

# EDITORIAL

Lana Hibbard

A 5 year old knows and needs to know so much. His questions assume that I am an expert in all fields. Yet in reality, despite having a Master's degree, I would hardly consider myself a master of much at all.

In a quest to find out about his world, my son's questions come flooding in.

- The ethics questions: If there was a big fire, are we allowed to drive faster than the signs say, so we can get away?
- The urban planning questions: What if there were so many cars, they couldn't all fit on the road?
- The environmental questions: What if there weren't any rubbish bins to put our rubbish in?
- The physics questions: What if the world stopped turning and the people on the other side didn't get sun anymore?
- Family planning questions: If we wanted a baby, where could we get one?
- The linguistics questions (supposedly my area of expertise): How come some people talk in another language and I don't know what they're saying?

Then there are the religious questions:

- How will God find all the boxes in the ground when He comes?
- Is God magic?
- Could God change into a car or an elephant or a chair?
- How come I can't hear God talking to me?
- What if God gets too busy and can't see me anymore?

Recently, after apparent contemplation, he asked, "How come some people call God different names?" This led to a short discussion of the fact that he gets called different names at different times: Tyson, Ty, monkey, honey, mate etc. It seemed okay then that God would have different names too. He already knew about the names *Jesus* and *God*, so I added *Father* as one who looks after us and *Saviour* as one who can save us. He was happy with that and went on with eating his dinner.

Just a couple of days later, his 3 year old sister said a simple grace before breakfast, "Dear Jesus, thank you for our food, Amen." He thought it was time to educate her regarding God's different names. "God's got lots of names, not just Jesus. He's God and Jesus and Father and Sabre."

It got me thinking about whether I do anything in particular to reveal these different aspects of God to my kids. I then extended this thought to include my work life. Do I do or say anything that helps to reveal the character of God to those around me?

I have a book that I like to refer to from time

to time called *At the name of Jesus*<sup>1</sup>. It explores a different name for Jesus for each day of the year. Reading through the pages, a multifaceted picture of God is gradually painted. I suggest that if we have a more complete view of who Jesus is, it becomes even easier to fall in love with Him, to depend on Him, and to share Him with others in a variety of ways.

When we allow it, God uses us to reveal various aspects of Himself to different people at different times. We each have a unique life story and spiritual journey; God wants to match you with someone who needs to hear about your experience of God. We need to be willing to share our spiritual lives with our students and colleagues so that we can encourage others and point them toward God.

In an education setting teachers are supposed to have it all sorted out and know most of the answers. This perception may be overgeneralised to include spiritual matters. At times, especially the difficult times, this hinders us from sharing our real spiritual journey. The expectation for us to have it all together may prevent us from admitting that this is not always the case.

This can lead to serious consequences. Firstly, those in need of support may not feel comfortable admitting the need for help. Equally as serious, perpetuating the myth that Christians have it 'all together' sets people up for disappointment. Young people and even children need to know that it's okay to have questions about God and to struggle with faith issues. When significant adults are willing to share their real experience of God and their spiritual journey, young people have access to a broader understanding of God and how He relates to us, His children.

Young people have questions, they need to know. What are you doing to reveal aspects of God to those you are in contact with today? **TEACH**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hornsby, S. (1983). *At the name of Jesus*. Michigan: Chosen Books.



“God wants to match you with someone who needs to hear about your experience of God”

[Photography: Ann Stafford]

## I love to tell the story

**Bev Christian**

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### Introduction

**A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...**

**These words, immortalised by George Lucas (1977) herald the beginning of a story, a narrative, an epic. A story connects people. It's how we explain the past, it's how we shape our identity, and it's how we form a picture of what the future may hold for us. Everyone relates to a story. If you don't believe it, just start telling a story in class and observe the stillness that suddenly settles on the restless young bodies and minds as they connect with the characters and plot.**

Storytelling has always been part of the fabric of life. Myths and fables, heroic deeds, values and morals, have all been passed from one generation to the next in narrative form as stories, poems, dances and songs. Our students are familiar with narratives. Ask them to identify the complication and resolution of *Hamlet* or *Farmer Schulz's Ducks* and you may receive blank stares, but ask them to identify the villain in *The Dark Knight* or *Nemo*, and they will answer without hesitation. Our children, like those of past generations, learn through narrative, but with one defining difference. In the past, tribal elders, patriarchs, matriarchs, parents and church leaders were the chief storytellers. These individuals had the moral and spiritual wellbeing of their children as a priority. Today, many of the stories our students listen to are told by people who have no concern for their values or morals and no interest in their eternal safety. Tinseltown is profit driven and so it produces what sells, and what sells is a good story, an epic.

Have you ever stopped to ponder the elements of a story that make it so appealing? What is it about the characters, the villains and the heroes, the complication, the interplay of good and evil and the final triumph of the resolution that makes us sigh with satisfaction? Eldredge (2004, p.13) maintains that the answer is found in Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT) "He has planted eternity in the human heart."

In each of our hearts, Eldredge claims, God has embedded a yearning to unfold and understand the real story, the story that brings purpose and meaning to life. Have you noticed that every great epic, the classics of literature and the silver screen

all contain the same basic elements? They often begin in an idyllic environment, into which comes a chord of dissonance, a sinister echo from the past. There is usually a period of oppression, during which the common people catch fleeting glimpses of hope. And then one is called, often from obscurity, to tackle the villain head-on, to "outwit, outplay and outlast" (Burnett, 2000) the evil forces, and the epic reaches its glorious climax, its last battle, its final confrontation. Sound familiar? It should, for this is the blueprint of the original epic, the one God has planted in our hearts. Oliver (2006, p.13) calls it a metanarrative, our worldview story of the great controversy between good and evil, based on the Bible.

As Christian teachers, we have a perfect opportunity to share this original epic with our students: not just a glimpse here and there, but in its entirety. This brings us to an important question. Does our curriculum reflect the whole epic? If our focus is too narrow, the true meaning and purpose will be lost, for it is in the context of the whole story that each part takes on meaning. The metanarrative deserves a closer examination, so, as with all good stories, we will start at the beginning.

The beginning, in this case, goes back beyond the events described in Genesis. In order to understand the metanarrative, to give meaning and purpose to the grandest story ever told, we have to go back in time, right back into pre-earth history, to discover the key character. This key character is also the Master Artist, the Poet Laureate, the Pulitzer Prize Novelist, the Academy Award Script Writer and Producer, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner and the Alpha and Omega of the greatest epic ever written. Does this sound too good to be true? This is the reality of God, yet even this partial description fails miserably to describe the Supreme Being who is God.

While secular society denies the existence of the Master Storyteller, Christians exercise their faith and accept the reliability of the biblical narrative as the word of God (2 Tim 3:16, 17). Without this belief, there is no story to tell. But God, living in harmonious accord with His created beings, the angels, is only the start of the story. It is important to note that God does not surround Himself with robotic followers, incapable of free choice. God instead takes the risk

**“A story connects people—it's how we explain the past, shape our identity, and form a picture of our future”**

of creating beings who will serve Him out of hearts of love. Consequently, the worst scenario is realised when dissonance creeps into this Utopia. The seed of pride is nurtured in the heart of Lucifer, the shining star among the angels. Note this description paralleling the King of Tyre found in the book of Isaiah:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High. (Isaiah 14:12-14, *NKJ*)

This biblical account, along with others (see Ezekiel 28:12-19, Revelation 12; 7-9) is accepted by Seventh-day Adventist Christians as the explanation of the origin of sin. The importance of this point lies in a simple exercise of logic. If there is no sin in the world, there is no need of a Saviour; a hero to rescue sinners. Put plainly, the absence of sin would render Christ's sacrifice meaningless. This simple truth may help explain why our students may be reluctant to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Unless they understand the origin and nature of sin, they may not feel the need of a Saviour. Without the whole story, individual chapters may not make sense.

So there is war in heaven and Lucifer and his followers are expelled forever (Rev 12:7-9). Therein lies our initial complication, the first conflict, the first hint that all is not well in the Universe, and all heaven waits with baited breath while Lucifer and his henchmen regroup and define their battle plan.

Then God gives a most astounding display of His power. In the face of impending evil, He creates this world, an earth of boundless beauty, delicate design and perfect order, and He inhabits it with intelligent life, patterned after who He is. The Genesis account reveals an omnipotent God with an overwhelming compulsion to create life with His words and sustain it with His breath (Genesis 1, 2). It is into this perfect environment that God places the masterpiece of His handiwork—Adam and Eve. At this point, a sinister echo from the past reverberates in the newly formed paradise. We know the story; how Satan, alias Lucifer, disguised as a serpent deceived those first inhabitants of earth, tempting them with his clever lies to distrust their Creator (Genesis 3). It is here that the complication impacts our perfect planet. It is from this point that the downward spiral of helplessness and hopelessness begins for humanity.

Yet all is not lost. Into this despair comes a covenant (Genesis 3:15), the promise of a Hero, and as the metanarrative unfurls, we catch glimpses

of hope in the grace God pours out on those who trust Him. All of our teaching of Old Testament stories should be grace-infused and hope-inspired. Salvation is not the domain only of the New Testament. It is the grand theme of the Old Testament also (Exodus 20:2).

