EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry
Guest Editor

Just a tree.

Its significance in ‘the killing fields’ however, was sobering. The notice at Choeung Ek stated its historic inhumane use. In an orchard Chinese burial ground, 15 km outside of Phnom Penh, the Chankiri Tree was brutally used to kill children, swinging them by their legs and smashing their heads against the trunk. Some soldiers carried out executions laughing, not wishing to convey any suggestion of sympathy that could incriminate them. Adult execution was by poisoning, bashing with digging tools or pointed bamboo sticks, methods designed to save ammunition. A Buddhist stupa containing 5,000 skulls is a sobering but confronting genocide memorial. Prior internment and interrogation, under extreme torture, occurred at Security Prison 21 (S–21), a former high school in Phnom Penh, and resulted from being accused of ‘pre-revolutionary lifestyles’, including being lazy intellectuals (professors and teachers), in contact with foreigners through free market practices, or involvement with government agencies, missionaries, or NGOs. Yale researchers (Genocide Studies Program, 2010) estimate that in enforcing an ‘agrarian’ culture, 20% of the population died:

The Khmer Rouge regime headed by Pol Pot combined extremist ideology with ethnic animosity and a diabolical disregard for human life to produce repression, misery, and murder on a massive scale. (para. 1)

Commentators acknowledge the ‘gut-wrenching’ experience for an international visitor, but question the impact of memorials on Cambodians due to government ambivalence to forming a cultural memory, reconciliation and adjudicated justice. Choosing to be confronted by this evidence in July 2010 caused personal reflection on why viewing the sites, considering such brutality and suffering, seeing the disbelief and despair in the photographic record of the victims held in S–21, could be a beneficial experience. Concurrently, news revealed that “Duch”, the director of S–21, previously a mathematics teacher in the high school, was on trial admitting his supervisory role and apologising to the relatives of victims, yet later making an appeal against personal responsibility. Duch, using aliases, went ‘missing’ for 20 years and had become a Christian prior to recovery by an Irish journalist and his arrest.

UN sponsored judicial investigations in Cambodia have begun to address the aching hearts of the nation, yet relatives of victims are unable to approve any graciousness in sentencing.

While editing TEACH, musing on how a teacher could behave in this way shaped my responses to articles. There was resonance with Bryan Cowling’s “The Revolutions We Need to Have”, acknowledging eight changes needed, especially in Christian schools, to move from promoting national productivity, to systemic changes for the development of sound character in each person. Engagement with Faul’s critical assessment of the proposed National Curriculum, invited considered reaction to preserve the ethos of schooling.

How should I react to abuse within my culture? Kilgour, advocates being proactive in addressing child abuse as the “public health problem of the decade” and collaborates with Watson (author of Finding David, see the book reviews) in researching school-based mentoring as a preventive and restorative interaction. School roles, strategies and suitable resources could protect Internet users as clarified by Chadwick and Knight. Forming supportive attachments in early school experiences emerges from Clarke’s case study, as some compensation for parental inadequacy.

Can school life be better? Ludlow justifies play in the early establishment of essential 21st century skills. Skrzypaszek commends “The Higher View of Education”, an incarnational ministry suited to post-moderns, preparing students for service extending through eternity. Solomon’s “rear-view” is used by Rieger to illustrate a research methodology, but also conveys culminating ‘wisdom’.

Protection from ‘cultural’ genocide needs the ‘caring’ mission and ‘restorative’ ministry of Christian teachers. Participation needs commitment to revolutionary behaviour motivated by recall of the Calvary killing field?

Remember the tree. TEACH

References

Protection from ‘cultural’ genocide needs the ‘caring’ mission and ‘restorative’ ministry of Christian teachers

[Photography: Joshua Moses, Sydney Adventist College]
The place of play in twenty-first century classrooms

Evidence and approaches

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Do our current ways of teaching our young children actually foster the development of effective skills and dispositions for twenty-first century living? A number of authors, (Pink, 2005; Golinkoff & Sharp 2009), have commented that solutions to the issues associated with the rapid development of knowledge in the twenty-first century, issues and problems involved in environmental sustainability and issues of national security, will require answers from individuals who have the ability to communicate, collaborate, think critically, be creative and innovative, confidently approach challenges and have content knowledge (Golinkoff & Sharp, 2009, p. 6). They identify these skills as being the ones that our 3 to 6-year-olds will need to acquire during their education, in order to be successful in their adult lives. Children of the twenty-first century need to go beyond the basic skills, they need to develop skills and dispositions that will enable them to become learners throughout their entire life (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009, p. 15). As teachers of 3 to 6-year-olds we need to ask ourselves, “What pedagogical approaches should I employ that will enable the children in my classroom to acquire the knowledge and skills for success in the twenty-first century?” To answer this question this article explores current thinking and research.

Believe it or not, the best way teachers can foster the development of skills for twenty-first century success, is through play-based curriculums! Through a preschool day that offers both free and guided play (Golinkoff & Sharp 2009, p. 12). Through a curriculum that provides “extensive opportunities for children to direct their own learning in a well resourced, well facilitated environment” (Lawrence, 2009, p. 6). A curriculum that uses teachable moments to develop academic skills during symbolic play, construction play, games with rules, open ended research and the “exploration of natural materials” (Targowska, 2008, p. 25).

Why a play-based curriculum?
Exemplary practice supports the strategy of a play-based curriculum due to accumulated research findings, reinforcing that:

• children willingly work at a level beyond their current developmental level in their zone of proximal development during play, considered to be at a level not usually seen in their non-play activities (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009, p. 14.);
• play is intrinsically motivating (Targowska, 2008);
• “academically regimented classrooms, with their repetitive, boring tasks, that exceed the attention spans and patience of 3 to 5-year-olds, frequently engender withdrawal, rebellion, and emotional meltdowns that place children on a tragic path of educational failure at a very young age” (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009, p. 11);
• children often become anxious and stressed as a result of over management (Elkind, 2001), raising cortisol levels and inhibiting their ability to learn (Sims, 2008);
• children assimilate and accommodate information in a hands-on concrete manner during play, thus strengthening and developing their cognitive competence through “countless opportunities for sustained attention,… symbolic representation, memory development and hypothesis testing” (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009, p. 36.);
• imagination and social interaction decline when adults direct all of the learning experiences (Hirsh-Pasek, et al. 2009, p. 26);
• there is an increased opportunity for children to develop self-regulation, social competence, oral language skills, number, time and spatial understanding, sensory and aesthetic appreciation during play (Honing, 2007, p. 72; Targowska, 2008, p.24; Hirsh-Pasek, et al. 2009, p. 18.);
• play develops in children dispositions to learn such as “enthusiasm, curiosity, commitment,
Children are then given the time and opportunity to interact and investigate in the play space. This is the doing phase. “Because they are carrying out plans they have made for themselves, preschoolers approach play as a way to accomplish something important to them” (Epstein, 2007, p. 19). Their motivation sustains their effort and scaffolds persistence and problem-solving.

Both during and at the end of the play, it is appropriate for an adult to scaffold the children’s reflection and to extend and deepen the play by joining it or asking some of these review questions. How did that happen? Is there another way to do this? Why did that happen? What else do you need? What did you discover? These types of questions help children to build and deepen knowledge, to communicate, think critically, problem solve, be creative, recall procedures and collaborate together, thus scaffolding the skills of confident, articulate and competent learners. This teaching strategy is at the heart of the concept of intentional teaching as defined in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF, Council of Australian Governments, 2009). Embedded within the plan-do-review approach is another teaching strategy called sustained shared thinking.

B) Sustained shared thinking
This approach to teaching has been defined as: “two or more individuals working together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity, and extend a narrative. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the understanding” (Siraj-Blatchford, et al. 2004, cited in Clarke, 2009, p.7).

Children will only enter into this type of thinking when they feel respect and support for their ideas from the adults and peers in their class, knowing it is okay to make mistakes. Teachers must then give children the time, to “become engrossed, work in-depth, to plan and reflect” (Clarke, 2010, p. 22, p.46), time to complete their chosen play projects and opportunities to express their ideas. Learning participants need to model thinking behaviours and the language of thinking—inquiring, reasoning, predicting, evaluating, problem solving and creativity (Clarke, 2010, p. 10, 42). It is also vital that children are given opportunity to develop a sense of ownership of the play project because ownership fosters intrinsic motivation and the dispositions to learn.

The educators of Reggio Emilia add another layer to the process of sustained shared thinking that they call the “100 languages” (Rinaldi & Moss, 2004). This teaching approach encourages children to investigate the topic in another mode, for example clay, drawing, ICT technologies, collage, drama,
or painting; thus extending, deepening and often reframing the investigation. For example a child may create a complex block construction during their play. A teacher using the ‘100 languages’ approach would talk to the child commenting on the construction techniques, ask questions, perhaps take a photo of it and suggest that the child might dictate and record a story about their construction; or suggest as an alternative that the child use drawing materials to record their construction. All of these strategies help to progressively extend and deepen the investigation, resulting in sustained shared thinking, ongoing or reframed future constructions and learning that combines to affirm the child’s thinking and creativity.

As the play investigation unfolds teachers can continue to intentionally show interest, clarify ideas, ask open ended questions, provide materials, and record in depth observations forming documentation, in an attempt to make the children’s thinking and learning visible to both adults and children. Emergent curriculum strategies, extended projects and plan-do-review sessions, ‘thinking hat’ strategies, jottings and learning stories, all scaffold opportunities for sustained shared thinking. The power of sustained shared thinking lies in its ability to foster in children the dispositions and processes to learn that are so vital to success in twenty-first century life.

C) Problem solving

Problem solving is a process that occurs naturally in play and daily life. It is also a skill that teachers can incorporate intentionally into their curriculum to foster in young children the dispositions to learn. They do this by using play as a mediating tool to extend children’s thinking (White, 2008, p.26) through problem posing and solving during sustained shared thinking.

