudes that reflect tolerance, acceptance and respect for those who are culturally and ethnically different.

For example, two constructs / concepts that may be associated with the Christian worldview are **Oneness**, which emerges from our human differences, and **Interdependence**, a requirement for **Oneness**. Teachers can point students to the biblical concept of **Oneness** which is derived from differences, as exemplified by the triune God (three separate, different individuals) constituting a single reality (unity, wholeness). The construct / concept of **Interdependence** as a requirement for **Oneness** can be linked to the biblical example of the Apostle Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 12:14–15 and 25–26 in which he makes a strong case for interdependence.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?... That there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (KJV)

From the aforementioned examples, teachers can use group projects and cooperative learning techniques which foster interdependence—the pooling of diverse individual strengths to achieve a common goal. These management approaches enhance meaningful relationships among students and teachers, and engender mutual trust and open communication.

Christian teachers must continue to create and sustain learning environments in which all students meaningfully participate in setting and reinforcing standards and guidelines for learning and behaviour. They have a sacred obligation to demonstrate to other teaching professionals, how to visualise students as unique individuals, created by God, who have an "object to achieve, a standard to attain that includes everything good, and pure, and noble",17

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**Endnotes**

5 Ibid., 338.
9 Ibid., 152.
12 Nguyen, N., Coutinho, M. J., & Oswald, D. P. Multicultural training for preservice special education teachers. (April 2000). Issue Brief on Ethnicity in Special Education; Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University. Project ACHIEVE.
The true teacher can impart to his pupils few things so valuable as the gift of his own companionship.¹

As chaplains we employ many tools to effect life transformation through the working of the Holy Spirit: prayer, Bible study, Weeks of Prayer, Friday night youth, inspiring chapel services, excursions, camps, student involvement, service projects, overseas trips, awesome music, funny and memorable preaching, good DVDs, authentic role modelling and more. Combined these elements make up an environment where a young person can give their life to Christ Jesus; however, I believe there is a powerful tool that we neglect, overlook and even avoid—friendship, friendship between the teacher and the student, between adult and young person. I believe friendship with our students is one of the most effective tools for guiding young people toward making a lifelong commitment to Jesus.

I admit the idea is uncomfortable and scary. It’s contentious ground. We raise our eyebrows, grit our teeth and assume there has to be another way. Our apprehension seems legitimate, friendship between a teacher and a student doesn’t seem natural or right, and it has gone wrong too many times.

We are governed by legal and professional standards and must work within the boundaries of the child safety protection acts that govern us. Adherence to the law, however, does not automatically preclude a friendship with our students. To deem friendship a practise belonging to another era is tantamount to throwing out the baby with the bathwater and is essentially denying our humanity, not to mention our Christian mission.

The importance of adult friendship
Research confirms what we have always sensed.

The most frequently encountered positive role model in the lives of children, outside of the family circle, was a favourite teacher. For the resilient youngster, a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidante and positive model for personal identification…when schools focus on what really matters in life, the cognitive ends we now pursue so painfully and artificially will be achieved somewhat more naturally…It is obvious that children will work harder and do things—even odd things like adding fractions—for people they love and trust…The number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today’s society.²

A study of resilient young people revealed, “[They] all had at least one person in their lives who accepted them unconditionally, regardless of temperamental idiosyncrasies, physical attractiveness, or intelligence.”³ Young people are so used to being ignored by us that it is no wonder they, in turn, ignore our spirituality. We are failing to connect. Leading students toward a relationship with Jesus is our ‘core business’. Our primary function is academic education and character development but our underpinning purpose is to lead children and their families into faith in Jesus. At our school, we achieve this through making connections.

Teachers at our school have made a determined effort to connect with students, usually just a few at a time. Our teachers are involved in building friendships by playing OzTag one night a week, shopping, visiting the Easter show for the first time, going to a concert, visiting church members, watching movies, and listening to music, among other things. Our bus coordinator has an ongoing banter about the NRL and rugby union with a now baptised Year 10 student. It was during one of these discussions that he learnt that the student stopped watching the NRL games on Friday night, “Because it’s the Sabbath sir!”