Take the story of Abraham, a life lived out in the vortex of grace. At each stage of his life Abraham is the recipient of unexpected grace, but never is grace more evident than in that final climax when Abraham stands ready to sacrifice *his* only son, his promised one (Genesis 22:1-13). So often we emphasise Abraham's willing obedience in this story and forget the real agenda set by God. Tyner (2006) puts it beautifully. "He [God] is the One who provides the sacrifice, including the sacrifice that gives us eternal salvation – doing for humans that which is impossible for us to do for ourselves." This is the real message of Mt. Moriah, that God not only demands the sacrifice, but He provides it. The theme is continued in the lives of Noah, Rahab, Ruth, Gideon, David, Hosea and countless others. Each life, each incident, is a testament to the grace of God, a foretaste of the promised One.

And so the metanarrative unfolds over time. Faithful believers pass the story and its promise down through the generations, and each generation wonders, "Will we be the ones to witness the coming of the promised One?" When the God-ordained moment arrives (Gal 4:4,5), His coming is so at odds with the expectations of the oppressed that it goes largely unnoticed, except by a few common shepherds (Luke 2:8-18), some foreign emissaries (Matt 2:1,2) and a couple of elderly nobodies (Luke 2:25-32, 36-38) who have read the ancient prophecies and actually know what they are looking for. For thirty years, while the promised One grows, the world of humanity is oblivious to His presence. Then He begins His mission, and His listeners see glimpses of what they long for, hear echoes of what they have hoped for, and wonder, "Could this be the One?"

It is impossible to be unmoved by this Hero. As He journeys around the countryside, healing the sick, raising the dead, challenging the common laws and mores with His stories, He is either loved or feared, and the fear burgeons into hatred. The ruling class, whose ways have gone unchallenged for centuries, anticipate an uprising and begin plotting His demise. How wrong and how right they are to fear this Jesus: wrong because their idea of an uprising includes radical insurgents, angry dissidents and political manipulation, right because the uprising results in a revolution that still lives on in the hearts of its followers two millennia later.

“*All of our Old Testament storytelling should be grace-infused and hope-inspired*”

# Teaching & Professional Practice



It is with horror that we witness our Hero cursed and spat upon, beaten and mocked (Matt 27:27-31). It is with awe that we observe His self-control, born out of His all-encompassing love, as He allows Himself to be led to that roman cross, the cruellest of all deaths. And so He hangs on a cross, this God-man who split time in two. Forever after, the inhabitants of earth will mark their time from this one event. This is the pivotal point of our story, where heaven and humanity meet in the selfless sacrifice of God and are reconciled to each other. If we have told the story well, our students will grasp the significance, and lift their hearts in worship.

The death of a hero always results in the deepest despair, but that despair bursts wide open as the stone is rolled away. The resurrection (Luke 24:1-7), the gift of the Holy Spirit and the ascension (Acts 1:6-11) follow in quick succession, with a promise from Jesus to return and take His followers home (John 14:1-3).

At this point in the metanarrative, we may be tempted to stop. After all, the supreme gift has been offered, accepted, and the resolution is complete—or is it? Just as an epic has plots and sub plots, so does the story of Salvation. Once again the eons pass, and once again heaven waits in anticipation. The epic is passed on by storytellers in the Colosseum and catacombs of Rome, by Waldensian pedlars in the alpine villages of Europe, by martyrs burned at the stake, by a humble printer in Germany, by bible smugglers across the English Channel, by beggars and scholars, by commoners and royalty, and by Christian teachers determined that the story will not be lost. And the final, ultimate resolution of the narrative? It is a resolution that not only gives hope for the present, but holds out to each of us the promise of a never ending story; of eternity spent in the presence of an almighty, all forgiving, all loving God (Rev 21:3, 4).

Some narratives have a coda, an optional element where the pattern of everyday life “is no

longer quite the same as when the story began. The new order incorporates some new knowledge that has been gained from what has happened” (BOS NSW, 1994). The metanarrative has a coda. Simply put, it is this: God alone is worthy of worship. God is validated as the supreme ruler of the universe and sin is eradicated forever. “One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation” (White, 1888, p. 678). Only the remnants of one reminder linger. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, forever carries the scars of His love for us in His head, His hands and His feet (White, 1888, p.678).

Knowledge of the Story of Salvation carries with it responsibility. Are we being intentional in how we share the greatest epic ever told? How can we ensure that our students are hearing this amazing epic in a way that will touch their lives for eternity? The following strategies may contribute in a positive way:

1. Plan faith development curriculum so that students have an opportunity to engage with the biblical metanarrative each year of their schooling.
2. Write a cohesive curriculum structured on the great controversy between Christ and Satan that is age appropriate from infants to the final year of school.
3. Ensure that all teachers are fully aware of the implications of the whole epic: the great controversy between Christ and Satan.
4. Use examples of the great epics of literature and theatre to demonstrate how they are mere reflections of the story God has planted in our hearts.
5. Continually point out to students where in the epic particular biblical events and stories fit.
6. Use the biblical metanarrative as a platform from which to teach narrative writing.
7. Joyfully live out the Story of Salvation as a witness to our students.

“Are our students aware that the steps of their existence are choreographed into the greatest story of all times?”



8. Pray consistently our students will listen to, understand, and unreservedly accept the Story of Salvation.

Are we giving our students the opportunity to discover the Saga of Salvation unfolding around them? Do they realise they are part of the cast? Are our students aware that the tune of their lives contributes to the symphony, that the steps of their existence are choreographed into the greatest story of all times?

We live in a world of reality *and* virtual reality. Many of our students become absorbed in the epics they hear and see on the three screens—cinema, television and computer. One of the insidious drawcards of computer games is that our students can be absorbed into an epic. They can live out the saga in virtual reality, and sadly, many discover a sense of purpose not felt in the real world. Here is our calling as Christian teachers. To point our students towards the reality of the story God is telling: to introduce them to the ultimate hero of all times. Why let our students live out man-made epics in virtual reality when they can know and experience the ultimate reality, the original epic? Why not introduce them to the metanarrative that can change their young lives, give them courage and knowledge to face the twenty-first century, and instil in them hope for a certain future? This is the story that should dominate our teaching.

A teacher was given a task by God. Her brief: to bring her students to the realisation that they were saved children of God with a sure and safe future. She pondered the task. She divided her content, and developed her strategies. She began with a gripping presentation on worldviews, and her students applauded. She continued with a research project on the reliability of scripture, and her students were convinced. She taught apologetics of the Christian faith, and her students became skilled at argument. But still she wasn't satisfied. Something was missing. Then, with a knowing smile born out of personal experience, she gathered her students around her and began to tell them The Story, and as they listened with growing wonder, the Author and Hero stepped right out of The Story and into their hearts and lives. **TEACH**

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## Food challenges—a 200 page resource for teachers

The Sanitarium Nutrition Service has teamed up with the Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association (VHETTA) – now known as Home Economics Victoria (HEV). They produced a 200 page teachers' resource or workbook, **Food Challenges**, which encourages students to appreciate great food, and above all, take lifetime ownership of their own health.

Written by experienced teachers (Dr Jane Lawrence, Dr Gayle Savige, Alison Kuen) with an understanding of curriculum requirements across the country, the resource takes a fresh, fun and engaging look at food. Designed for upper primary and lower secondary students, it is an invaluable resource for the teaching of Home Economics, Food Technology and Health. Since its release in 2006, it has been a best-selling resource and continues to generate interest nationally.

Each of the 12 chapters looks at a different situation or occasion and features hands-on food production, design challenges, nutrition investigations and case studies. Some of the chapter headings include: "Are your brekkies brilliant?"; "Is your canteen helping?"; "Culture and diversity"; "School camp cuisine"; "What's for dinner?"; "Watching your budget". This resource challenges young people to be informed, aware and confident decision-makers and consumers.

For just **\$39.95**, this full-colour, beautifully designed book is a celebration of fresh, delicious and healthy food. To view a chapter of **Food Challenges** and download an order form, just visit our website [www.sanitarium.com.au/nutrition/resources.html](http://www.sanitarium.com.au/nutrition/resources.html)

For more information about this resource, contact Angela Saunders (Senior Dietitian—Sanitarium Nutrition Service) on 02 4348 7625.



## Bringing back the school farm

**Jillian Carter**

Middle School teacher of technology: agriculture, Mountain View Adventist College, Sydney, NSW

### Introduction

**Would you like to see an improvement in your students' motivation to learn, level of responsibility and knowledge of where food comes from, regardless of academic ability? Do your students have the opportunity to learn hands-on business and marketing skills during their schooling years? Do they have the opportunity to do all of this in one subject?**

### Our program

Mountain View Adventist College (MVAC) established a school farm in conjunction with the addition of a new Stage 4 Technology Mandatory subject in 2006, which focuses on agricultural industries. The areas of study we look at include Products (Agricultural Product Design) and Built Environments (Structural Design). These areas cover a range of design projects which the students are actively involved in, such as: the production of in season snow peas, Lebanese cucumbers, and green beans, the production of free-range eggs, and the breeding of chickens, quails, and mini lop rabbits (for pets). Students also design chicken enclosures and business logos for produce packaging.