Being aware of the processes of problem solving helps teachers to make the most of the potential of teachable moments to scaffold children’s metacognition. Interactions can promote progressively focusing, widening or deepening ways of thinking (Fabian & Dunlop, cited in Moyles, 2005, p.229). Skilful open-ended questioning, wondering and intentional modelling lie at the heart of this pedagogy and when used help children identify the problem, discover what is already known about the issue and scaffold a suggested hypothesis for forming a solution to the problem:

- What do you want to happen?
- What will happen if?
- What could you do first/next/then/after?
- How could we?
- What do you think?
- Can we find another way?

- I wonder if….? (Martin, 2009, p.16).

When teachers place familiar objects in different places, remove a piece of essential equipment, ask open-ended questions during storyline, seek children’s solutions to the day to day problems of the preschool and use problem cards, they allow children the time and opportunity to develop this important life skill. This teaching approach is one way to harness the potential of the environment as the third teacher.

D) Environment as the third teacher

The environment has the potential to become the third teacher when:

- Teachers provision it in such a way that children are empowered to locate use and return materials independently, without close adult direction;
- Diverse items are stored in matching containers in specialist areas, so enabling children to focus on the contents and support making choices;
- Children are given the time and opportunity to interact with the materials without step by step teacher direction, (Walker, 2007);
- Materials are positioned in smaller well defined spaces, to scaffold concentration, independence and more in depth investigation;
- Materials are presented aesthetically to invite interaction with the materials, fostering a child’s curiosity, engagement and innovation;
- Materials are offered as both individual and shared experiences;
- Materials used in ongoing projects are able to be left in place rather than packed away at the end of a session (Curtis & Carter, 2008; Epstein, 2007; Walker, 2007).

The potential of the environment to act as a teacher is further enhanced when teachers provide materials and opportunities for children to record and keep track of their learning, such as clipboards, and digital cameras. This scaffolds children’s revisiting and celebration of learning and social construction of knowledge. The discussions that emerge from the resources also enrich opportunities for communication and critical thinking. In this type of environment children become confident and capable learners.

Once the environment has been provisioned in this way it is vital that teachers maximise its potential for learning by remaining available for discussion, showing interest in children’s play, being enthusiastic about their play, modelling research strategies to solve the unknown and bringing their imagination to the play scenario (Lubawy, 2010, p.15). In short we need to remain ‘hands on’ rather than involve ourselves in housekeeping, record keeping and socialising with co-workers and parents.
E) Dramatic play
When children engage in dramatic play they act out roles, interact with and negotiate with peers, and plan play scenarios. As they do this, they use more complicated grammatical and pragmatic forms of language than is usual for them in normal conversations, because they are modelling the behaviour of significant others. At the same time they become more skilled in inhibiting their impulses, and negotiating plots and roles, thus strengthening their self-regulation skills in combination with language skills.

This type of play also develops children’s thinking, imagination and the social skills of communication, cooperation and perspective taking. It scaffolds sustained shared attention, memory, reflection and the understanding of emotions (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 132). During dramatic play, sandpit play, water play, clay and play dough play, and construction play, children encounter many opportunities to learn about spatial relationships and quantity, pattern, shape and numeracy. Astute teachers will take the opportunities presented in these types of play to notice and record the children’s meaning making and to engage in sustained shared thinking with them; thus catching and making the most of a teachable moment in the child’s zone of proximal development.

Dramatic play also helps children to understand themselves and their culture, allowing them to feel a sense of wellbeing and agency (Bodrova & Leong, 2003), both of which are foundational for healthy emotional development and the development of resilience in children. The importance of this sense of wellbeing cannot be over emphasised as an important life skill for the twenty-first century, because, “without a strong sense of wellbeing it is difficult to have a sense of ‘belonging’, to trust others and to feel confident in ‘being’, and to optimistically engage in experiences that contribute to ‘becoming’” (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p. 30).

The benefits of dramatic play dissipate when children engage in role play of known DVDs, and TV shows, with realistic props. When this occurs, the plot, roles and props are set; imagination and language are restricted. Previewed play scenarios are repeated over and over and limited by the recalled script, rather than used creatively by being invented, modified and extended upon (Bordova & Leong, 2003, p. 11).

F) Projects and emergent curriculum
Three approaches to curriculum that further support play-based learning are projects, emergent curriculum and progettazione. All fall within the definition of the Early Years Learning Framework (2009, p. 15) definition of intentional teaching. All three approaches have these beliefs in common:

• Curriculum is child centred and based on the needs, strengths and interests of the child;
• Curriculum is integrated across domains and between home and centre, educating the whole child;
• Curriculum is hands on and sensory as “children learn and construct meaning as they act upon objects in space and time” (McLachlan, Fleer & Edwards, 2010, p. 17);
• Curriculum is negotiated, emergent and play-based;
• Curriculum is strongly grounded in multiple intelligences and the 100 languages of children, co-operative grouping, and Bloom’s taxonomy;
• Teachers carefully observe the child in an attempt to know as much as possible about their knowledge, interests and learning styles, so that they can intentionally provision the environment and guide the curriculum to support the child’s learning in their zone of proximal development;
• A teacher’s role is to support, encourage, reflect, hypothesise, problematise, add content knowledge at teachable moments, and co-construct with the child, as the project unfolds. All three approaches are also strongly based on a view of the child as a strong and capable learner, who constructs as well as co-constructs knowledge, understanding and meaning while interacting with the provisions, ideas and people within their preschool, family and community. All three approaches consciously develop in children dispositions to learn, and the skills we have already identified as the skills our preschool children will need for success in the twenty-first century. Each approach has a number of unique elements which predominantly reflect the nature of either the teacher’s or child’s role in the project, and subtle differences in how knowledge is acquired, as well as beliefs in what knowledge and skills are of most worth. A discussion of each of these is beyond the scope of this article. It is sufficient to say that the efficacy of a play-based curriculum is strengthened when emergent projects are used to support children’s meaning making.

Observing, documenting and assessing play-based curriculum
Undergirding play-based curriculum lies the “pedagogy of listening” (Rinaldi, 2001), that is the adult’s active participation in careful observation, documentation and assessment. When teachers and parents observe the child at play, listen to their conversations, record their actions and conversations, and use their professional knowledge to reflect on and interpret what they see and hear, they position...
themselves to respond to the child’s meaning making by supporting the child’s learning and development through co-construction of play-based provisions and experiences. This process, when supported by documentation, makes the child’s learning visible to their parents and peers. The pedagogy of listening also requires teachers to be open to change, be willing to suspend judgement, use all of their senses to listen, and to value the unknown (Rinaldi, 2001, p. 81).

There are a number of methods that can be used to observe and record children’s play including:

**a) anecdotal observations** – which focus on recording vignettes of what a child does and how they do it and using the data to interpret the child’s development, strengths, needs and interests;

**b) running records** – are a serial form of anecdotal records, recorded at regular intervals of three to five minutes over a short time period, then reviewed to interpret the attributes of children’s play over an extended period;

**c) jottings** – record short snippets of conversation or actions, and are used by teachers to jog their memory about a child’s development or meaning making. Jottings may form the bare bones of a future anecdote or documentation statement, or alternatively provide the evidence for a mark on a checklist of skills;

**d) documentation** – may incorporate a vignette, digital image or sample of work. Documentation is the process of observing children closely during their engage-ment with experiences and provisions, to record their actions and conversations, and using these records to revisit, reconstruct, analyse and deconstruct the experience for the purpose of gaining information for future pedagogical decisions, as well as for display and consultation with the child’s family and peers (Rinaldi, 2004).

The aim of observing and recording play is to “foster learning”, modify the “learning-teacher relationship” (Rinaldi, 2004, p. 78) and make the child’s learning visible. Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett and Farmer (2005) call documentation “snapshots of the child’s tangible achievements” (p. 220). When teachers and parents use these snapshots to discuss the child’s learning and development it “helps them to see things from different perspectives, allowing each...to transcend the limitations of their own points of view” (Curtis & Carter, 2000, p. xiii).

When documentation is shared with the children who are the subjects of the observations, it powerfully affirms each child’s ideas and actions. These children sense the adult’s celebration of their learning through their interest, respect and enthusiasm. This process allows each child to revisit the experience, often motivating them to further thought and interaction, thus deepening investigation and understanding of the play-based curriculum.

**What does pedagogical documentation look like?**

There is no set format for documentation. It is not a product, rather it is a process and because of this, documentaries are published in many formats. Some early childhood professionals choose to display documentation in panels of photos and comments and photocopies of children’s drawings with accompanying vignettes, or audio tapes. Others place documentation, beside models and constructions or use photo journals, slide shows, videos, podcasts, portfolios or posters. The methods of displaying documentation are multiple and are only limited by time, cost, creativity and technological expertise.

Deciding what to document comes with experience and a clear understanding of why one is recording this moment. Hobba (2006), advises that teachers refrain from documenting everything and focus in depth on just a few things. You, as a teacher, know your students best. What is it that you want to find out about them? There are many possible provocations for documentation.

Learning how to document authentically is a professional journey that early childhood educators embark on. It takes time, research, training and experience to hone personal observation skills, to notice and record important and useful vignettes of children’s meaning making. Other factors that contribute to good documentations are time to reflect, write, revisit and produce documentation, and an atmosphere of support, collaboration and open discussion between professional peers. The reward for children, teachers and families is the strong enabled development of a pedagogy of relationships and listening formed in conjunction with a mutual understanding of the child’s strengths, needs and interest.

The concepts discussed indicate that successful play-based curricula rely on the interactions between, a number of complex pedagogical skills and processes: plan-do-review; sustained shared thinking and problem solving; negotiated and emergent planning, open-ended provisions, carefully considered and aesthetically pleasing environments, and the pedagogy of listening. Early childhood educators of 0 to 6 year-olds need to harness the wisdom and findings of decades of child development research, as well as the findings of the last decade of neuroscience and use them to inform our pedagogical practice. Teachers can and should deliberately and thoughtfully intertwine developmental indicators, learning outcomes from
framework and syllabus documents, and observation practices that listen to children and make their thinking visible to interested adults, with play-based emergent and negotiated curriculums. It may well require movement out of personal comfort zones. The value of these processes is in enabling the children in our care, to move beyond basic skills, to become creative thinkers who are both socially adept and academically competent, children who have also acquired skills and dispositions for success in life. The evidence for play-based approaches to curriculum for this age group is considerable and reliable—children learn best through play! TEACH

References
There is no doubt that the phrase “The Education Revolution” as distinct from ‘a revolution in education’, coined by the ALP spin doctors before the 2007 election, has been very effective. Some might say it ranks alongside Gough Whitlam’s “It’s time” as one of the most memorable epithets in recent Australian political history.