Friendships like these have led to new levels of commitment in a number of our students, often in those we would have least expected to accept Jesus. Some of the most spiritual discussions are not in my period five Bible study on a Tuesday but in my car on the way home from school or an event. I am often reminded of what a colleague once said to me, “Relationship is more important than content.”

A few weeks ago, one of the students I mentor came to me flustered, “Andre I have something to tell you. You’re going to get so angry at me. I’m really sorry.” Then she blurted out, “I just smoked! I just had a cigarette. I’m so sorry Andre.” I realised her confession was actually a fruit of the friendship and subsequent trust we had developed over the years. It is the trust that comes from an environment of

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³ Young people are so used to being ignored by us that it is no wonder they, in turn, ignore our spirituality.
friendship and allowing a margin for the student to make choices and indeed make mistakes that leads students toward growth and maturity.

**Am I a suitable mentor / friend?**

Some may wonder whether a flawed role model is desirable. What will our young people aspire to? We may avoid spiritual mentoring because we assume we are not able to live up to a standard that is holy enough to meet student expectations. In reality, students are not looking for perfection. Young people are quietly observing how the adults they respect navigate the tenuous terrain of the Christian life.

Your young people want to see how you deal with stress, temptation, crisis, disappointment, success and the challenges of life. Scary? That is where real growth and change occurs. Remember your young people do not expect you to be perfect. They want to know that you are real and honest about your struggles and mistakes. They want to know that you are giving it your best, and like them, you face challenges too.4

The effort to establish friendships is not to be the solo effort of the chaplain. It must be environmental. This organic approach is akin to the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child”.

In my interactions with young people and their parents, I point out that even as a minister I am not immune to struggles. I share my mistakes, my victories, my happiness and my temptations. I try to convey that a relationship with Jesus is relevant to their every life choice and that the Christian walk is not a pristine, static or boring journey.

Because our school is located in a marginalised and deprived area, I tell many stories about growing up in a family where we didn’t have it all. I talk about being a reject and a ‘try hard’; being bullied; and of trying to form my own identity out of being an angry and confused New Zealand-born Samoan teenager who hated school and most times erred on the wrong side of life. The students have memorised the testimony of my rebellious young adult years and my battle with substances and even now my battle with all things worldly. I am not proud of these aspects of my life but I have to share them because I need to model for them that the love of Jesus is real and that his grace forgives me, and them!

Central to postmodern youth ministry is the idea that we are on a journey together, it is not a conversation between an expert and a novice but rather two humans (albeit of varying experiences, wisdom and ages) doing life together.

Authentic engagement is never condescending. It’s not ‘top down’...If we are to truly incarnate the gospel of this new world, we as Christ-followers would do well to learn the spiritual rhythms of non-Christians and a dance that is, first of all, truly human. As we seek humble engagement instead of power, we will earn the right to draw others into the subtle rhythms of grace.5

Sadly, many teachers value control of their classroom over a warm relationship with their students. Ellen White, one of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism, cautions against this. She says teachers who are strict and proud of having students under their subjection “are not the most successful teachers”. She says they fail because they do not cultivate friendliness with their students.

They often hold themselves too much reserved, and exercise their authority in a cold, unsympathising manner which cannot win the hearts of their children and pupils.6

Instead, she encourages teachers to befriend students.

Show [students that you] love them, and [take] an interest in all their efforts, and even in their sports, sometimes even being a child among children, [it] would make the children very happy, and would gain their love and win their confidence.7

**A word of warning**

Friendships with students can become unhealthy or even abusive. The public view of chaplains, teachers or pastors abusing or taking advantage of a vulnerable, young student exists because it can, and sadly does, happen. Some adults fail to exercise “healthy boundaries”8 and end up in sexual, or less sinister but equally damaging, co-dependent relationships with teenagers.

If our emotional needs are not met by God and the appropriate adults in our lives, we may inadvertently project these needs onto our students under the guise of Christian discipleship. The desire must be that young people can have healthy relationships with us and see Jesus reflected in us.

**Let go and let God love them**

Being a friend, I used to become so invested in the lives of these students that when they fell off the rails and indulged in excessive swearing, smoking, drinking, sexual relationships, parties, lies, hate, or gossip, I would get discouraged. I felt like I had somehow failed.