On a daily basis the students complete a range of activities in order to keep the farm functioning and their farm friends in good health. They are responsible for providing food and water to the chickens, quails and rabbits. They also collect, market and sell their products (10 dozen chicken eggs per week), and their young pets. When growing vegetables, the students must maintain a regular fertilising program, pick and pack their vegetables and then deliver their product to their purchaser. The students also collect money and write cash receipts. The students learn about farm economics, farm hardships (in 2007 hail destroyed the cucumber crop est. 100kg) and monitoring disease in the crop and in the livestock. All students enjoy this subject as it covers a wide variety of areas.

### Benefits identified by staff

The educational opportunities provided by this subject have encouraged students' lifelong learning, assisted in developing responsibility and boosted enjoyment of learning. The framework of the subject encourages students to develop and communicate

ideas, work effectively in teams, analyse and evaluate their designs, solve problems, deal with death, develop skills in business and marketing, and discuss God's amazing creations. Many of these developmental areas are identified by The National Goals of the Adelaide Declaration (1999) as essential areas of learning for all students in Australia. This subject provides both high and low academic achievers with hands-on experiences that motivate learning. These results are consistent with the researched benefits of agricultural learning experiences (Cormack, 2005).

### Perceived benefits identified by students

Students who participated in this program during Semester One, 2008, completed a questionnaire where they identified the following benefits to the program, "You learn how to plant and take care of animals, and it makes you feel like there is a reason to go to school", "It taught me that animals are not just there for decoration but to love and we need to have responsibility!!" Others stated, "I enjoyed learning because we were learning and doing chores at the same time", "I learnt that it is fun to take care of plants and animals and there has got to be one subject that is fun". The students were also asked if they would recommend other schools to establish a similar program and they answered, "Yes, I would recommend other schools start a school farm because you can have fun and at the same time you can be learning about great and educational things", "YES YES YES! A farm is the way to go, it's great fun and such a great experience" another stated, "Schools don't know what they are missing out on".

A statement made by one of the students identified how students can transfer their experiences and knowledge from the subject to their lives: "I learnt from the rabbits that you shouldn't have babies when you are young" (we had an unplanned pregnancy of a young rabbit). This is a significant statement considering the demographic of the school and the increasing rate of teenage pregnancies in today's society.

### Benefits identified by the principal

"We are very blessed to have an excellent technology: agriculture program running at the College," comments Mrs Gibbons, the College

“The program has encouraged lifelong learning, assisted in developing responsibility and boosted enjoyment of learning”

1 MVAC students participating in the farm project

[Photography: Jillian Carter]

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principal. “Not only does this program enhance our curriculum, it also supports all of our students in understanding the value of creation. Many Sydney children don’t get the opportunity to see how their food is grown and how to take care of animals. This program encourages them to experience the first hand delights of seeing a newborn rabbit and picking the fruits of their labour from the vegetable garden. Even though this program is running for the Middle

School students, all the students at the College have the opportunity to share in the joy of feeding the animals or cuddling a young rabbit or chicken.”

Although a school farm project does take money and effort to set up, the benefits outweigh the difficulties. MVAC has demonstrated that curriculum demands may be met in an innovative and practical way. In addition, by connecting students with the environment, the school is promoting positive values and providing ‘hands on’ experience that students will remember for years to come.

“It provides hands-on experience that children will remember for years”

## Cost of establishing a farm program

Establishing a school farm will vary in cost according to the size and agricultural industries chosen. A farm similar to MVAC is suitable for a school with very limited space—28m x 13m.

Our farm has:

- raised vegetable beds due to poor soil quality (suitable for 1 class of 25 students),
- an area suitable for 25 chickens (including a nesting area),
- an aviary housing 4 rabbit hutches and quails on the floor,
- a greenhouse, and
- an exercise area for rabbits and their babies.

Ongoing expenses such as feed and fertiliser are paid for out of the farm earnings, as it is a fully functioning self-sustained student operated business.

Further farming options include aquaponics and hydroponics which are both great for promoting sustainability and water saving.

Seems like a lot of money? Well, no, not when you consider the current cost of your Stage 4 Technology Mandatory: woodwork / metalwork, computing, cooking or sewing departments. This may be a cost effective alternative for your school.

The Australian Department of Environment and Heritage in conjunction with the United Nations, declared 2005–2014 the Decade of Education on Sustainable Development. There are, therefore, many grants currently available from local councils which can help schools to establish Sustainable Development projects or school farms. In July 2007, MVAC received a \$6050 government grant towards establishing the program.

For more information on establishing a school farm program contact Jillian Carter [jcarter@mvac.nsw.edu.au](mailto:jcarter@mvac.nsw.edu.au) or visit [www.freewebs.com/mvacfarm](http://www.freewebs.com/mvacfarm) for more pictures. **TEACH**

## References

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## Our set-up costs

Secure fencing—3 barbs at the top (28 m x 13 m)	\$7000
Second hand aviary (3m x 2.5m)	\$400
Second hand chicken shed for nesting and food storage (3 m x 3 m)	\$500
Rabbit hutches (x4)	\$450
Livestock (day-old chickens—\$5 each, Mini Lop rabbits—\$50 each, day-old quails—\$3 each)	\$400
Raised vegetable beds (made from old pallets) & quality soil	\$1200
Greenhouse & installation (8.4m x 3.2m)—depending on location / climate this may not be essential	\$3000

2 Jillian Carter, teacher and the author

3-5 MVAC students participating in the farm project

[Photography: Jillian Carter]





# Worship in an early childhood setting

**Joan Hope**

Director, Edinburgh Early Learning Centre, Lilydale, Melbourne, Victoria

### Introduction

**Catch cries such as ‘high quality care’ and ‘warm, caring environment’ seem to be standard descriptors of early childhood learning environments regardless of the centre’s philosophy. No longer can one claim that these descriptors are unique to a centre staffed by Christians. Christian care providers need to look deeper into their practices to determine what makes their centre unique.**

*“The easiest way for children to develop an understanding of the Christian world view is through an adult who has a relationship with their Maker”*

Young children can develop an understanding of a Christian world view from their own limited life experiences. It is the role of the Christian care provider to ensure that the children in their care are introduced to the loving Creator and his Son. It is in these early years that the building blocks for their life are established. The easiest way for children to develop an understanding of the Christian world view is through an adult who has a relationship with their Maker.

Many practising Christians advocate starting their day with a time of prayer and reflection. For those with a genuine relationship with Jesus, this is more than a ritualistic start to the day. It is a time to acknowledge their Maker and commit their day to service for Him. Young children do not need to be taught to value worship. A more effective means of conveying the importance of worship is by an adult showing genuine enthusiasm and by proving to the children in their care that this relationship is real and valued. By starting a child’s day with stories from the Bible, singing songs of praise and speaking to Jesus, a child will come to value this special time of worship.

The key components to any worship time would include prayer, music and the written or spoken word. This may seem simple enough, but the secret of an effective program for young children lies not with the components, but how they are presented. It is important that all information presented to children is relevant to their developmental stage.

### Storytelling

Jesus’ primary tool of instruction was story telling because stories are such a powerful way of delivering a life message. When telling a story to

children, it is crucial that the story be used to convey a message. “What we teach matters, teaching Biblical truth affects right thinking about God, and right thinking about God affects a right heart toward God” (Oman, 2007).

Children need stories that they can relate to, such as stories about children or from the perspective of a child observer. In an early childhood setting a wide range of approaches need to be used to tell the same story several times over a period of a week or two. This variety caters for a range of learning styles, aids recall and also reinforces the story. The materials and techniques used may act as sensory, motor, preoperational, cognitive or intrinsic stimuli (Barber, 1981). The caregiver may for example, read the story from a book, tell it, use sketches or pictures to illustrate the events, get the children to act it out, have the children echo key sentences, use puppets or felts, or any of a multitude of other story telling techniques.

Sensory stimuli are one effective means of improving learning and recall of stories (Barber, 1981). Sensory stimuli such as the visual images in pictures and flash cards, the auditory stimulation from musical instruments, stories and jingles, and the tactile experience of handling a range of objects all enhance a simple story. The addition of foods to taste or perfumes to smell will further stimulate learning. Imagine the impact of the story of Mary washing Jesus’ feet as the sweet scent of perfume fills the air! Although the props to be used are important, the way that the props are introduced during the story telling experience can build additional curiosity and interest. One novel idea is to use an apron skirt with about twelve multi-coloured pockets that are big enough to hold props. As the story is told, props can be removed from the pockets.

The use of effective motor stimuli that are relevant to the child’s developmental level is also a valuable learning aid (Barber, 1981). A story can be enhanced through the use of dramatic play aids such as a rocking horse prop for Balaam’s donkey, pots and pans for Mary and Martha, or blocks for the Tower of Babel. However, the use of motor stimuli can be further extended to include, children physically acting out some scenes from the story



being told. Young children particularly enjoy being involved in the story and relish the opportunity to get up and march around the walls of Jericho or chase the Israelites across the Red Sea. The use of props, costumes, puppets and other such aids help maintain the learners' limited attention span.