What then Prime Minister Rudd and his Education Minister Julia Gillard sought to achieve under the banner of ‘The Education Revolution’ was, by modern standards, quite impressive. It included the roll out of two billion dollars worth of computers, the framing of a national curriculum where others have tried and failed, the establishment of new standards, the introduction of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the creation of the My School website, the implementation of national partnerships and the progressive diminution of state sovereignty over school education. Most governments in the past have been content to tackle just one big initiative at a time realising that even one initiative can take eons to implement. The Rudd Government overwhelmed the educational community with a multiplicity of initiatives concurrently. It is too early to judge how effective any of these initiatives have been, let alone to establish whether individually or collectively, they represent a revolution in educational practice, let alone educational thinking.

At the same time, observers of Australian education have recognised that the past decade has seen an increased emphasis on pragmatism and utilitarianism as the driving forces behind education. Instead of defining the purposes of education in terms of personal growth and character formation, education more often than not is now described in terms of its contribution to national productivity. This shift in emphasis explains the focus on national curriculum, national assessment, national standards and the ubiquitous My School website. Such a revolution has its good points as well as its bad points.

A less perceptible revolution, but no less real, has been the demise of ‘the development of the whole person’ in favour of more specialised, partial development of persons. Instead of setting out to develop in a holistic way, the academic, physical, social, cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions of their children, the majority of schools are focusing their efforts on the academic, the social and the physical domains almost to the exclusion of the cultural, moral and spiritual. It could be said in many cases, parents have been accomplices in this unfortunate distortion in education by not challenging its incompleteness.

Some commentators have questioned whether Australia needed Rudd’s “Education Revolution”. Others have gone further to question whether Australia needs a revolution of any kind in education. For my part, from a Christian educator’s perspective, there are at least eight areas in which some revolutionary thinking, talking and action is needed.

**Revolution 1: An authentic Australian Christian approach to education**

The first of these is the need for us to create an authentic Australian Christian approach to education. This will be an approach that impacts education, formal and informal, from the cradle to the grave, that includes early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling, tertiary education of all kinds, formal and informal adult education, credentialed and non-credentialed. Note the need is not for an approach to Christian education but rather a Christian approach to education. The term ‘Christian education’ has become a cliché devoid of quality. The term ‘Christian education’ has come to mean almost anything you like that has to do with Christianity. On the other hand, a Christian approach to education is one that is deeply informed by a biblical theology and worldview.

The very mention of the term ‘worldview’ is a turn-off for many people in Australia, including Christians and is regarded by some people as being too cognitive, or too clinical. But the reality is, each views the world—what we read and what we hear, what we teach—through a lens that is shaped, more than we realise, by what we value and desire. What we desire above all else frames our priorities and our behaviour, in schools and in our teaching.

A Christian approach to education includes how to:
- present the prescribed curriculum;
- choose between the myriad of options provided for in the syllabuses;

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1 This paper is an edited version of Bryan Cowling’s Opening Address to the National Christian Schools Policy Forum in Canberra on 24 May, 2010.
• explain the purpose of learning;
• regard students (sponges to soak up knowledge stuff, automatons to be programmed to think and speak in a certain way, clones to be shaped into an image of the parent or educator, eternal creatures made in God’s image to love and serve him forever, devils to be disciplined);
• assess what has been learned, and why.

A Christian approach impacts the way teachers nurture and challenge students’ talents and abilities for the benefit of the class and community. A Christian approach to education gives a different meaning to pastoral care, a different meaning to service, a different meaning to quality and a different meaning to leadership. A Christian approach to education is integral to making people whole. A Christian approach to education challenges two of the gods of this age: individualism and consumerism and emphasises a fundamental principle of relationalism in God’s world.

An authentic ‘species’ that is Australian is needed, not a transplant from somewhere else. But more than that, educators need to frame a Christian approach to education in a language that enables discussion about it and linkage into the public market place, into the wider educational community. So this approach needs to be plausible. It needs to make sense even to those who might ultimately reject it.

**Revolution 2: Serious, positive engagement with the curriculum**

Christian educators need to engage seriously and positively with the curriculum. It is important in the refining of the curriculum documents that an appropriate balance is found and maintained between what is important for us as a nation and what is important for each school and teacher to deliver. In our responses to the National Curriculum, our arguments should be restricted to major issues of principle, which if implemented, would cause us to compromise our allegiance to Jesus Christ or get in the way of our practice of a legitimate Christian approach. Let others pursue the issues of preference and taste, the addition of this piece of content, the omission of something else but let us address the big issues of principle.

Though we are Christians, we live, work, lead and teach in a fallen world, a world of competing ideologies, a world of education and scholarship that is pluralistic in the best sense of the word, and in which a modernist or post-modernist view of the world is pervasive.

It is important that the curriculum supports the spirit of curiosity, the promotion of humility in the face of the abundance of what we do not know. It is critical that the quantity and complexity of what is included in each syllabus does not impede students’ acquiring a life-long love of learning, a warm and respectful relationship with each of their teachers, and a positive disposition towards exploring God, His world, His revelation of Himself, and the purpose for which we have been created. In particular it ought not to be what we censor that distinguishes our schools from others, but how we address what is prescribed for us.

**Revolution 3: Holistic integrative thinking and speaking about truth in the disciplines**

One of the features that distinguishes Christian schools per se, from say Anglican schools generally, is the use of language such as ‘the integration of Christian faith and learning’. By and large this sort of language does not appear in the publicity material for most Anglican schools, but it does appear in the prospectuses for many Christian schools. However, when it comes to examining what ‘integration’ means in practice, the differences between our schools are not so large. This occurs despite the vast amount of literature that has been written on the theory and the theology of integration, with these resources being accessible for many years.

This is a significant issue in its own right and I do not have time to develop it here. Suffice to say, a genuine integration of God’s truth claims as revealed in the Bible and through Christ, together with the truth claims of each and every one of the academic disciplines studied in our schools, requires an intentional, thorough, accurate and carefully thought through understanding of biblical theology and doctrine, and an equally purposeful study and understanding of how academic knowledge claims are made, including the worldviews underlying those claims.

Christian teachers cannot hide behind rhetoric in this area. In fact, each needs to put behind them the fumbling, trivialised and often pious efforts of bygone decades and promote, practise and showcase radically different, holistic, integral approaches to thinking, teaching and learning. A revolution is needed in the way educators think and the way teachers speak and discuss this area of professional practice. It will manifest itself in a more authentic representation of Christian teachers as genuine educators and learners.

**Revolution 4. Deepening and broadening the knowledge base of all school staff**

It follows, therefore, that every teacher Christian schools place in front of students needs to be as highly equipped in their knowledge and application of the Bible...
as they are in the subjects they teach. It is apparent that this goal, to bring their teachers up to a suitable benchmark of theological knowledge and commitment (as well as pedagogy), may place an onerous burden on many schools. But the price schools pay, and the price our students now and in the future will pay if educators don’t do this, is much greater. It is reasonable to expect all of our teachers to be engaged in on-going personal and professional development. In typically Aussie style, educational administrators tend to say that this is a matter for each individual to determine.

The professional credibility of Christian schools is a communal matter. All teachers need to be true life-long learners for the sake of the body to which they belong. Lifelong learning is integral to life in God’s kingdom. Personal advice offered to people suggests, “In God’s new world all will be engaged in gifted and talented programs and applied biblical studies. Get used to it now, get hooked now.”

This paper flags the importance of Christian schools taking a more proactive role in deepening and broadening the skills and knowledge base of all of their staff, and doing everything they can to facilitate it. Just think how far $2 million per school could have gone if it had been applied to this instead of to bricks and mortar!

How important an investment is your school or the schools you know making in this area? When the going gets tough, is it your professional development budget that is the first to be slashed? How strategic is your deployment of time and money in regards to professional development?

Revolution 5. Succession planning for leadership in education

In Anglican schools across Australia, as no doubt in other sectors, many school leaders will retire over the next five years. There is no shortage of literature in this country and overseas recounting the reluctance of good teachers to put their names forward to lead big schools. Succession planning has never been done very well in Australia, and this also applies in our school sector.

Tomorrow’s school leaders need more than school experience and secular higher education qualifications. They need applied theological training so that they can exercise the ministry to their staff (and students) that the churches are not able to directly offer. This presents as a major challenge because it is costly in terms of money and time, every school and current Head says they don’t have enough of it, so it does not happen.

Our respective sectors are trying hard to identify mentor, challenge and encourage aspiring leaders—not just for our own schools I hope, but for the whole range of schools. Our Diocese shares a particular ‘heart’ concern for our Christian brothers and sisters in government schools who need Christ-centred leadership development just as much, if not more, than the teachers in our own schools.

Unless educational systems invest more in the preparation of our future leaders, our schools will suffer badly.

It is apparent that schools are facing (and have been facing for some time) a desperate shortage of home-grown scholars in education who think, lecture, write and advocate Christianly.

- Where are our philosophers of education?
- Where are our outstanding leaders of education who also have a sound theological background and experience?
- Who is doing the seminal and scholarly thinking about education?
- Who can take on the pragmatists and reductionists at their own game?
- Where are the career paths in Australia for a teacher in your school who aspires to pursue a PhD or an EdD in education and theology?

In September last year Archbishop Peter Jensen delivered the Isaac Armitage Lecture in which he asked the question: “Is there such a thing as Anglican education?” “If there is,” he asked, “where is the literature, what are its foundations and how is it manifested in Anglican schools?” Out of this has grown a small think tank of theologians, educators, academics and others who have been charged with the responsibility of writing a seminal book, creating a ‘school of thought’ that forms the basis for a more conscious, rigorous biblically-based philosophy and practice in education. This initiative is being supported by a serious campaign to encourage a score of our best thinkers and teachers to undertake postgraduate study/research. Schools and school systems have a lot of catching up to do.