One Friday night after dropping off a group of students, I found out a student I was mentoring, one I thought had been making excellent progress in his Christian journey, had relapsed into some at-risk behaviours and was trying to get a girl to follow him. I remember being confused and discouraged. I complained to God as I drove home. I couldn’t understand how the friendship, the talks, the modelling, and the praying had ‘failed’. Philippians 1:6 came to mind, reminding me that the student...
belonged to God and not me.

God impressed upon me the reason I was angry, it was because my human love is conditional. I enjoy being a friend to the students when they show promise but I am stressed when they fall because I can’t help feeling I have failed and that they have failed me. Only God can be a real friend to them, showing them a boundless love void of any selfishness. I became convicted that my friendship is a catalyst to their spiritual growth, not the end goal.

**Conclusion**

It was the willingness of Jesus to meet, speak and eat with just about anybody; the feeling he engendered that they could dare come to him as they were, that transformed them. The beautiful ‘acceptance in their unacceptability’ brought about repentance, forgiveness and the discovery of the joy that life with Jesus brings.³

Friendship was at the heart of Jesus’ ministry and is what we need to model.

In your efforts to mentor, be simple, be creative, but most of all, be real...Through relationships with you, the next generation will catch a vision of their worth to Jesus Christ, begin to see Him as their ultimate Hero, and ultimately take up the cause of the cross.⁹

My prayer is that you have purposeful friendships with your students that point them to Jesus our ultimate friend, so in turn, they can develop life-impacting friendships with others.

**Endnotes**

2 ³ North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. *Caring and support*. http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at6k10.htm
Most OH&S officers take their responsibilities seriously, with good reason. Failure to act on potential hazards has serious consequences, both in terms of safety and accountability. Most schools appoint OH&S officers, yet it is important to remember that all staff members are accountable for students’ health and safety. Safe work practice documents reveal that any individual who assumes responsibility in a school situation for the welfare of students by providing instruction, direction, advice or assistance is deemed an accountable person.

How accountable are you when it comes to the Eternal Health and Safety of the students in your school? Do you help take responsibility for the spiritual formation of your students? Or perhaps your school has an appointed Eternal, Health & Safety Officer. With increases in funding, many schools have employed chaplains who serve in this role. This issue of TEACH features the role of chaplaincy in Christian schools. Chaplains act as advocates for students. They have a heart to develop spirituality and a job description that fosters the Eternal Health and Safety of students. Their role in schools is very important, but as with any good practice, there may be inherent dangers.

In this case, the biggest danger is that classroom teachers may abdicate their role to the chaplain, leaving with this individual the responsibility for the students’ Eternal Health & Safety. George Barna (2003), researcher and author, points out that one primary function of churches is to equip people to reflect Jesus. As faith-based communities, Christian schools function as churches, and most perceive that one of their roles is to make disciples. This requires a greater commitment than merely learning about Jesus. It’s like those ‘learn about’ and ‘learn to’ statements that appear in some syllabus documents. Christian educators desire that their students move beyond learning about God and learn to live in God’s presence, so they can reflect His love to the world. For Christian teachers, their chosen career is more than a job. It is a ministry.

To be effective in this ministry demands an integrated approach that reaches further than the chaplain’s office. Everyday teaching and school routines should reflect the spirit-filled lives of the teachers. This should be evident in chapel programs, during morning devotions or worships, in scripture classes, and in every aspect of the school program.

Students learn to reflect Jesus by associating with people who are reflecting Jesus in the way they live. This means all of us are accountable when it comes to the Eternal Health and Safety of our students. How seriously are we taking our responsibility? TEACH

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

Reference
Introducing psychology interns to counselling in Christian schools

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An illuminating idea
As part of a compulsory aspect of professional counselling practice, I had established a supervisory relationship with practicing psychologist, Colleen. Colleen happened to also supervise interns who were studying a Masters degree in either Educational Psychology or Clinical Psychology at various universities around Sydney. When I found out that Colleen was looking for placements for her students to gain experience in various counselling settings, an exciting idea was born. I began negotiations with the principal and school council of Sydney Adventist College (SAC) regarding the placement of psychology interns in the school and later in Mountain View Adventist College (MVAC).

Assessing the potential value of intern placements
I discussed with the principal the needs of the school and the training and skill level of the interns in order to determine how the interns might best serve the needs of the College.