One of the biggest mistakes made when sharing God's word with children is failing to speak at their level. David Staal (2005) in his book, *Leading Kids to Christ*, reminds adults to be wary of the use of terms and analogies, as these are lost on young children. Simple phrases such as 'having Jesus in your heart' can be taken quite literally by children. This can be illustrated by relating an incident about a child called Peter who had been learning the song "Into my heart". During the week he had been studying the human body and there was a model of a human torso in the room on which the budding doctors could conduct operations. He located the heart, removed it and opened it up then sadly commented, "Jesus isn't in here!" He could locate and identify the heart, but the abstract concept of 'having Jesus in your heart' was beyond his current level of comprehension. This illustrates how young children understand concrete terms and language more easily than abstract terms and language (Staal, 2005).

Stories can become memorable for children when the language used is accessible and the story teller is engaging. Expressive body language, scene setting and character building all help transport the child into the story (Choun & Lawson, 1993), further interest can be added through facial expressions, dramatic gestures, and changes in pitch, pace and volume. Simple vocabulary and short sentences help keep a toddler's attention, whilst explanations and background events are a distraction (Haas, 1984). "Concentrate on the key spiritual idea, not the details...less is best" (Oman, 2007). Preschoolers enjoy stories that have echoing of phrases and involve some interaction with the storyteller (Haas, 1984). Carefully worded subjective questions can be used to help the listeners identify with the character's feelings or fact based questions can be used to check on comprehension of events.

It is highly advisable to spend time in small group situations at some point after the story, particularly for children who had questions during the story. While hands are active solving a puzzle or manipulating clay, the child's brain is processing information and conversation can flow. Dramatic play areas that encourage children to act out stories during free play time are a valuable follow-up to worship time. One easy dramatic play area to set up is the nativity stable as children readily engage in acting out the roles of the characters. Other possibilities include a hospital area for stories of sickness and healing or a play dough table for

recreation of story elements. The conversations that children initiate during these play times provide opportunities for integrating faith and learning and addressing any misconceptions young children may have. The secret to successfully sharing Jesus with children is being there for the questions, not just for the riveting story telling.

## Prayer

When introducing children to prayer, it is best to start with prayers of adoration and thanksgiving. Simple sentence prayers or statements of adoration thanking God for specific blessings and creations through the day, prayers of thanksgiving before a meal and actual conversations instead of recited jingles are a subtle method of introducing children to a meaningful prayer experience (Barber, 1981). Children learn to pray by praying (Mathson, 1984) and by observing adults pray. If adults set the example of praying simple prayers of adoration and thanksgiving that are relevant to the child's experience and in the language of the child rather than the adult, children will learn to pray prayers that are relevant and appropriate for their developmental stage.

A simple prayer of thanksgiving that even the youngest children can pray can be taught through the use of props such as pictures, soft toys or artificial fruit and vegetables. Each child selects an item and says a prayer of thanksgiving relating to the object they have selected; for example, "Thank you

“One of the biggest mistakes made when sharing God's word with children is failing to speak at their level”

[Photography:  
Ann Stafford]



“To make the experience meaningful, the lessons learnt need to be applied in the children's play”

Jesus, for puppy dogs” or “Thank you God, for my family”. The child is given the prompt for ‘thank you’ then finishes with words of their own. Older children may cut out an outline of creatures from construction paper and have an adult write their prayer on the shape—“Thank you God for the birds”. The prayer shape can be suspended from the ceiling to serve as a reminder (Mathson, 1984).

Children can be introduced to conversational prayers through letter writing. Whilst the caregiver will need to write the letter, the actual wording should come from prompts and ideas put forward by the children. The content of the letter could include thanksgiving and adoration, through to sharing experiences and making general petitions, such as ‘Please help us to be kind to our friends’. A general petition stated in a positive way such as this reinforces the desired behaviour in the child.

Prayers of intercession and petition are more specific and Barker (1981) warns against teaching children to pray these prayers too soon in their spiritual development. Prayers for a sick grandparent who is not healed can lead to the assumption that God did not help or that He took the loved one out of the child's life. Prayers of petition can soon create a misconception of God as a “celestial Santa who dispenses gifts and favours on demand” (Choun & Lawson, 1993, p. 258). These incorrect assumptions can be avoided by limiting children's prayers to the more general prayers of adoration and thanksgiving.

## Songs

The Bible gives many examples of the use of music to praise God. Psalms 33:1-3 says

Good people, cheer God! Right-living people sound best when praising. Use guitars to reinforce your Hallelujahs! Play his praise on a grand piano!

[Photography:  
Ann Stafford]



Invent your own new song to him; give him a trumpet fanfare. (*The message*)

Songs are a way to talk to God and others. Music can help children communicate their feelings to God as well as share God with others (Mathson, 1984). Grano (2007) refers to two types of songs, “Direct songs speak directly to God and use the word *You*. Indirect songs speak *about* God and use the word *He*.” When a child goes home singing songs both to and about God, it can be a great witness and encouragement to families. In this way, children are able to freely share words and thoughts that adults seldom get the opportunity to share with others.

Songs with simple lyrics and joyful melodies have universal appeal to children (Mathson, 1984). Caregivers can use familiar or simple tunes along with a spiritual message or verses about a specific Bible character to help reinforce a story or theme and enrich the worship experience. For example, *Old MacDonald had a farm* can be altered to “Old Man Noah had an ark”.

Action songs are effective because children enjoy gross-motor activities. To achieve maximum effectiveness the actions need to relate to the lyrics and the lyrics need to reflect the underlying message you are trying to impart to the children. Since music is a persuasive medium and the children will likely remember the lyrics, choose songs that are scripturally sound (Choun & Lawson, 1993).

## Tying it all together

Even with the three essential components of story telling, prayer and music integrated in a worship program, it is of little benefit if worship is merely a ritual. To make the whole experience meaningful, the lessons learnt need to be applied in the children's play and in conversations with staff. They can then be used as a stimulus for further exploration and development. The challenge for early childhood educators lies not so much in presenting a Christian program but in allowing the child to see Christ in the educator. **TEACH**

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# *H&S Issues*

**During the past decade there has been an increasing focus on Occupation Health and Safety Issues—and with good cause. The responsibility of an organisation to provide a safe environment for its workers and community is recognised and acknowledged as important.**

Organisations are required to establish a procedure of careful monitoring and documentation to track the process. Relevant safety checklists are developed; and supervisors appointed—sometimes as a full-time paid position. All staff members are required to maintain their area to safe standards. Employees are delegated to check certain areas on a regular basis and report any potential hazards. They are also required to add their signature and the date to validate the document. Checks are made regularly and frequently—and documented. OH&S becomes part of the inspections of the organisation during the accreditation process.

This focus is also necessary for the safety of our school communities. Every teacher recognises the responsibility of having other people's precious

children in their 'duty of care'. This responsibility is acknowledged and supported by the school with appropriate resources and time (admittedly, not always as well resourced as we would like). The response—the OH&S process—is intentional. We dare not leave it to chance. Neither do we take it lightly. Issues are addressed promptly and efficiently.

Consider this statement, "The Eternal Health and Safety of our children is our highest priority". Evaluate the intentionality and the time, effort and resources that are expended in addressing Occupation Health & Safety issues at your school. Now compare it with how well your school addresses Eternal Health & Safety issues? Which emerges as a priority?

How much greater is the Eternal Health and Safety of our children? While OH&S is essential, EH&S is our core business. How intentional are we in ensuring that these issues are addressed...and addressed frequently? How long is it since your staff did an EH&S check of your school environment? Do we give EH&S issues as much attention and careful monitoring as we do OH&S issues? **TEACH**

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

## Developing excellence in 4 minutes

**Rosalie McFarlane**

Principal, South Auckland Adventist Primary School, NZ

**Every day as you enter the classroom, close the door and turn to face your children, you are about to create something that will last longer than your career, perhaps even longer than your lifetime; a legacy built from the bricks of memory.**

“*Our students are forming an opinion of us that they will carry around for the rest of their lives*”

### The legacy you leave

We tend to remember our teachers because what they do touches the soul of who we are and what we become. This is why Jesus speaks so strongly against those whose influence leads children to sin<sup>1</sup>. Ironically, the teachers we remember most clearly are often the best and the worst. These recollections are usually vivid. It is no different for our students. Each day they are forming an opinion of us that they will carry around for the rest of their lives.

How would you like your teaching to be remembered? Would it be as a ‘good’ teacher or as a ‘great’ teacher? Or, might it be as an ‘exceptional’ teacher? If you were to overhear discussions about your teaching, or if you were to visit a website on which your teaching was being discussed, what would you want to be said, or written?

An exceptional teacher is not the product of chance or an accident of birth; an exceptional teacher is developed.