Revolution 6: Purposeful recruitment of Christians to teaching

There are about 279,000 teachers in Australian schools. It is predicted that over the next five years, 110,000 of these will resign or retire. It is the policy (and an assumed practice) of many of the schools in the Christian school sector to employ only committed Christians, or at least to give preference to the employment of Christians. This practice has been facilitated in some jurisdictions by an exemption from certain anti-discrimination laws. A review of current trends in policy and practice suggests a concern that these concessions will not last forever.

For over five years the Anglican Diocese of Sydney has been actively promoting teaching as a worthy and strategic vocation for Christians. The first three years were focused primarily on senior
students in government and independent schools as well as students in University. For the past two years this initiative was shared with teachers and potential career changers. The Diocese employs a full time person, Ian Keast, as the Director of the Christians in Teaching Project. Other non-government and government schools have benefitted, perhaps even more than Anglican schools, from Ian’s tireless efforts. The need to recruit more educators who are highly competent, enthusiastic, mission-oriented, Bible-believing Christians into teaching, the leadership positions in schools, and for that matter into tertiary education institutions, is taken seriously. If it is important that the students in our schools are taught by committed Christian teachers then there is a need to expand our collective efforts to put before Christians the challenge and opportunity of teaching.

Revolution 7: School operation justifies only employing Christian teachers

But more needs to be done than that, and that’s where the revolution comes into it. There is a need to conduct our schools in such a way that justifies the claim that only committed Christians can do the job. That is to say, unless a Christian approach to teaching (and pastoral care and relationship building) is adopted in which there is such an authentic integration of faith with learning that only a Bible-believing and practising (applying) Christian with the requisite quality professional knowledge and competence can do the teaching, schools forfeit the right to the exemption from anti-discrimination laws associated with religious observance. If all Christian schools want is teachers who are caring and work as professionals and don’t deliberately undermine what the schools are about, then why should these schools claim to only want to employ committed Christians?

Let it also be understood, that just because a teacher professes to be a Bible-believing Christian does not guarantee for one minute that they think, live, speak and teach in an authentic Christian way.

Revolution 8: Working, praying, standing and acting together

There is a final revolution which all of the foregoing points put together require. It is an outcome that our minds will tell us should be promoted, but our hearts and hands might take longer to embrace. Almost every one of the exhortations referred to above impacts in some way on each of our constituencies.

It is readily recognised that there are still lots of misperceptions, misunderstandings, distrust, prejudice and stereotypes held amongst Christian educators, of each other. Sometimes these go back generations and need to be debunked. Different organisations have their own histories and these must be respected. However, it is very important that Christian educators work together, pray together, stand together and where possible act together. At the same time they need to encourage spiritual brothers and sisters who are striving to serve as modern-day Daniels in government schools. In many cases, they do not have around them supportive and praying Christians. To do less is to squander the opportunities and resources God has given to us.

Putting all these challenges together establishes an agenda for change that is much larger than Kevin Rudd could ever imagine. At the heart of our revolution (or all eight of them) is the need for authenticity and integrity. Christian educators cannot, in honesty before our Lord, whose claims on followers are total, pretend to be about His work in education and not subject all that is done to His Lordship.
The Australian Curriculum
A look through the lens of Christian education

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Abstract
The development of the Australian Curriculum is an ambitious task that involves meeting the needs of a large range of interest groups, each with its underlying philosophy and conceptualisation of what constitutes an effective and viable curriculum. The context of independent, Christian education systems and schools adds an important dimension to a discussion of the challenges that confront teachers and administrators as we move towards the implementation of a national curriculum. The observations and questions presented in this paper are not exhaustive, but are based on seminars and consultation sessions, discussions with a variety of teachers and subject coordinators, and wide reading of the documentation that has been forthcoming from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and other sources. The purpose of this paper is to promote discussion and reflection relating to the issues that confront teachers and educational institutions as they prepare for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, particularly in the context of Christian education.

Setting a context
The development of the Australian Curriculum is an initiative introduced by the Federal Government and managed at a national level under the auspices of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). It is based on the premise, “A curriculum for the 21st century will reflect an understanding and acknowledgement of the changing nature of young people as learners and the challenges and demands that will continue to shape their learning in the future” (ACARA, 2009, p. 6).

In spite of this underlying principle, however, there are anomalies and issues that need to be addressed.

General issues emanating from the Australian Curriculum
While it has been, and continues to be, of critical importance to examine specific learning areas included in Phase 1 (English, History, Mathematics and Science) and Phase 2 (Geography, the arts and languages) of the development of the Australian Curriculum, including opportunity for constructive feedback relating to the draft curriculum for each, it...
is also important to examine the ‘big picture’. This includes issues that occur across the Australian Curriculum. The issues identified in this paper represent some of the major concerns. There are others that continue to be cause for debate.

1. Time allocation, timetabling and ‘special character’

The issue of time allocation and timetabling emanating from the Australian Curriculum is likely to present schools with considerable challenge. This is particularly true of the history curriculum in the secondary school. Changes in the nature and volume of content for history 7–10, for example, call for more teaching time to be allocated to that subject area. This leads to the following questions: From where will this additional time come? Will schools be expected to take time away from other subjects of critical importance such as English and Mathematics? A related question is, How will equity be determined in terms of time allocation for different learning areas?

There is an extra dimension to this issue in the context of independent, Christian schools and systems, and this touches on the issue of ‘special character’. A key aspect of schools within the Seventh-day Adventist system of education, for example, is that in both the primary and secondary school, time is allocated for the formal study of Christian biblical teachings, beliefs and interpretation. From a pragmatic perspective, it would be very easy simply to take time from this part of the curriculum and give it to mainstream subjects, such as history. The fundamental issue, however, is that doing so may begin to erode the ‘special character’ of the school.

Pastoral care and time given to the social, emotional and spiritual nurture of the child is also potentially under threat and this is a concern. If the fundamental philosophy of the school focuses on the development of the ‘whole child’, then it is of critical importance that time in the school curriculum is allocated to pastoral care. With the increasing demands on subject content and skill acquisition associated with the specific subject areas nominated in the development of Phases 1 and 2 of the Australian Curriculum, schools are under pressure to find that time in the timetable.

2. Funding considerations

There is no doubt that more resources, including more teachers, and certainly, ongoing and intensive professional development, will be needed not only to meet the requirements of the Australian Curriculum, but also to interpret what it means in terms of changes to existing school structures and resources. This is particularly true if the intention of ACARA and the Federal Government is to ensure consistency in terms of interpretation and implementation across all the states and territories in Australia. Considerable financial pressure is already placed on schools and government departments of education. This begs the question, Who will fund the necessary material and human resources, and who will fund the professional development of programs to assist teachers and educational systems to meet the demands implicit in the Australian Curriculum?

Many independent and state/territory schools are facing intense financial challenge in the context of global economic trends. Careful and creative thought needs to be given to ways of addressing this issue and its considerable ramifications. In Queensland, for example, there are already moves to restructure the schooling system to accommodate the new focus on years 7 to 10 as one cohort. Traditionally, in that state, students in year 7 were still part of the primary school structure. Issues such as, Who will teach the year 7 cohort, as they become part of the secondary school structure? and From where will the funding come to provide for all the ramifications of these structural changes? add to the financial burden of school systems and state/territory government departments. This leads to considerations such as, Will there be a need to make cuts in other areas of the school curriculum in order to accommodate the required transition to the Australian Curriculum? Independent, Christian schools need to be aware that the focus on Christian teaching may be challenged because of funding considerations when the Australian Curriculum is fully implemented.

3. Assessment and reporting

Assessment is an integral part of curriculum development and implementation, yet it appears that the nature of assessment has not been an integral component of the process of developing the Australian Curriculum. This aspect of the proposed changes is open to debate. According to ACARA, the question of assessment is to be dealt with at the state/territory level and not at the national level. There are pragmatic reasons for this. If, however, it is left to the states and territories to determine assessment, how will this contribute to the national flavour of the Australian Curriculum? Surely it must be “national” across all components of the curriculum, including assessment and reporting. There appears to be lack of clarity about the nature of assessment and reporting across the learning areas. Several issues arise from this. First, If this truly is to be a national curriculum, what kind of assessment is to take place? Second, How is assessment of students to be reported? ACARA has...
indicated that “achievement standards” will describe the quality of student learning that takes place, but there appears to be confusion as to how that will be reported. For example, there appear to be very few guidelines as to the interpretation of the proposed grading scheme. Finally, How will consistency in the standard and quality of assessment be ensured across the states and territories? It is logical to assume that the issue of consistency is fundamental to the interpretation and implementation of the Australian Curriculum, yet there appear to be glaring anomalies regarding the issue of assessment.

4. Core of knowledge, skills, understanding and values

Changes in and additions to History and Science content (K–10) may be problematic for some Christian schools. For instance, there are issues associated with the tension between teaching compulsory content and teaching Christian biblical interpretation of the origins of humankind and our history. These issues are not new, but an examination of the requirements of the Australian Curriculum provides opportunity to revisit key questions in the context of the ‘special character’ and core beliefs and values of independent, Christian schools. This may be particularly true when it comes to the biblical account of Creation as the origin of humankind.

The Shape Paper (ACARA, 2009) makes reference to the “core of knowledge, skills, understanding and values” that characterise the Australian Curriculum. In the available documentation, however, the core values do not appear to have been comprehensively identified. The key business of most schools and schooling systems in Australia is to educate the ‘whole child’ so that he or she is prepared to contribute positively to and function effectively as a member of society. In this context, the question of values is of fundamental importance.

An examination of the ten “general abilities” statement in The Shape Paper (ACARA, 2009, pp. 11–13) provides a reference point for inferring what those core values might be. For example, Creativity, one of these ten general abilities, infers placing value on problem solving, originality and divergent thinking. It also infers valuing qualities such as resilience and perseverance. Placed in the context of independent, Christian schooling, these core values, together with values based on Christian biblical principles, such as respect and love for God, and respect and love for fellow human beings, are of critical importance in how the Australian Curriculum can be assimilated into a Christian teaching and learning environment.