During the infancy stage of the project, the interns placed in the school played a significant supportive role in the effort to establish a needs-based assessment of perceived ways the school counselling team could best serve the school community. They assisted in surveying staff and student needs and began setting up structures to respond to them. During a parent information night, they helped conduct a parent-needs survey and utilised the results to develop pathways to address parents’ needs.

Developing a job description
There was no existing protocol or pathway for the introduction of psychology interns into our school setting. We needed to carve a new pathway for integrating psychology interns into a major school system. The university required the formulation of a job description for the interns. We wanted to develop a job description that reflected the needs of the school and how the interns would be utilised in order to address those needs.

Drawing on the findings of the needs-based assessment we had done of students, staff and parents, I formulated a draft copy of a ‘Needs-Based Assessment for the Integration of Psychology Students’. The draft included suggestions for possible services the interns could provide and needs they could fulfil. This proposal later developed into a model that would provide not only an adequate job description but also the prime function and accountability structures of our department.

Selection of interns
Selection of a suitable intern is critical. We liaise with the placement coordinator at the University of Western Sydney, School of Psychology in order to find those students interested in a placement in a Christian school setting. Potential interns submit a resume and indicate their willingness to operate within the school’s value system.

Contributions made by the interns
The benefits of hosting and supporting psychology interns at Sydney Adventist College and Mountain View Adventist College have been extensive. These benefits have mostly come through the expanded services the counselling departments can now offer at the schools.

Interns were involved in the formulation of a major Anti-Bullying Project for SAC. They formed part of a brainstorming group and made it possible to visit sixteen other major private and public, co-ed and non-co-ed colleges around Sydney with a view to determine best practice in addressing bullying. These findings then formed an important resource during the development of school policy and practice.

With increased counselling staff, SAC has been able to establish two additional counselling rooms. School administration supported this growth and it wasn’t long before the interns began supervised meetings with students. Counselling sessions help address issues such as cutting, suicide ideation, family break-up, sexuality, sex, identity issues, anger management, depression, relationships, grief, separation anxiety, integration adjustment, and bullying.
An educational psychology intern has been placed as a classroom supervisor with the learning support coordinator. This intern works with teachers to develop and implement behaviour support plans for individual students; manage small groups of students who require specialised support; work with students on an individual basis as required; carry out appropriate testing (including for integration) of students when required; and liaise with teachers regarding student progress.

By utilising the interns, we have been able to offer increased support to parents. The interns played an essential part in the development and delivery of a ‘Relationship Recovery Workshop’ aimed at empowering families of divorce, separation or bereavement in their healing and reinvention. The interns acted as facilitators of small groups, supporting parents and their children.

The interns were integral in the development and delivery of a parent night for middle school parents. The program included a panel discussion with several brief presentations on teenage developmental stages and parenting issues. The program gave us an opportunity to introduce ourselves as professionals, facilitate networking amongst parents, and provide feedback to parents. Following are further services offered by the interns:

- skills training
- support for teachers dealing with difficult behaviour
- assistance in supporting learning difficulties
- follow-up with students
- career guidance
- psychometric testing, including feedback to parents about the child’s needs with respect to psychometric test results
- liaising with teaching staff and documenting cases to assist resolution of student-related issues
- delivery of anger management courses
- support for student mums.

The relationship between the interns and the school is truly of mutual benefit.

The interns’ experience
During the first placement, entry, orientation and integration were poor due to teething issues. In spite of this, our intern enjoyed her early experience with us and was enthusiastic to get more involved in the school. Over time, her confidence grew and teachers started to show their appreciation of her input. (Experience and the development of a job description now enable us to facilitate a smooth entry process.)

The interns are with us in order to further develop their skills. They have an opportunity to observe behaviours, see professionals in action, ask questions, and explore ideas and concepts in a supervisory relationship. Over time, they learn to trust their intuition as they use the student story and their own life experience and training to respond to needs. They also learn to reflect on situations to determine what can be learnt about themselves, about others, about life or about God.

As the interns grow in confidence, experience and competence, they start to team-counsel students and parents under my supervision. When appropriate, they then branch out on their own, seeing their own list of students. During their university training, these interns have not had the chance to do one-on-one counselling so our school setting offers a tremendous learning opportunity.