### Developing teachers with blunt tools

I believe that most schools endeavour to support and develop teachers so they might become exceptional teachers. Unfortunately, many of the tools we have used are neither powerful or effective. As a result, principals and senior staff find themselves frustrated when professional development does not lead to a highly polished teaching force.

Inservice training carried out in isolation might, at best, allow teachers to carry one or two ideas forward into teaching practice. While there may be small adjustments in practice, ideas formed in isolation are unlikely to generate significant change in teaching practice. As a result, teachers may not be empowered to move forward and become exceptional teachers.

“The typical approach to formalised professional development is based on the assumption that there is one set of procedures that works for all teachers.”<sup>2</sup> In this model, teachers are seen as a single entity rather than a group of individuals. Because teachers

are at different stages in their careers, information and skills that might be appropriate for a novice may be inappropriate for a teacher with more expertise.

Appraisal is promoted as a professional development opportunity that encourages reflection on practice. Unfortunately, all too frequently, appraisal focuses on compliance while masquerading as development. It is a ‘one-size-fits-all’ exercise. In addition, the manner in which appraisal is conducted creates an artificial environment where abnormal rather than normal practice is evaluated. Teachers may tweak the paperwork or do a late-night planning session to make sure they have a model lesson to ‘show off’. Therefore, what is observed is not necessarily the norm. In situations such as this, feedback is given, but its effectiveness must be questioned.

Training, rewards, meetings, performance appraisal, mentoring, and observation all have a place in improving practice (Bodaken & Fritz, 2006), but they are limited.

Is it any wonder that the blunt tools we are using do not produce the changes in practice we hope for?

How can schools and teachers come together to develop exceptional teachers who provide exceptional education?

Research reveals the bottom line—teachers require direct, differentiated, sustained assistance. They need a process of evaluation and feedback which expands over time, which fits into the appropriate stage of their career, and they depend on appropriate interaction between themselves, their leaders and other professionals.<sup>3</sup>

### Where the real power lies

Professor John Hattie (2003) eloquently and poignantly identifies the reality.

Interventions at the structural, home, policy, or school level is like searching for your wallet which you lost in the bushes, under the lamppost because that is where there is light. The answer lies elsewhere—it lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act—the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling.

I therefore suggest that we should focus on the greatest source of variance...[in student



achievement]...that can make the difference—the teacher. We need to ensure that this greatest influence is optimised to have powerful and sensationally positive effects on the learner. Teachers can and usually do have positive effects, but they must have exceptional effects.

In the same paper, Hattie identifies the factors that have an impact on learning. This research makes it clear that the teacher is the single most important influence in improving learning. Two areas of teacher expertise—providing specific feedback and the quality of instruction—were identified as being highly influential (see Table 1).

*You, the teacher, make the difference.*

Although government authorities and school leaders might spend countless hours trying to address the variables that impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their systems, the combined efforts of all of these bodies exert less influence on learning than you, the teacher, can.

While external measures are applied with the aim of improving learning, change will only happen when we make the change. Being exceptional is in our own hands, for as teachers, we make the decisions behind that classroom door.

### A new way forward: *The 4 minute walk-through*

*The 4 minute walk-through* is a unique adult learning process. It aims to:

- reduce the paperwork around teacher development;
- provide teachers with vicarious opportunities to reflect on personal practice;
- provide an effective framework that draws leaders into classrooms yet can be completed in limited time; and
- use performance appraisal as a meaningful tool upon which to build, through observation and collaborative reflection, a powerful, dynamic professional learning community—one teacher at a time.

*The 4 minute walk-through* is based on an industrial model where leaders of industry got down to the floor of their businesses and learned about the reality of the workplace from those actually doing the job. It is a tool that can provide rich data on what is happening behind classroom doors and provide insight into the reality of what is happening in classrooms. More importantly, it provides opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice and its effectiveness.

Currently, school administrators face a real dilemma. It is difficult to ascertain what is actually happening once the classroom door has been closed. There exists no single ‘truth’ or perspective of what is going on as a teacher engages in teaching. Meaningful discussions of practice

are made more difficult by this lack of precision; consequently feedback is limited in its impact. In essence, *The 4 minute walk-through* uses a *new lens through which to observe teaching* and a *new voice through which to talk about teaching*.

In many ways, teaching can be likened to a photo mosaic. Traditional models of assessment or appraisal capture several snapshots of the teacher’s task. The engagement thus reflects only small portions of what occurred. As a result, discussion is likely to focus on specific, and at times, unrelated and isolated events which occurred during the period of observation or interaction. Using the mosaic metaphor, the appraiser might focus the discussion on an aeroplane, a doorway, or a red car—the micro-photos that make up the big picture. Misunderstandings may occur when the teacher, whose perspective and lens is very different, cannot understand the comments made by the appraiser.

The lack of data which is offered by a narrow series of snapshots means that there is opportunity for considerable mismatch between the perceptions of the teacher and the appraiser. *The 4 minute walk-through* process is designed to provide greater data, and more frequent snapshots of reality, thus providing for more holistic discussion and reflection on teaching and teaching practice. As a result, a more complete picture of reality is created.

A *Walk-through* is:

- a snapshot of teaching and learning in a classroom,
- an opportunity to gather rich data,
- a picture of what is,
- an opportunity to reflect on teaching and learning practice.

“*Being exceptional is in our own hands*”

**Table 1: Factors influencing student achievement (Hattie)**

Influence on Student Achievement	Size	Source
Feedback	1.13	Teacher
Student’s prior cognitive ability	1.04	Student
Instructional quality	1.00	Teacher
Direct instruction	0.82	Teacher
Remediation / feedback	0.65	Teacher
Student’s disposition to learn	0.61	Student
Class environment	0.56	Teacher
Challenge of goals	0.52	Teacher
Peer tutoring	0.50	Teacher
Mastery learning	0.50	Teacher
Parent involvement	0.46	Home
Homework	0.43	Teacher
Teacher style	0.42	Teacher
Questioning	0.41	Teacher
Peer effects	0.38	Peers

It should be noted that none of these implies a judgment on practice. It is about seeing what is. Over time what is seen develops a picture of learning in the classroom. Leaders and teachers alike can get a sense of what is really happening. From observing others, teachers will, more often than not, find themselves reflecting on their own practice and effectiveness in their own classrooms.

A *Walk-through* is not:

- an assessment or judgment of a lesson,
- an assessment or judgment of a teacher's practice,
- a written appraisal,
- data from which to give immediate 'feedback'.

### The *Walk-through* protocol

Take nothing with you. Paper suggests evaluation. Don't make appointments. You want to 'see it as it is', not as it is set up for you. Enter quietly and make no eye contact with students or the teacher. Be as close to a fly on the wall as possible. There may be a need to ask about learning in step 2 but do this in a way that will keep the fly-on-the-wall illusion.

### The Five Steps

These five steps may seem daunting at first glance, however, through strategic, well-trained observation, they should take a maximum of four minutes (sometimes less) to cover in a classroom.

As you spend your time in the classroom, use your observations to focus on the following areas:

#### Step 1: Student Orientation

*Where are the students focused before they see you?*

This question identifies how the students are being taught and managed in the learning process. Were they focused on the teacher, on individual work or on group work, or were the students not particularly focused? None of these foci are good or bad within themselves. They are simply an indication of what is happening in a room. Over time, for example, it might become apparent that a teacher prefers only one style of teaching. This would then be cause for further investigation and discussion to explore why it is the preferred practice.

#### Step 2: Curriculum Decisions

Three questions help focus on curriculum.

*What skill / knowledge / content / strategy are students learning?*

It is imperative that an observer is able to identify what is being taught. If someone coming into the room cannot detect what is being learnt, then chances are there will be students having the same difficulty. This observation is also a powerful way of

identifying if a teacher has planned a lesson. If what is being taught is consistent with the long-term plan, chances are that the teacher is prepared.

*How do I know students are learning?*

Answers to this question may appear obvious; however, attending and focus do not necessarily indicate learning. Are the students 'busy' or are they actually learning. Learning is demonstrated by an ability to describe, define or explain what is being learnt or by giving thoughtful responses—not merely attentiveness. It may be necessary to ask students what they are learning.

*What level of thinking is the teacher taking the students to through teacher talk, questions, board work, student activities, or worksheets?*

This question focuses on the level of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy. Is the work mostly knowledge and comprehension or are the students using higher levels of thinking.

#### Step 3: Teaching Decisions

Three questions help focus reflection on the teaching decisions being made.

*What do great teachers do that this teacher is not?*

While the question may sound judgmental, it is not. It is a question that supports reflection on the observer's knowledge of teaching and what may have made the lesson more effective.

*How is the teacher incorporating school-wide initiatives / thinking in teaching?*

This question confirms the rigour of school-wide annual goals and targets and the extent to which they are taken on board by teachers. It also helps to keep the school-wide culture consciously in the minds of teachers as they are observing.

*How does the teacher cater for non-routine students or learning?*

This provides an opportunity for considering the students and situations that are outside what would normally be part of the school programme.