The Shape Paper (ACARA, 2009) also makes reference to student dispositions stating, “The curriculum will describe the knowledge, understandings, skills and dispositions that students will be expected to develop, in sequence, for each learning area across the years of schooling” (p. 9).

At this stage, however, there does not appear to be a comprehensive exposé of what those dispositions might be. It is possible to infer specific student dispositions associated with the ten general abilities, but it would be more useful at a national level to have a comprehensive identification and description of those desirable dispositions.

From a Christian, biblical perspective, the nurture and development of worthwhile, Christ-like dispositions is of fundamental importance in the education of each child and the development of Christ-like dispositions is a key focus of teaching and learning that contributes to the ‘special character’ of the school. There are different interpretations of what dispositions are. A simple, but useful definition is, “Dispositions are inherent qualities that incline a person to act in consistent ways that can be observed through patterns of behaviour in particular contexts” (Faull, 2009, p. 14). An important aspect of those patterns of behaviour is the way values are activated in day-to-day living and learning. While The Shape Paper (ACARA, 2009) makes reference to dispositions, there is considerable scope for reflection and discussion regarding the identification of those dispositions that need to be nurtured and developed, not only in terms of success at school, but also in terms of their value for life.

5. Issues associated with achievement standards and outcomes

a) Achievement standards

The Australian Curriculum places emphasis on achievement standards when assessing and reporting on student learning. The ACARA documentation describes achievement standards in terms of the quality of learning experienced by students and states:

Achievement standards will provide an expectation of the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling (i.e. the depth of their understanding, the extent of their knowledge and the sophistication of their skills). (ACARA, 2009, p. 13)

As an example, the achievement standard for Year 2 English, Listening and Speaking, is as follows:

By the end of Year 2, students listen to a range of spoken and media texts on familiar and learned topics. They understand and recall literal information and retell main ideas and two or more key facts. They use spoken language as a
Outcomes are subject-specific. The distinction between the function of outcomes and standards, as well as their relationship in learning and assessment is clear. As in some other states and territories, there is reluctance in NSW to give up what is perceived as being an effective, clearly defined curriculum for another that is perceived as being problematic. This was evident in a recent article in The Sydney Morning Herald (13 September, 2010), where Anna Patty cited the NSW Board of Studies regarding the Australian Curriculum.

It is not possible for all students to reach high standards in deeper understandings and skills development with the current content overload... There is no scope for differentiation of curriculum to cater for the full range of student ability (para. 9).

b) Outcomes

The Shape Paper (ACARA, 2009) refers to “three broad categories of outcomes” (p. 9) taken from the National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (p. 13). Arguably, these outcomes are so broad that a considerable number of other outcomes can be inferred from each. This raises two issues, firstly: Is it intended that systems and teachers actually make these inferences? and secondly Does each state or territory infer its own meaning or is there to be national consistency in the interpretation and application of these outcomes?

From a Christian perspective, the “three broad categories of outcomes” described in The Shape Paper provide a platform for further reflection and discussion. The first category is of particular interest and has to do with “A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning about adult life can be built” (ACARA, 2009, p. 9). In the description of this category of outcomes, reference is made to social and emotional intelligences. From the perspective of faith based teaching and learning, an interesting omission is spiritual intelligence. Reference is also made to national values. A Christian worldview calls for the inclusion of Christian, bible-based values. These considerations provide examples of outcome elements that, while contributing to the ‘special character’ of Christian schools and Christian teaching, are excluded from the Australian Curriculum.

In their response to Draft Phase 1 (K–10) of the Australian Curriculum, the Associated Christian Schools (2010) concluded with the statement, “ACS strongly urges ACARA to maintain, as a fundamental principle in the development of Australian curriculum materials, opportunities for faith based schools to preserve their diversity, flexibility in delivery of faith, culture and values, and independence” (p. 14).
In order to preserve this diversity, flexibility and independence, it is vitally important that Christian schools and systems rigorously examine the Australian curriculum documentation and think carefully about the repercussions on their right to be distinctive at a time when states and territories are moving towards prescriptive content, skills and values that are secular in nature.

6. The issues of equity and discrimination

The development of any new curriculum needs to take into account the issues of equity and discrimination. In the context of these issues, the philosophy underpinning the Australian Curriculum is manifest in the statement:

...an alternative curriculum for students who are regarded as disadvantaged does not treat them equitably. It is better to set the same high expectations for all students and to provide differentiated levels of support to ensure that all students have a fair chance to achieve those expectations. (ACARA, 2009, p. 8)

The Shape Paper also states, “The Board will not accommodate disparities by setting different expectations for different groups” (ACARA, 2009, p. 10).

The issues of equity and discrimination are not peculiar to the Australian Curriculum and these considerations have been a key element of curriculum development at the state and territory level. For instance, the New South Wales Government Charter for Equity in Education and Training (NSW, DET, 2005) indicates clearly, “We aim to improve overall education and training outcomes by focusing on those learners and groups of learners who are not benefiting fully from education and training” (p. 1).

The principles of equal opportunity for successful, meaningful learning resonate with the Christian, biblical principle that all children have the right to equal quality of teaching and learning. The implementation of the Australian Curriculum provides an opportunity to revisit the critical question of who the ‘disadvantaged’ students are and to clarify what it means to “provide differentiated levels of support to ensure that all students have a fair chance” to achieve “the same high expectations.” While there appears to be relatively strong emphasis on socio-economic considerations, as well as culturally marginalised and physically and/or intellectually challenged students who are disadvantaged, it is important to recognise that gifted students may also be disadvantaged if they do not receive the level of support required “to have a fair chance to achieve those expectations.”

It should be noted that there is a difference between having high expectations for all students and having the same expectations for all students. There is scope for debate about the feasibility of all children achieving “the same high expectations”, even with differentiated levels of support. Pedagogic models such as the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW, DET, 2003) and Productive Pedagogies (Queensland, DET, n.d.) indicate it is imperative that teachers and educators have high expectations of all student groups. A critical consideration, however, is that student differences are taken into account. In doing so, it becomes evident that not all students are likely to achieve the same high expectations.

While most researchers and educational authorities (see, for example, Oswald, Johnson & Howard, 2003; Council of Australian Governments, 2006; Victoria, DEECD, 2006) agree that schools and teachers should set high expectations for all students, the thesis that all students should have the same high expectations is debatable. It could be argued, for example, that by having the same high expectations for all students, schools and educational institutions may be setting up some students for failure.

Nationally, at least at a systems or organisational level, it is of critical importance that the issues of equity and discrimination are part of the ongoing discussion and that there is consistency in the interpretation of concepts such as ‘disadvantaged’, ‘same high expectations’, and ‘differentiated levels of support’ so that all disadvantaged students do, in fact, receive equitable levels of financial and human support. Arguably, unless this happens, in terms of having a fair chance to achieve ‘the same high expectations’, the question of equity becomes problematic and may result in unintentional discrimination against some student groups.

A truly national curriculum calls for consistency in all areas of support. In the context of independent, Christian schooling, there is the added dimension of equitable opportunity and high expectations for the spiritual nurture of all students. If there is to be an increased focus on subject content, with more time required to teach that content, then it is essential that Christian schools design and share strategies that help keep the spiritual dimension of teaching and learning alive and that set high, but realistic expectations for all students. In this context, the spiritual dimension of nurture is a critical component in the development of the ‘whole child’ and is of fundamental importance when considering the ‘special character’ of Christian schools. Arguably, it is in this area that all students can be nurtured in achieving equity in terms of the same high expectations.
Conclusion
The focus of this paper has been to present an overview of some of the issues inherent in the Australian Curriculum as the basis of discussion and creative problem solving. This time in the history of education and schooling in Australia provides a dynamic context for questioning and rethinking not only about school teaching and learning, but also teacher education. In particular, it provides independent, Christian systems of education with a valuable opportunity to rethink how they structure and resource education in this country.

It would be a mistake to denigrate the Australian Curriculum because there is much, in theory, to recommend it. The underlying principle of providing a curriculum based on equitable content, understanding and skills nation-wide is to be applauded, in spite of the monumental challenges this creates. The inclusion of all socio-cultural groups in the planning of such a curriculum deserves to be acknowledged, as does the push for ownership of literacy and numeracy across learning areas. Stakeholders involved in education need to be creative in designing specific, workable strategies for achieving these aims.

Taking into account student dispositions (see ACARA, 2009, p. 9) and cross-curriculum perspectives, as well as content, understanding and skills is meritorious because it goes towards addressing the issue of educating the ‘whole child’ in a multi-cultural society. The question of nurturing appropriate student dispositions is particularly significant in terms of the ethos and culture of independent, Christian schools and requires carefully considered reflection and planning.

The fact that the Australian Curriculum is designed to accommodate different pedagogies, such as the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW, DET, 2003), provides further evidence of the positive intent of this initiative. Finally, the consultation process is a strong indicator of the serious endeavour to make the Australian Curriculum a truly national undertaking.

How do we, as Christian educators, prepare for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum? If ever there was a time to establish effectively functioning ‘think tanks’, it is now. If ever there was a time to liaise with and effectively communicate with each other regarding educational issues, including those raised in this paper, it is now. Educational systems and leaders, as well as individual teachers and schools, need to seize this opportunity for really making a difference in the quality of learning our children experience; for prioritising those aspects of teaching and learning that rise above national importance—those that are of eternal value. TEACH

References

The question of nurturing appropriate student dispositions is particularly significant in terms of the ethos and culture of independent, Christian schools and requires carefully considered reflection and planning.
The higher view of education

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Aim
This paper aims to explore the relevancy of Ellen White’s book, *Education*, in a postmodern setting. Further, it intends to address whether the guiding influence of the Prophetic Gift is still relevant to Adventist education. This discussion is based on the writer’s personal conviction that at certain crucial times God takes the initiative to communicate. To follow through such a position one needs to explore what God expects us to hear? What are the central themes of His communiqué? How relevant are they to life in the contemporary day and age?