In addition, interns have the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of their university internship program.

Conclusion
‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’. For me, fulfilling one’s dreams is an exciting adventure. This project has made an important contribution to Christian education in our schools. The process hasn’t been without its challenges but we have seen effective multiplication of our labour, allowing us to care for even more needs within our community. This project is a worthy fulfilment of a wonderful dream, and the illumination has only just begun for those who see its potential.

Welfare to wellbeing
After careful consideration of the services offered at the school, including those by the counselling department, we planned a change of name for ‘Student Welfare’. Instead of being called ‘Student Welfare’, the inference of which is helping the needy, I suggested a new title ‘Student Wellbeing Support Team’. This new title suggests a positive and holistic approach to caring for students. This proposal was met with favour and was passed by the School Council.

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Campus churches
Optional extra or imperative inclusion in our Next Gen schools

Mel Lemke
Chaplain, Avondale School, Cooranbong, NSW

Gateway, our church on campus, is a most exciting initiative. Three individual parents approached me in the car park after school a week before our campus church officially started. Their common question was “Pr Mel, I hear there is a church starting on campus. Can we come?” All three came to church that weekend, with their families. They love the community of faith they have discovered there. Each has become active in our church and has chosen to follow Jesus. This choice alone has added great value to their lives. New families keep coming to see what our campus church is about. They come because they love what they have seen in us, and want to know more. In my years as a pastor, I have never had anyone walk up to me in a car park or on the street and ask if they could come to my church, or if they could join my church. It happened three times in our first week of having a campus church, and grew out of an already-established relationship.

Never have our schools been so well placed to influence the lives of Australian and New Zealand families. Before us lies an unprecedented opportunity to invite children and their families with limited prior knowledge of God and His ways to consider Him and choose Him. In a growing number of schools, we find ourselves in a position where students from non-Christian or nominal-Christian families make up the greater percentage of student enrolment. At the same time, many of our schools have become schools of choice in the private sector and enjoy a growing reputation as places of learning that deliver not only excellent academic achievement but also produce high quality citizens and leaders through an intentional program of values transmission, relationship building, community service, and life-skills development. Parents today are looking for more than just education for their children. They are looking for the added value that good schools provide. A concurrent development sees us with more chaplains in schools than we have ever had. In Australia, government support and funding of chaplains in schools has helped boost this very positive trend. This initiative alone has raised awareness of the important role chaplains play in schools. It has enabled some schools to hire chaplains for the first time and other schools to strengthen their already existent chaplaincy program.

Identifying opportunity
Dr Barry Oliver, leader of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the South Pacific region, recently identified Christian education as core to the mission of the church. This was a strong affirmation of the role of our schools in reaching unchurched families in our community.

Our school campuses could be the sites where our most fruitful kingdom growth occurs over the next decade if we are wise enough to maximise what we have. No other ministry arena has such wide and open access to the homes and hearts of secular families. Families who know nothing of God have already opened a door towards a life of faith when they enrol their children in our schools. Trust forms naturally as committed Christian teachers invest in bringing out the best in each child. Relationships with parents strengthen as children grow and learn and become.

Our campus church
A strong chaplaincy program was seen as an integral part of our school’s vision for growth over the next decade. Pastoral care workers were recruited with the skill and life experience to meet current and future needs. We recognised that parents who chose to send their children to our school liked what we did, and supported our values. We saw that parents considered our school an inviting, safe place, with a strong commitment to bringing out the best in their children. This provided an excellent foundation to invite families to explore and experience what sat underneath our values and commitments—our faith. It was seen as important to plant a church on campus, a place that was neutral and already known and trusted by school families.

An initiative was taken to start a church on our school campus with the express vision to be a church for the families of our school. Our campus

An unprecedented opportunity to invite children and their families with limited prior knowledge of God and His ways to consider Him and choose Him

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church is growing rapidly. This is not just a church that meets on campus. It is a church that is intimately connected with and supportive of the life of the school. Our pastor has an office on campus and is a part of the school chaplaincy team. The chaplains are a part of the pastoral team of the church. There is a memorandum of understanding between the school, the church and the conference that sets terms of reference for the functioning of the church. Our head of school is a key player in the life of the church, and our church pastor a key player in the life of the school. Our school and church are by no means perfect; we have our share of challenges. But God is here, He is in this, and it is an exciting place to be.