#### Step 4: Use of the Environment

*How is the teacher using the room to deliver the curriculum and to enhance student achievement?*

Consideration here is given to what displays are on the walls, who has done the work and the purpose and value of it being there. It explores decisions that have been made to enhance learning through the environment as a key teaching and learning resource. A well-intentioned, positive classroom environment can do a significant amount of the teaching.

“A well-intentioned, positive classroom environment can do a significant amount of the teaching”

# Teaching & Professional Practice

## Step 5: Health and Safety

*What obstacles / barriers exist which could cause harm or injury to the student / teacher?*

This question asks the observer to notice any factors that may impact on safety in the classroom.

## Further Dialogue

When the observation is finished, take a few moments of reflective time to write up what was seen. This data will form the basis of later discussions. The entire process is designed to encourage reflection.

Teachers need the opportunity to enter into quality professional dialogue and receive appropriate feedback. The difference between good and exceptional is the ability and opportunity for a teacher to reflect on practice. From this they can develop their practice to empower learning at the highest and most appropriate level. *The 4 minute walk-through* is about taking snapshots of reality, and then engaging in reflective conversations. The nature of these conversations will vary greatly, depending on the experience and expertise of the teacher. Over a period of time, a trend or pattern may appear or questions arise about the decisions

teachers are making and the criteria they are using when making decisions about curriculum delivery or instructional approaches. In any quality professional dialogue both parties are learners.

*The 4 minute walk-through* is one effective approach—perhaps more powerful than many of the blunt tools we currently draw on—that we can use to empower teachers to become exceptional.

Are you satisfied or do you want to grow? **TEACH**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 15:5-6

<sup>2</sup> Marczely (2001)

<sup>3</sup> Interlead Consultants (2008)

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“**Teachers need the opportunity to enter into quality professional dialogue and receive appropriate feedback**”

## “I am going to video you!”

### Behavioural management in early childhood settings

**Elva Fitzgibbon**

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#### Introduction

**Behaviour management or discipline can sometimes be the cause of graduate teachers leaving education. A former student teaching in a tough NSW school told me that she had accidentally hit on a new discipline tool—the mobile phone.**

She was an early childhood teacher with a kindergarten class and found playground duty hard-going. One day when a six-year-old boy was deliberately non-compliant and verbally aggressive to her, she pulled out her mobile phone and pretended to video him saying, “Let’s get this accurately so we can look at it and properly talk it over later.” This had a lightning strike effect on the boy and his mates. A week later she saw them pointing at her in the playground with the sort of body language that said, “You had better watch out for her.” She telephoned me to discuss the ethics of this sort of approach and chatted generally about behaviour management. I reminded her of some of the most commonly used strategies. During the conversation, she realised that in the heat of the moment she tended to fall back on just a couple of favourite strategies, even though they may not be the most effective option.

We need to be reminded of the fact that we are only human and so, thank goodness, are the children. A good sense of humour, fun, genuine love and positive messages can work wonders.

Teachers, especially in early childhood settings, can make use of all the strategies that follow. The strategies have a variety of terms but the techniques are similar. They are given here in a general order from mild intrusion through to major intervention. Teachers should mix and match strategies according to their personal knowledge of a child, and the relationship dynamics of the child, peers and class.

#### Rules and cue systems

Pre-school and school are often the first time children encounter formal rules. Never assume that they really understand all the rules. Teach the rules and expectations, don’t just expect them. Rules should be made visible with each class or

group acting out the rules or breaking of them.

Digital cameras have made it easy to make a rule cue card with pictures of the current children doing the right thing. If a child has problems with rules or has difficulty interpreting the meaning of a rule, break it down into little steps and take photographs for each. You can then scaffold learning by displaying the steps on a felt or magnetic board or turning the pictures into a social story for the child to read at home or school. Children on the Autism spectrum benefit from their own illustrated and laminated booklet of rules.

Use a copy of the cue card to talk to a child who has broken the rule. The card helps to minimise conflict by providing a focus point that is between the adult and child. Adding a space where the child can draw what went wrong and how they will handle it next time encourages the child to think and talk about what happened.

Along with rules, teach the negation sign of a circle and bar. This will minimise misunderstandings like the following: A pre-schooler pointed to a *no bicycle* sign and said, “Mum, we’re not allowed to draw lines on our bikes.”

#### Overlooking

The child should be aware that you are aware; however, planned ignoring is suitable for minor difficulties where children may ideally sort it out between themselves. The teacher’s presence gives security and moving closer while looking pleasantly firm will have an effect. Making a comment that you “didn’t quite hear that” may give a child time for second thoughts and allow the child to regroup to a better attitude or action.

#### Positive affirmation

Try to give a child who has behaviour difficulties praise when they are doing something right. As Christian educators, positive affirmation should come naturally. I love the phrase, “Catch them being good.” Build up the child’s self esteem with love and attention as this will reduce the poor behaviours that often arise from a lack of self worth.

A handy tip is to praise a child sitting next to a child doing the wrong thing. The desired behaviour

*In the heat of the moment she tended to fall back on just a couple of favourite strategies*



will often be taken up in an effort to elicit similar praise.

When giving a request or command, always use a child's name with a warm tone, pause for effect, smile and then deliver the request. The little pause and kind voice strengthens the direction.

## Puppet power

A class puppet or favourite toy can be used as a means of giving directions to the class or an oppositional child. Children prone to argue or say "no" will often co-operate when a puppet gives an instruction or explanation. The puppet can act as a third 'person' between you and the child and provide a channel through which humour or drama can be used to diffuse the situation.

A child having a tantrum once kicked over a chair, so the class puppet began to 'howl' saying, "He's kicked over my chair", "It's not your chair" responded the teacher and implored the puppet to stop making such an awful fuss. This totally distracted the class and resulted in the class and tantrum child going into fits of laughter. Every teacher must develop their inner actor.

Puppets can also be used to role play situations such as bullying, and model ways to deal with this.

## Repeat—rephrase (even sing)

Why do we raise our voice a notch and harden it when we tell a child something the second time? It is a bad habit. A more successful technique is to repeat the direction, consciously making the tone warmer and adding a "please". You can then indicate that you assume the instructions will be followed by saying, "Good, you can do that—thanks Zac", and move confidently away.

If it's needed, rephrase the direction. We often over-estimate children's receptive language abilities.

Singing instructions works well with children who have a language disorder, who are on the Autism spectrum or who are oppositional. Music is hard to resist and a happy, impromptu song like, "Let us put the toys away, Jamie is putting the toys away, Kelly's putting the toys away—everything is tidy now", will be received as non-threatening, especially if it ends with a 'thank you' chorus.

## Dynamic distraction

If you can act, sing and rhyme, you should be able to distract like an expert, just add enthusiasm. Distraction works really well with very young children. I observed a teacher in a pre-school with a group of children who had coughs and runny noses and were generally out of sorts. He was making paper planes and having plane races when a child started a tantrum. Another teacher distracted the angry, stamping child by saying to the surrounding

group, "Let's all stamp. Let's help Ella stamp out her anger." This led to music being put on for stamping, then marching, with Ella leading the parade. Once the behaviour problem is redirected, you can talk to the child at a time when they are more receptive.

## Offer assistance

When you are met with a confrontational manner or negativity from a child, it is often due to feelings of frustration or distress. If you can bypass the anger being expressed and show genuine empathy, you may defuse the situation. Help, offered in a genuinely caring voice, is often hard for an outraged child to resist. Help may be offered in the form of picking up the mess of a project gone wrong, gently back patting while saying nothing or offering assistance with a task.

Knowing a child well and how they normally react is the key to managing the situation and helping the child feel better.

We should acknowledge feelings more often and remember to always address the feelings, not the fight. Once the feelings and opinions have been listened to and the child's perception of the problem has been acknowledged, an offer of assistance is usually acceptable to the child.

## Bail out

This option is based on prediction and reading a child's body language along with the surrounding situation. As soon as it is becoming clear that a child is 'working up to something', becoming oppositional, or about to hit out at others, quickly step in and give him or her time out.

This is a cool off opportunity before anything happens. However, it is important to acknowledge the child's feelings before giving him or her time to walk with an adult, get a drink or some other activity.

Having a cool off bean bag in a secluded spot teaches children that we all need space to get over bad feelings at times and that you are prepared to help them avoid acted out behaviour. One teacher I observed used a mini trampoline and would work out with a child how many jumps he or she would need in order to get rid of angry feelings. You could also give a child crayons to draw their feelings or the situation bothering them. Discussion can follow up on this later.

## Postpone the fight or task

When a child is non-compliant to your face, you can reduce tension by partly agreeing with them. For example, to the child who insists that James took something of his the day before, say "You may have good reason to be angry with James, but I want you to have that truck back on his desk when we go in from recess."

*Help, offered in a genuinely caring voice is often hard for an outraged child to resist*

# Teaching & Professional Practice

If a child is refusing to do work, you can suggest that he has a break until he is ready to do it but it must be completed for instance by lunchtime. If there is a break in the offering, the task will often be done without a fuss, albeit at the last minute.

If a child is spoiling for a fight with you, ignore it, or after the initiation of conflict, cut it short by saying that you will sort this problem out later. This takes the power away from the child which often takes the wind out of their sails. However, be sure you do follow up with them. You set a dangerous precedent and will lose all credibility if you don't.