Preamble
Even though the postmodern paradigm is fading into history, society continues to struggle with the aftermath of the postmodern ethos. Grenz defines postmodern consciousness as “the loss of the centre.”1 Middleton and Walsh speak of life as “cast adrift, exposed, uprooted and above all frightened.”2 Further, they propose that postmodern life is engulfed with fear of environmental destruction, fear of economic insecurity, fear about sexual immorality and the fear of odd ideas confronting every day life.3 McGrath refers to postmodernism as “the world beyond comprehension and mastery.”4

Makay, a psychologist and social researcher, speaks of the deep-seated insecurity within the Australian society. He credits the fear of the future, and the internal human insecurities and doubts to the lack of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Postmodern philosophy shaped a pathway of uncertainty, subjectivity and pluralism. It began a frantic deconstruction of God’s purpose for the spiritual, mental and physical development of human potential. Interestingly, Mackay suggests that at the same time, “we are almost instinctively attracted to the confident voice; the strong leader.”5 He reasons the “moral vacuums” of human life “yearn to be filled.”6

In what way can Seventh-day Adventist education respond to the needs of the contemporary world? Does it have a voice, which gently, yet confidently helps participants to refocus on the most essential matters in life?

Historical background
In a letter written to Brother and Sister Starr, April 11, 1900, Ellen White referred to her forthcoming book on education:

- I want all our teachers and students to have this book as soon as they possibly can. I can hardly await the process of publication. I want the principles contained in this book to go everywhere. We must take a higher stand on education.7

One wonders what made her so anxious to see this book in the hands of students and teachers. Ellen White began preparing the material around 1890. Most of the preparation was completed in Australia with the help of a literary assistant with a teaching and missionary background, Miss Sarah Peck. Her major task was to gather the counsels on education written by Ellen White in 1890 and before. However, she noticed that Ellen White’s counsels were divided into two main streams, those suitable for the Seventh-day Adventist church and those for the wider society.8 The counsels for the church were included in *Testimonies* Volume 6 (1900) and *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* (1913). The material included in the new book *Education* dealt with broader principles.

While Miss Peck compiled and sorted out the material written in previous years, Ellen White kept adding new thoughts.9 She wrote, “I have been reading some chapters of the book on education. Sister Peck has been gathering this matter from a mass of my writings.” She adds, “I have read three chapters this morning and I think the arrangement is excellent.” Early in 1900, William C. White wrote:

- During the past two years, I think Mother has written more upon the principles of education, the importance of Bible study, and the importance of combining labour with study, and the value of agriculture as the ABC of all agricultural training, than in all the years before. I think she had written more largely upon it than on any other branch of our work.”10

Since Ellen White had already published a book on Christian education in 1884, one wonders why she was so eager to write and publish another book. I suggest that three key factors influence her keen interest in what she refers to as the higher view of education.
First, she aimed to refocus Adventist education on biblical principles. She counselled the editors of *Christian Education* (1899) to “attract the attention of their readers to the Book of books” and to focus on the principles that flow from the “greatest Teacher that the world ever knew.” She pointed out that such education is found in the Word of God. 

Second, her personal spiritual journey and search for God’s presence empowered her with Christ-like sensitivity, passion and concern for people’s welfare. In 1898, she wrote a letter to her son Edson in which she referred to some parents’ unkind attitudes towards their children. “Children are treated like dogs, ordered about, scolded and beaten and the children are educated in such a rough manner they can but be coarse and rough…Satan is pleased to have this work going on in families.” She counselled, “due respect must be given to children, for they are the Lord’s heritage.”

Thirdly, before publishing the book *Education* in 1903, Ellen White sent copies of her manuscript to several readers asking for critical comments. Her son William sent some sections of the manuscript to Professor Sutherland, president of the Emmanuel Missionary College. His covering letter highlights a few interesting insights about the underlying theme of this book.

You will notice that since you saw the manuscript last a wide range has been taken out. More of the plan of redemption has been worked in by drawing from Mother’s published works, such as Patriarchs and Prophets, Great Controversy, Desire of Ages, Mount of Blessings and Christ’s Object Lessons.

This required much labour but we hope that this book is sufficiently strengthened to compensate both for the labour and delay.

The most important contributing factor for the urgency was the completion of her major work *The Desire of Ages* (1898) in which she enlarged the themes of God’s involvement in the human drama. She wrote, “In these days we hear much about ‘higher education’. The true ‘higher education’ is that imparted by Him ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’. Her new book explored the principles of education in the context of the Great Controversy theme involving God’s plan of salvation and the view of education that will last through eternity. From this stance, she explored the dynamics of God’s purpose for life, namely the development of the spiritual, mental and physical faculties.

With this objective, she envisioned to revolutionise the ethos of Christian education. No wonder that she wrote, “The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come.” She explained, “We must receive a knowledge of God, the Creator, and of Christ the Redeemer, as they are revealed in the sacred word.”

In all this, she was not setting prescriptive rules for education. Rather, recognising the freedom of human individuality with ‘power to think’ creatively, she highlighted the value of the principles relevant to life’s journey in all times. Knight points out that in, 1901 Ellen White wrote, “The Lord has not designed any one special, exact plan in education,” and further “no exact pattern can be given for the establishment of schools in new fields.”

Avondale became the guinea pig of her experiments and the principles she explored in the book *Education* were to become a pattern for Seventh-day Adventist schools around the world. Under the umbrella of God-inspired thoughts, she wrote, “the school in Avondale is to be a pattern for other schools which shall be established among our people.” Can her voice and guidance be still relevant in the contemporary postmodern pace of life? What do we hear God saying?

**Relevance of the book *Education***

Time and space does not allow for an elaborate discussion of this topic. Nevertheless, allow me to share a succinct summary of what I consider as Ellen White’s two central themes and to explore their relevance for postmodern life. The first theme explores the purpose of education and the second theme touches on God’s purpose for life.

**The purpose of education**

The opening chapter of the book *Education* begins with an emphatic statement suggesting that, “True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study.” Ellen White suggests it includes, a) a holistic view of human life (physical, mental and spiritual); b) a broader view of life. She claimed that education prepares the students for “the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” Yet, I suggest that this is not the central point of her vision for education.

Knight, notes correctly that for Ellen White, the purpose of education is to lead students to God and to a saving relationship with Jesus. White follows her opening thoughts with the statement that education which empowers students with the joy of service, both in this life and in the life to come, flows from the heart of God.

It may appear that in taking such a view she disqualifies both intellectual and vocational preparation. I suggest, however, that she does not discount the pursuit of intellectual and professional goals. Rather, she simply recognises that because of sin, “man’s physical powers were weakened,” “his
The first objective of Christian education is to direct human minds to God’s own revelation of Himself. This does not refer to excluding intellectual and philosophical gymnastics but to a foundational, relationally experiential knowledge of God. “The mind of man is brought in communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate.”

The intimacy of such a relationship provides an environment for the highest intellectual development. She explains, “Whatever line of investigation we pursue to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all.” She concludes, “In this communion is found the highest education.”

The nature of such education “is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe.” Further, “it cannot be completed in this life” but “will be continued in the life to come.”

Ellen White’s focus on a relational knowledge of God responds to the needs of the floundering ethos of the postmodern climate, namely what Grenz defines as human loss of centredness. Life in the contemporary world resembles a whirlpool of disoriented activities. The loss of coherent cosmology with a reliable point of reference turns people’s minds inwards to a self-oriented world of emotional anxieties, detached from the past, insecure about the present and unsure about the future. Ellen White’s emphasis on God sways human life from uncertainty, insecurity and hopelessness to a point of reference anchored securely in the heart of God. From this vantage point, she explores the principles and values for life’s journey.

The purpose of life’s journey
Exploring the theme of God’s purpose for life Ellen White wrote, “Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range.” There is a need of a broader scope, a “higher aim” which prepares students not only “for the joy of service in this world.” Her next point, breaks the boundary of the limits set by “selfish desires” and “worldly ambitions” and unfolds a visionary perspective of the higher education. It prepares students for “the joy of wider service in the world to come.” The wider view of life’s purpose enables students to discover their God-given individuality and uniqueness “with power to think and to do.” At the same time, it trains them to be visionary thinkers, dreamers, movers and shakers, not the slaves of circumstances.

Is it possible to assume that the true nature and quality of what service in our contemporary world means should flow from the inspired thoughts, which gently bring into focus what matters to God? Is it possible to assume that the joy of service in this world should reflect the principles of the wider service that will last through eternity?

White links such preparation with the development of the physical, mental and spiritual faculties. The goal is specific. It is aimed, “for the stability and uplifting of the society.” For this purpose, the book *Education* unfolds the principles of what I define as an incarnational purpose of education.

This focus ties education with ministry and service. Loxburgh and Romaniuk define the incarnational view as ministry that allows people “to engage each other in the reality of their life situation” rather than “strategic plans from above.” Exploring the incarnational nature of Christ’s ministry, they write:

> The narratives of Jesus’ presence among us start among the ordinariness of people’s lives. Jesus begins with their lived experience; he enters those experiences weaving God’s story through their lived lives. He draws people into a new imagination about the nature of the good news he incarnates.

In other words, the incarnation view of ministry enhances Christian education with the principles of transformational qualities.

As noted, the primary object of education includes a relational and personal knowledge of God (John 17:3). Further, recognising the Bible as the main source of God’s revelation, one “should gain knowledge of its grand central themes,” such as “the view of God’s original purpose for the world, the rise of the great controversy, and the work of redemption” (creation, salvation, eternity).

However, intellectual understanding of God’s worldview requires practical application of the divine values and attitudes to life’s journey. She refers to the principles of “truth, obedience, honour, integrity and purity.” It demonstrates that God’s purpose for life has a transforming quality. In her view, service moves beyond the realm of activism. It has a deeper incarnational meaning. In fact, an intimate relationship with God leads to a reversal of human attitudes and it develops sensitivity to engage with students “in the reality of their situation.”