The role of chaplain
The role of the chaplain in such a future is crucial. The chaplain forms a vital link between the school, the church and the families we seek to reach. Chaplains help build stability, resilience and strength into the lives of students, enhancing the learning that takes place in the classroom. The pastoral care team works alongside teachers and family members in helping students reach for and achieve their best. Every encounter is an opportunity to “make God touchable”, to show we care, and to extend unconditional love and support. The chaplain provides spiritual leadership to all on campus, and provides a bridge to a new life experience within the campus church faith community.

The future
We have struggled for years to find a way to support and demonstrate genuine care for secular families in Australia and New Zealand. We spend larger budgets and greater effort on programs that convince fewer people to consider our faith. Alongside this trend, the Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia is aging, and we find it difficult to contemplate a future of decline. We don’t need to. That is not God’s intent for His church. He has given us a way ahead to an exciting future of kingdom growth, a future that sees our school campuses being strategically transformed into centres of pastoral care and selfless service. In so doing, they become ministry centres, inviting people to a full life with God.

Our campus church commissioned a group to plan for as many ways as possible to build friendships with school families and to invite them to come along to church and check it out. The chaplains are a part of that group. Everything is geared towards making church a welcoming and safe place for the unchurched as well as a place of worship for committed believers. We want church to be a place where people feel secure, valued, included; a place where quality networks develop and lifetime friendships form; a place where people meet God, and grow to treasure being in His presence. The Gateway story has only just begun.

A future that sees our school campuses being strategically transformed into centres of pastoral care and selfless service

strategy for at least the next ten years. Ours is not the only school moving in this direction. A number of other schools have realised the benefit of good schools having a strong chaplaincy program and an integrated campus church, and are already seeing the results of their investment. This paves the way towards an exciting future.

Leading church administrators and educators within the Seventh-day Adventist system have recognised the vital importance of chaplains to the future of our schools. The recent Australian Union Conference Education Consultation\(^3\) invited submissions and extensive discussion on the future of chaplaincy. Several key gaps were identified, with a clear will to move towards resolving the issues tabled and to promoting the growth of school chaplaincy into our future. Current proposed recommendations and discussion revolve around the following:

1. That a strong chaplaincy program be implemented in each school.
2. That chaplains invest in the pastoral care and support of our teachers.
3. To position chaplaincy ministry as a calling to pastoral ministry in the fullest sense, and that a steering group be established to:
   - develop a national chaplaincy program;
   - create national guidelines for the employment and professional development of chaplains;
   - establish guidelines for career paths for chaplains, including ministerial internships where appropriate;
   - create a formal network for chaplains;
   - clarify the relationship between the chaplain and local church;
   - develop guidelines for the funding of the chaplaincy program;
   - develop strategies to ensure chaplaincy services extend to all teachers;
4. To explore the possibility of providing undergraduate studies for chaplains;
5. To enhance connectivity between local churches and schools by developing strong partnerships between the ministry, the principal and the chaplain; and that the spiritual sponsorship of school students be promoted within the local church.

While still at an early stage of development, there is clear recognition of the importance of chaplaincy ministry to the future of our schools, and a deep commitment to building capacity and depth in the chaplaincy program into our future.

Using our schools as a vehicle to help people and to educate them for this life and the next is not a new idea, but it seems that God is rebirthing this strategy as a most important way to build His kingdom in our post-postmodern society. It is a strategy built on meaningful long-term relationships, something deeply important to today's generation.

We have a rapidly growing number of unchurched families who send their children to our schools. They like what we do, or they would not entrust their children to us. They like and support the values we stand for. They appreciate the unconditional care and genuine interest we show them. Their children are making decisions for Jesus during weeks of spiritual emphasis, and are studying the Bible with our teachers and pastors. In very many cases, all they are waiting for is the invitation to come, and to “taste and see that the Lord is good”.\(^4\) TEACH

Endnotes
2. Term used by Mother Theresa to describe the work we do when we act as “a pencil in God's hand,” demonstrating His love to others through our actions.
4. Psalm 34:8