In order to keep track of incidents and warnings, some teachers keep a notebook on duty. One teacher I know has a mini recorder on which she records names, incidents and times whilst on duty. She says that although she smiles a lot, the children know that she takes duty supervision seriously.

## Anger outlets

Isolating children seldom works. If they want to be on their own it may even be an incentive for acting up. It is much better to set up anger outlets that you are comfortable with as this will assist in teaching a child

to control their angry outbursts.

A pillow that has an angry face and a sad face on the two sides along with another that has a quiet face and a happy face is one such outlet. Teach the child to pummel the angry face, cry on the sad one and when ready, move to the happy pillow. Learning to listen to their own feelings and measure them is a valuable skill. Alternatively, take the child for a walk or run to show how exercise has a calming effect. A further suggestion is the use of a small secluded space like a little tent that an angry child can hide in and block off with a zip door. Put in some cushions and large size bubble wrap for the child to use to relieve feelings and to distract from the source of the problem.

Through all of these suggestions, there should always be an adult to act as a listener and sounding board.

Finally, remember to concentrate on the primary problem and not be distracted by subsequent events such as swearing, which can be addressed later on. Last of all, "There are no bad children, only bad behaviours." **TEACH**

“*There are no bad children, only bad behaviours*”

# Podcasting in the classroom: A case study

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**The world is changing. Many students now fill their world with mobile phones, text messaging, MP3 players and computers that they use for social networking. They have really become the iPod generation. Due to the ubiquitous nature of iPods, and other mp3 players, digital music is everywhere and podcasting has become a mainstream activity of the web 2.0 age.**

## Introduction

The term 'podcast' is a combination of the words broadcasting and iPod (Newberry, 2006). For the uninitiated, a podcast is an audio or video file that is usually made available on the internet for users to download. Many different programs can be downloaded as podcasts. Any television or radio program can be transmitted as a podcast, as can any class, lecture, performance, or event. The extensive nature of podcasting today may be exposed by a search on Google of the word podcast. This search recently returned 152,000,000 hits. Apple claims that there are thousands of free podcasts available on iTunes.

As an educational tool the use of podcasts in the classroom is similar to other computer-based technologies. Podcasts can be used as a resource created by others, a resource created by the teacher, or as a project created by students (Preston, 2008).

But can podcasts be used to implement quality learning experiences in the classroom?

Current research shows the single most important determinant of student achievement at school is quality teaching (Whelan, 2005). In considering quality teaching and learning it is important to stress that educational effectiveness for all students is dependent on the provision of quality teaching by competent teachers who utilize effective teaching strategies (Rowe, 2006).

The effectiveness of using technologies like podcasting in the classroom does not rely so much on the technology itself but on the ways it can be used to deliver a quality learning experience. The NSW Quality Teaching Model details "generic

qualities of pedagogy that have been successfully applied in a range of school contexts and are shown to lead to improved student learning" (NSW DET, 2003, 4-5). These qualities are categorised into the three dimensions of intellectual quality, quality learning environment, and significance for the student.

One way that these dimensions can be operationalised is through the use of constructivist learning activities. Constructivism is the dominant paradigm in education today (Rowe, 2007). Most constructivists would agree that all knowledge is actively constructed and organised in networks that are increasingly more complex and abstract, and that constructed knowledge is under an almost continuous state of reorganisation and restructuring. The main pedagogic implication of a personal constructivist perspective is that learning can be facilitated by teachers who challenge student conceptions and involve them actively in the teaching-learning process by providing stimulating and motivating experiences. This type of pedagogy emphasises that learners need to be actively involved, to reflect on their learning and make inferences, and to experience cognitive conflict.

The question that now arises is how to best implement a constructivist approach to teaching and learning in the classroom? Marc Prensky (2001) suggests that today's students are digital natives due to their exposure and immersion in the digital media of the day. For these students, significance, a key aspect of the NSW Quality Teaching Model, is often related to the digital age and the use of digital media. The use of computer technologies in the classroom, therefore, may provide the answer as they have been shown to be an effective way to implement constructivist pedagogies and enhance student learning (Drennan, Kennedy, & Pisarki, 2005; Preston, 2008). The creation of a podcast is a valuable task because it is a real world skill; it provides an authentic task for students; it is an ideal means to immerse students in the process of inquiry; and it gives students the opportunity to research,

*“Learners need to be actively involved, to reflect on their learning and make inferences”*

“*Students collaborated to research a topic and develop it into an actual podcast*”

develop their understanding, create and present their findings. Students are encouraged to “actively manipulate information in a variety of contexts from a number of different resources in order to solve meaningful and relevant problems” (Hopson, Simms & Knezek, 2002, 116-117).

In particular, the power of the world wide web and the emergence of web 2.0 technologies such as podcasting means that anyone can now be part of the knowledge-access, knowledge-building, and information-exchanging culture (Loving et al., 2007). But many teachers lack the skills necessary to introduce podcasting activities in the classroom. One solution is to partner teachers with pre-service teachers with the requisite skills to implement podcasting activities in the classroom. The Partnerships in ICT Learning project (PICTL) explored the way that partnerships between universities and schools could provide a way to enable pre-service teachers and teachers to use ICTs with students. The PICTL program provided some successes and explored ways that pre-service teachers could lead out in technology learning activities in schools.

### The current study

The current case study followed the path of the PICTL project. A classroom teacher, pre-service teacher, and university formed a partnership to implement a constructivist podcasting project in the classroom.

Podcasting was utilised as a learning tool in a classroom of 30 year nine students. Although there was variation in levels of use, 100% of participants in the case study indicated that they use the internet at home. Prior to having completed the podcast

at school, 73% of students specified that they had engaged in web 2.0 uses of the internet through the uploading of content they had created.

The students were divided into groups that contained between four and eight students. Each group worked in collaboration with the teacher to choose an appropriate topic within their present history unit. The students then began to develop their podcast by researching the topic and creating the actual podcast. This was completed in class over a three week period.

Throughout the podcast project, student data was collected using three different data collection measures. Students were given a knowledge pre-test prior to the start of the podcast activity, a knowledge post-test after the completion of the podcast activity, and an attitudinal survey.

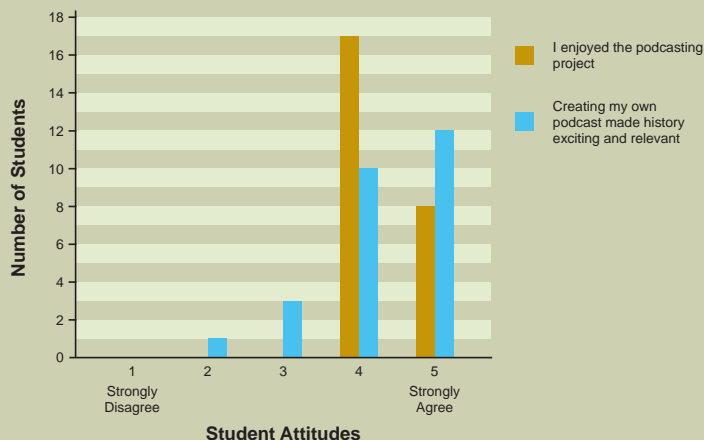
Overall the student groups performed well during the podcast activity. The attitudinal data collected during the study showed that students generally enjoyed the podcasting experience. 86% of students indicated that creating their own podcast made history seem exciting and relevant (see Figure1).

There was a significant increase ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the students' content knowledge after the groups had produced their podcast. Although this finding is encouraging, it must be viewed in the context of the small sample size.

Whilst producing their podcasts students were enthusiastic about learning, were actively involved in the construction and analysis of their own data and were demonstrating a range of creative skills. The results of this study support the current literature that recognises that constructivist podcasting projects can enhance student learning in the classroom (Preston, 2008).

[Photography:  
Peter Beamish]

Figure 1: Student attitudes to podcasting





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## Conclusions

Overall, the results of using podcasting in the classroom were positive. Generally, students in the podcasting class benefitted from a quality learning experience through the use of web 2.0 technologies. In addition, the pre-service teacher formed a good partnership with the teachers at the school. This was illustrated when he was asked to run a professional development session for all the staff at the school.

The podcasting project helped students to acquire knowledge in the area in which they were working.

Students also had an overall positive attitude to the use of technology in the classroom and many saw it as increasing the relevance of their learning experience. This case study supports the suggestion that web 2.0 use in the classroom enhances student learning, and that it can be used by teachers as they implement the NSW quality teacher model in their classrooms. **TEACH**

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“  
Many  
students saw  
the use of  
technology  
in the  
classroom  
as increasing  
the relev-  
ance of their  
learning  
experience  
”

## Breathing, bag boys and bottom-line essentials

**Lanelle Cobbin**

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### Introduction

**Special character is becoming a familiar phrase as we attempt to define the unique essence of Adventist Education. So how would *you* define it? Some say that it's "the lifestyle and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as expressed in your school"<sup>1</sup>. I like to think it's something bigger. For my 'lifestyle and practices' are born of something grander: they emerge from a keen awareness of the astounding reality and character of my God and my relationship with Him. Of the innumerable qualities He possesses, the hallmark and most astounding one is His love. How sad that this most prominent characteristic has become so trivialised through overexposure that its meaning has been leached of much of its vibrancy. In reality, "amazement and rapture should be our reaction to the God revealed as love"<sup>2</sup>.**

“How long since we've really been suffused with amazement at the magnitude of God's love?”