Ellen White wrote, “He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity.” Here, she upholds the example of educator par excellence, Jesus. In her view the service that provides a force for the stability and uplifting of the society, needs to reflect the depth of Christ-like attitude.
In every human being He (Christ) discerned infinite possibilities. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened for its attainment, both desire and faith.  

For Ellen White, Christ’s methodology demonstrates the incarnational, life-inspiring principles and purpose of education. Firstly, He taught how to uplift human value and dignity. Secondly, He awakened new impulses and opened the possibility of a new life. In other words, through the principles of incarnational service, He helped individuals to discover their God-given uniqueness and inspired them to reach their highest potential. Thirdly, she points out that “it was not on the cross only that Christ sacrificed Himself for humanity” but His “every day experience was an outpouring of His life.” 

Such education needs to take place in the classroom, lecture halls, homes, churches, in the neighbourhood and in the world at large. She concludes the book with a vision of the wider service in the world to come. “It is in service, that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing, and ever as we witness learning and discovering new mysteries.” 

I suggest the two highlighted themes, which form the heartbeat of Ellen White’s book Education, respond to the prevailing climate of the postmodern ethos. In that sense, the principles she espouses are relevant and timely for they speak to the moral vacuum of the society that yearns to be filled with a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Endnotes

2 Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age (Downers, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 26.
3 Ibid.
5 Hugh Mackay, Generations, Baby Boomers, Their Parents & Their Children (Sydney, NSW: Macmillan, 1997), 190.
6 Ibid.
7 Letter 58, 1900 “Sunnyside,” Cooranbong, New South Wales, Ellen White to G.B Starr.
9 Arthur White, The Early Elmshaven Years 1900–1905 (Hagerstown, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 180. In 1894 Ellen White published a book entitled Christian Education. In the note to the reader she stated that the book was designed not only for teachers but also for parents, who should be prepared to direct intelligently the education of their children. Ellen White, Christian Education (Battle Creek, Michigan: International Tract Society, 1984), 1.
10 Arthur White, The Australian Years, 450.
11 Letter 85, 1899.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Arthur White, The Early Elmshaven Years, 181.
18 Ibid., 123.
19 Ibid., 17.
20 George Knight, Myths in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education and Related Issues (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 18.
21 Ellen White, Manuscript 92, 1900.
22 White, Education, 13.
23 Knight, Myths in Adventism, 49–51.
24 White, Education, 14.
25 White, Education, 15.
26 Ibid., 14.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Ibid.
29 In the book Christian Education Ellen White wrote, “ignorance will not increase the humility or spirituality of any professed follower of Christ. The truths of the divine word can be best appreciated by an intellectual Christian. Christ can be best glorified by those who serve him intelligently. The great object of education is to enable us to use the powers which God has given us in such a manner as will best represent the religion of the Bible and promote the glory of God.” She asserted that “The agency of the Spirit of God does not remove from us the necessity of exercising our faculties and talents, but teaches us how to use every power to the glory of God. The human faculties when under the special direction of the grace of God are capable of being used to the best purpose on earth and will be exercised in the future immortal life.” Ellen G. White, Christian Education (Battle Creek Michigan: International Tract Society, 1894), 203.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 White, Education, 19.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 18.
35 Ibid., 17,18. Ellen White points out that by directing students to the sources of truth and by opening their minds to “great facts of duty and destiny” will empower individuals not to be “slaves of circumstances” but individuals “who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought and the courage of their convictions.”
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 29.
39 Ibid.
40 Ellen White, Education, 190.
41 Ibid., 29.
42 Roxburgh and Romanuk, 75.
43 Ibid., 78.
44 Ibid., 80.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 309.

“...”

These principles are relevant and timely for they speak to the moral vacuum of postmodern society that yearns to be filled with a sense of meaning and purpose in life.”
In most cases thorough learning of a skill requires a process of acquiring a series of smaller or contributing skills. The younger the child the more one can see a myriad of skills developing. It is breathtaking to observe all the skills a baby develops up to school age. At the other end of life, skills begin to diminish. One of the problems of old age is that acquiring new skills can be difficult. Brain deterioration means that some elderly people lose established skills.

The general process for learning a new skill follows a series of culminating steps. How did you learn to drive?

1. Being motivated – wanting to drive (like your peers) and seeing value, fun, and a challenge in the learning.
2. Gaining understanding – being taught, studying the car manual and driving rules, and qualifying for a learner’s permit.
3. Learning each subskill – learning to start on a hill, use of the brake and accelerator, signalling and the dreaded reverse park, to name a few.
4. Practise, practise, practise – the only way to build those skills up to the accepted standard in a smoothly paced way. Eventually these will be spontaneous and even automatic.
5. Demonstrating your ability – an essential to proving to others that you can do it, including passing the driving test.
6. Applying and generalising the skill – driving safely and independently in the community. Generalising the skills to other conditions e.g. unfamiliar terrain, difficult weather, other types of vehicles.
7. Mastery of the skill – maybe completing a defensive driving course. Being acknowledged by others as a safe, very competent driver. Having a flawless legal driving record.
8. Keeping the skill current – driving regularly, updating on road rules and continuing to generalise.

As you have probably learned from experience some people take longer to acquire some of these steps, and certain skills can be challenging. Did you generalise well, or stick to safe options? Did you get tired of practicing and jump ahead into situations when you were not ready? Were you inconsistent from day to day? Worst of all were you nervous when going for your licence and fail to demonstrate that you really could do it?

In classrooms today there is a tendency to standardise teaching and learning. Large classes, outcomes based education and political pressures, contribute to this. Let’s comment on the eight steps in learning the skill of driving as it might apply to learning skills in the classroom.

1. Being motivated
Does a child really find fun or value in a repetitive learning of times tables? On the other hand, does a predictable and repetitive learning task every day have the effect of calming and reassuring unsettled children? How much choice is offered in learning options? There is a wide range of motivating factors at work from intrinsic motivation with a love of learning for its own sake, to extrinsic motivation and relevant rewards. The attitude of “what do I get out of it” is a growing one in the community. Fortunately to balance that, there is the altruism that is evident in community volunteers. Motivation is a complicated, personal and classroom dynamic.

2. Gaining understanding
A good teacher is what is needed for this outcome; giving clear instruction where possible, through demonstration which is strengthened through visual and auditory stimulation as well as cues. Teaching should be flexible enough to allow for different learning styles and for accommodating all children in an inclusive classroom.

3. Learning each subskill
Teachers need to order the learning into small steps and allow for different learning rates and abilities. If needed, slow down and even provide over-learning, so every child can achieve mastery of the subject matter.

4. Practise, practise, practise
Build more practice into daily opportunities set up for those learners who need it. Bright children may be taught once and know it, while others need more time and consolidation through software, cooperative games, buddy practice with a peer, or extra adult support.
Schools everywhere, it appears, have been transformed into building sites as part of the Federal Government’s stimulus package. Temporary fences have been erected and a steady stream of trucks and tradespeople enter and leave the school property daily as classrooms, multipurpose centres and even canteens take pride of place on the school property. All this activity means safety precautions are put in place. Builders are chosen carefully, tradespeople are hired, their qualifications are checked and after they leave, their workmanship is inspected. They register when they enter the school and sign out when they leave.

Schools are responsible when it comes to building programs. No one wants an unqualified tradesperson building a school structure. Schools are also responsible when it comes to choosing teachers. Interviews are conducted, CVs are scrutinised, and references noted. It’s a relatively easy thing to check academic qualifications and workmanship but how do we check the hearts of teachers? Is it even possible to do this?

Sometimes we focus on the academic and teaching qualities of staff and forget that the very reason for the existence of Christian schools is more than pedagogical prowess and academic achievement. What lies in the heart of a teacher is difficult to measure, and it is more about being than doing. Teachers are what they teach through applying theory, and through being loving, authentic, and consistent. Teachers who spend quality time with God will be effective agents of grace who share God’s love from the overflow of their hearts. Here are three questions Christian teachers can ask themselves:

1. Is my relationship with God so full that I can share His love from the ‘overflow’?
2. Do I spend more time focusing on what I do rather than who I am?
3. What does the quality of my relationships with peers, students and parents tell them about God?

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EH&S issues are a joint initiative between the Adventist Schools Australia Curriculum Unit and Avondale College.
The internet is an incredible tool. It provides an opportunity to communicate, learn, play and be entertained by content from around the world. It’s vibrant, incredibly varied and offers information on any topic at a click of the mouse. While the internet provides many positives there are also risks. Cyberbullying, inappropriate contact, identity theft, scams and exposure to adult content can make the internet a risky place for children. The risks exist for all children, from pre-schoolers who are only starting to use a computer, to more experienced teens, and also adults.

When it comes to teaching students about cybersafety, Australian schools face some major challenges: knowing what their obligations are in providing appropriate cybersafety care for students, and where to find research-based and reliable advice, strategies and resources.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA) manages a national cybersafety education program, Cybersmart. This program includes targeted education and awareness activities and resources for teachers, students, parents and children, materials for use in schools and at home, and research into current trends in cybersafety. Cybersmart aims to give children, teachers and parents, sound advice on how best to manage risks, so their online experiences are safe and positive.

Online behaviour and risks

Studies into children and young people’s online behaviour indicate that they use the internet to undertake a wide range of activities. These include using it for research as well as a range of social, gaming and learning activities. The ACMA’s research into young people’s online participation identifies a shift as children age, from individual activities such as playing games, which is popular with children aged 8 to 11 years, to social pursuits for young people aged 16 to 17 years.1

This research identified important points including:

- Among 16 to 17-year-olds, 97 per cent of those surveyed reported that they had used at least one social networking service. For children aged between 8 to 11 years, only 51 per cent had used a social networking service.
- Using the internet for social interaction is the primary reason 81 per cent of 12 to 17-year-olds go online. Fifty four per cent of 12 to 17-year-olds note that “chatting with friends from school” is their main reason for using social networking services.
- Risky online behaviour increases with age. About 78 per cent of 16 to 17-year-olds claim to have personal information, such as photographs, posted on their social networking pages, compared with 48 per cent of 8 to 9-year-olds.

Children and young people are clearly entrenched in the online world. But how risky is it? According to the ACMA’s Click and Connect study, children demonstrate a good general knowledge about online behaviours that might be considered ‘risky’. Despite this, some young people still engage in risky behaviour, and some perceive these behaviours are common across their peer groups.

It is important to educate young people about the risk, then give them the skills and tools to change risky behaviour. This is particularly relevant in the use of social media sites. The popularity of these sites has grown enormously in recent years, leading to increased exposure to risk for users. Children and young people are better able to evaluate risk and manage difficult situations if they are aware of the consequences of their online actions and understand why they should think before posting online, keep personal information private and respect others.

The UK’s Byron Review2 found that children do not report having major concerns about their online behaviour as they seemingly feel informed and in control about online risks. However, they are still “developing critical skills and need (adult) help to make wise decisions.” Report author, Dr Tanya Byron, notes that data shows young people are at an
increasing risk of “exposure to sexually inappropriate content, contributions to negative beliefs and attitudes, cyberbullying and (content which promotes) harmful behaviours.” The review recommends “a strong commitment to changing behaviour through a sustained information and education strategy.”

These recommendations acknowledge that teachers and library staff, throughout primary and secondary schools, can play a pivotal role in helping students to develop appropriate and ethical behaviour when using digital technologies.

Cybersafety education

The school authority, teachers and other specialists owe a duty of care to students. Schools need to be aware of the key role they have to play in cybersafety education. This is particularly important in the current environment where the internet and online technologies are an essential part of life for students both at home and in the classroom. An educator’s duty of care cannot be underestimated, though in a rapidly changing environment, it may be contentious.

Developing school policies

To help minimise risk in the school and classroom environment, schools can identify risks relevant to their students and develop strategies and processes to address them. For example, schools may have policies and processes for use of the internet, email and mobile phones. These policies and processes should be updated regularly and effectively communicated to staff and students.

An effective policy is one that originates from a particular school or organisation and is the result of discussion which ideally engages the whole school or organisation in the process. While an ICT sub-committee may develop a draft policy, a working document only becomes relevant and practical if it is based on broad consultation and has thorough support. Sound policies should look to include:

• a rationale;
• a statement of purpose;
• guidelines for use; and
• a student commitment or undertaking—this should be sufficiently detailed to provide students with key safety messages that reinforce the overall school approach.

Schools are encouraged to contact their state authority about policies and developments in cybersafety education. More policy guidelines along with samples for each state jurisdiction are available online at www.cybersmart.gov.au/en/Schools.aspx.

ACMA Initiatives

To empower administrators, teachers and librarians to help students stay safe online the ACMA has developed a diverse and targeted range of education resources and training programs. These promote key cybersafety messages and support children and young people in their online activities by teaching them essential skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Key ACMA programs for teachers, children and parents aim to help children minimise risk and enjoy their online experiences.

Professional development for educators

The ACMA offers a free cybersafety professional development workshop (PD) for educators that is available to all practising teachers across Australia. Since it was launched in 2009, more than 5,500 educators across Australia have attended the workshop with demand for presentations continuing to grow. Key cybersafety topics covered in the workshop include:

• the profile of a modern student;
• the skills required to develop a cybercitizen the legal responsibilities of educators and schools to mitigate risk and potential liability; and
• cybersafety resources that are useful to support school policies and teaching practice.

Educators need to work closely with their students to embed appropriate behaviour, knowledge and skills. A core foundation of the Cybersmart program for schools, shared in the workshop, is the cybercitizen profile. This assists teachers to identify and develop the relevant skills that children and young people need to be safe and responsible cybercitizens.

The cybercitizen profile is based on four capabilities:

• positive online behaviour;
• digital media literacy;
• peer and personal safety;
• e-Security.

The profile provides an outline of what children and young people do online at different ages.

Teachers who attend the PD take home a range of Cybersmart resources such as lesson plans, case studies and policies. These help teachers to engage students and to implement effective cybersafety strategies within their school environment.

The PD workshop is accredited, endorsed or recognised in all states and territories. Delivered by an experienced cybersafety trainer with an education background, the PD is offered as either an on-site workshop, held at schools, or an off-site workshop held at a local venue.

Appraisal of the program includes the following comments:

The Executive and staff...would like to express their sincere appreciation for your involvement in our...Professional Development week. Your sessions on cybersafety were insightful, helpful
Recognising that a child’s internet activity will depend on their age and experience, the ACMA provides a range of free teaching resources which meet age-specific needs.

Internet safety awareness presentations
Complementing the PD workshop, the ACMA also offers free Internet Safety Awareness presentations for students, teachers and parents. These presentations are easy to understand, thorough and informative. They cover a range of issues including children’s use of the internet as well as other emerging technologies and tips and strategies to minimise risk and help children stay safe online. In 18 months, over 150,000 students, teachers and parents have attended these free presentations. Registration forms for the PD and Internet Safety Awareness presentations are available online at [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au) by contacting the ACMA by email cybersafety@acma.gov.au, or by calling the Cybersafety Contact Centre on 1800 880 176.

Internet safety for pre-service teachers
To support acknowledgement of the significance of safe online environments associated with schooling, the ACMA has offered presentations to universities to meet the needs of pre-service teachers. Initiated at Deakin University in June 2010, this type of interaction currently includes a lecture (50 minutes) and tutorial (90 minutes). It is available free to all universities throughout Australia.

Through this interactive program pre-service teachers can gain the skills and knowledge required to confidently teach their students about cybersafety. Topics covered include cyberbullying, sexting, safe social networking, identity protection and digital citizenship.

Universities can request and arrange a presentation by emailing cybersafety@acma.gov.au.

Education resources
Recognising that a child’s internet activity will depend on their age and experience, the ACMA provides a range of free teaching resources which meet age-specific needs. These materials include animations, video content, games and interactive activities, as well as lesson plans and other supporting information for teachers. Sources for these resources are identified below, with some description and indication of their potential use.

The Cybersmart website is about how to keep safe and be smart online. It provides cybersafety education and awareness for children, young people and parents. The website features news, resources and information about current cybersafety issues and provides practical advice about how to deal with them ([www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au)).

The Cybersmart Schools Gateway is a web portal offering all Australian primary and secondary schools easy access to the Cybersmart education resources. The Schools Gateway hosts all current resources and links to national and international resources. The Schools Gateway also includes strategic tools for cybersafety education planning ([www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools.aspx)).

Primary school
CyberQuoll is an internet safety education resource for upper primary school students. It provides a fun, cartoon-style multimedia resource with different episodes explaining the basics of the internet and keeping safe. CyberQuoll includes a teacher guide with student worksheets, certificates and contracts. A family contract is also included for parents to use with their children ([www.cybersmart.gov.au/cyberquoll](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/cyberquoll)).

Cybersmart Detectives is an innovative online activity that teaches children key internet safety messages in a safe school environment. Children
work in teams, online and in real time to investigate and solve an internet-themed problem. They are supported by teachers and internet safety experts who act as Cybersmart guides in the activity. Cybersmart Detectives teaches children key internet safety messages particularly the need to protect personal information (http://cybersmart.englishtalk.net/).

A second activity, Cybersmart Hero, which focuses on cyberbullying and the need for children to support others being bullied online, was recently launched and is now available nationally. It is one of the upper primary resources available from the generic site for teacher resources (http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools/Teacher%20resources.aspx).

Hector’s World is an innovative online safety resource for young children featuring Hector Protector, a bottlenose dolphin (http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Kids.aspx). Developed in New Zealand by Hector’s World Limited, this animated resource features episodes that can be viewed online. It’s accompanied by online puzzles and downloadable storybooks and activities. There are also lesson plans from children aged 5 to 11 years.

Secondary school CyberNetrix is an engaging multimedia resource designed for early teens. It includes interactive activities designed to simulate popular online activities, such as instant messaging (IM). CyberNetrix aims to highlight age-specific risks online and offers advice about how to avoid them. This resource includes a teacher guide with activity guidelines and student handouts (www.cybersmart.gov.au/cybernetrix).

Let’s Fight it Together is a comprehensive teaching resource to help young people, teachers and parents understand cyberbullying and its impact on others. The resource provides practical advice in a package comprising a short film, supporting teaching materials and links to online activities. Let’s Fight it Together highlights how technology can be misused, leading to cyberbullying, as well as guidance about how to promote and develop a culture of confident technology users.

Originally developed by Childnet International and the Department of Children, Schools and Families in the United Kingdom, the ACMA has adapted the program for use in Australia. It can be accessed from the resources for lower secondary schools at the site http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Schools/Teacher%20resources.aspx.

Wise up to IT is a video-based program aimed at secondary school students. The program covers cyberbullying, online stalking, internet security and grooming in four videos which depict young people’s experiences online. Wise up to IT provides teacher and student resources (www.cybersmart.gov.au/wiseuptoit).

Super Clubs PLUS Australia (SCPA) is a protected online social learning network for children aged 6 to 12 years. The ACMA has launched two ‘Cybersafety Badges’ on the site. Children earn the badges by completing cybersafety activities including an interactive ‘spot the problem’, a cybersafety quiz and a cybersafety audit of their home.

Many of the ACMA’s resources are available on DVD or CD ROM and can be ordered free of charge from the Cybersafety Contact Centre on 1800 880 176. The Contact Centre also provides cybersafety advice and information for a range of audiences.

Smart choices

The internet is a truly incredible tool and as it continues to develop, there will be many more, and varied, opportunities and risks for users. Helping children have positive online experiences requires sound support and education—not only by teachers but also by parents, carers and library staff. With this, children will be better able to make more informed decisions when they see or experience confronting material online. The ACMA’s up to date, targeted and useful information can assist and is freely available.

Help children to make smart choices and stay safe online. TEACH

The Cybersmart program is a national cybersafety education program managed by the ACMA, as part of the Australian Government’s commitment to promoting online safety for children and adolescents. The program welcomes all feedback. To comment, please email cybersafety@acma.gov.au

Endnotes

2 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 4.
6 Ibid., p. 7.