How long since we've really been suffused with *amazement* at the magnitude of God's love? Roberta Bondi had an intimation of it when she said:

Before anything else, above all else, beyond everything else, God loves us. God loves us extravagantly, ridiculously, without limit or condition. God is in love with us. God is besotted with us. God yearns for us. God does not love us 'in spite of who we are' or 'for whom He knows we can become'—God loves us...the very people we are; and not only that, but even against what we ourselves sometimes find plausible, God likes us.<sup>3</sup>

It's a dazzling reality. Do we know it in our bloodstream? Do we share it in our speech, our tone, and our gestures?

### Adventist Education goals

Our rich, inspired heritage boldly declares our goal in Adventist education. "Godliness, Godlikeness is the goal to be reached."<sup>4</sup> Given that "the work of education and the work of redemption are one"<sup>5</sup>, love is clearly the preeminent common denominator. God revealed it. He gave it. We've received it. It's our

honour to pass the gift on. I need to be an agent who breathes this 'essence of God' into my relationships in my role as a teacher; to prayerfully consider all the creative ways I can breathe out all-that-He-is in my classroom. It's an interesting thing about breathing. When God formed Adam, we know it was His breath that gave him life, but Hebrew scholars tell us that, in a sense, because each letter in the Hebrew name for Lord, *YHWH* (Yodh, He, Vav, He) is expressed through the expulsion of breath, the very name of God is curiously fused to the sound of breathing. Radical thought. How interesting too, that the name for breath in scripture is the same word as 'spirit': 'ruah' (Hebrew); 'nooma' (Greek).<sup>6</sup> When you let God in—you let His Spirit-breath invade you in a very special way. When I breathe Him in personally and breathe Him out into my classes, I am unleashing His Spirit—epitomised by selfless, unconditional love. I will only be able to breathe Him out if I breathe Him in first. His 'special character' can then become my special character.

Joel Barker, a great exponent of the visioning process tells us, "Vision without action is merely a dream, action without vision just passes the time, vision with action can change the world".<sup>7</sup> To what extent do our actions really match our vision in the arena of loving relationships and a loving school culture? If love is our God's supreme quality, and we are told to emulate Him, then *love* is the bottom-line essential we need to pursue. All my other beliefs and practices flow from this. If we were to invite members from our school community to define our school with three adjectives, how prominently would love feature?

### The benefits of loving relationships

Who would not want to pursue rich, loving relationships, for they clearly have a treasury of benefits: If you want to grow faith, resilience, emotional intelligence, academic results, even brain neurons—invest in rich relationships. If you want to reduce risk-taking behaviour, invest in relationships. Invest. Notice. Care. Take time.

But surely our highest calling to *love* emerges

purely and simply from an ardent response to God's opulent love. *To love* is to respond to the preciousness of others because they are precious to Him. It is integral to the "everything I have commanded you" embodied in the Great Commission<sup>8</sup>. We are children of God whose primary job is to show the world love. It is the greatest gift we can give. What really matters in life is how we choose to love, how we choose to express that love in our families, our schools, and our world. Long after we are gone—this is what will matter. How interesting that recent Barna research into the secular mindset has identified Christians as being, essentially 'unchristian'.<sup>9</sup> It would appear that a significant number echo the words of one blunt Mississippian in this declaration, "Christianity has become bloated with blind followers who would rather repeat slogans than actually feel true compassion and care"<sup>10</sup>. Sad reality.

What a shame if we were to focus on our 'beliefs' and neglect our 'belonging'—to communicate text, but not context; the context of our humanity. Let us be scathingly honest—it has happened far too often. Lives get bruised from hurtful, careless relationships, when we choose not to honour the human in the equation, or when we, through distraction or neglect, turned a blind eye to meanness or exclusive behaviour in our students.

### What if?

What if we were to ask *what if* questions? What if love were to become so seared into our consciousness that it became contagious? What if a love-steeped atmosphere were to deeply pervade our school culture? What differences would we see? What if we were to intentionally focus on being available to be used by God to infuse 'God-memories' into the daily experiences of our students? How would the face of life at our school change? Is this something we are intentionally and prayerfully moving towards? Are we closer this year than last? Bottom line note-to-self: How deeply saturated is our school with the essence of

Godly love—the very Spirit-breath of God Himself, emerging from a "mighty longing after God"?<sup>11</sup>

All of us would attest to the importance of loving relationships. We see an array of synonymous words in our advertising material—for we do applaud their importance. We all would concur that, yes, people matter most, but when push shoves us into a corner, how easy it is to support the system more than the person, and sadly ignore the cries of the human heart.

The sad reality of the person being swallowed up by the system is not unique to Christian education. Education has for some time now experienced the diminishing of the human spirit.

The 20th century, for all its scientific and technological amazements...was a century in which we watered down our own humanity, turning wisdom into information, destiny into DNA—making it increasingly difficult to find nourishment for the hungers of the heart...We took teaching and learning—that ancient exchange between student and teacher and world in which human beings have always explored the depths of the soul—and started thinning it down into little more than the amassing of data and the mastering of technique.<sup>12</sup>

Fortunately there has been a recent trend to attempt to "reclaim the integrity of teaching and learning so that it can once again become a process in which the whole person is nourished"<sup>13</sup>. The resultant compelling chorus of educators who have walked-the-talk in inspiring ways, profoundly demonstrates what love-in-action in the educational arena can look like 'with skin on'.

### Living the vision

1986 saw the release of one of those astounding school transformation tales in *The George McKenna story*. This true account tells of a strong-willed administrator who remarkably transformed one of the most notorious gang-infested South LA high schools into an academic success. His radical reforms saw daily attendance move from 30 to 90 percent. It was transformed from a failing institution

“What if love were to become so seared into our consciousness that it became contagious?”



[Photography:  
Lanelle Cobbin]

to one where nearly 80% of its graduates went on to college. Formerly bored students began reading Shakespeare! When the real Mr McKenna was asked what the bottom-line essential difference was, he declared it to be that he had initiated a culture of 'institutionalised love'. No, not a bureaucratic formalisation of love in a clinical, regimented sense, but rather a total permeation of love into the culture of the school—so that it became not only *what they did* but *who they were*. Love came to thoroughly define them at every level of school life and in every action. Yes, it was tough love at times, a love that invited belief in students and set boundaries for them. But it was real and it was transformational. More recent powerful films like *The freedom writers* only reinforce the exceptional power of caring relationships.

This is a kind of incarnational love—where love invades people. It is loving-from-your-bloodstream—allowing the experience of every person in your school to be sustained with its life-giving benefits. It is breathing in God through personal connection and then breathing Him out to those around. Perhaps this is the reason Gillespie reiterates again and again with the latest *Value-genesis report*, that it's not *what* you do, it's *how* you do it that makes all the difference in Adventist Education.<sup>14</sup>

Colin Prentice, eminent former School Principal and CEO of World Vision in New Zealand is another embodiment of this incarnational love. His experience as principal of both an affluent middle class school and a low-decile, challenging school attests to the power of loving relationships and high expectations in school cultural change. His journey is littered with stories of students whose lives were profoundly impacted by his kindness and identification. He was available. He noticed. He learned names. He jogged along with the detention kids on the famous 'Prentice run'. He affirmed through countless handwritten cards. He cared enough to expect their best. He loved them into greatness, and it all poured from His relationship with God. Needless to say, environments were transformed.<sup>15</sup>

The veracity of such a notion is also being embraced in the wider community. In the commercial world, Kevin Roberts, CEO of Worldwide, Saatchi and Saatchi and the Ideas Company claims,

A business revolution is changing all the rules in the marketplace. How consumers feel about you—their emotional connection with you—is what determines success. This emotional phenomenon is changing everything.<sup>16</sup>

Roberts believes that by building respect and inspiring love, business can move the world. This emotional connection through the expression of

value and care is also the reason eminent hotel chains such as the Ritz Carlton commit to escorting you to your destination rather than simply offering directions. This is an expression of worth and value—in *you*.

### Johnny the bag boy—loving with skin on

Barbara Glanz adds her voice to the chorus in her sharing of a very special invasion of memorable, loving acts in her book *The simple truths of service*. She tells of Johnny the bagger—a 19 year old Down syndrome, supermarket 'bag boy', one of 3,000 service providers who attended her customer service training session. In her presentation, she encouraged them to leave their personal 'signature' on their job through a loving act to those they served. Such an act would leave a warm memory and encourage customers to want to return. Her words excited Johnny, but he wondered how he could possibly do that—after all he was just a 'bag boy'. After much thought, he had an idea—he would find a 'thought-for-the-day' and sign his name on each one. His Dad helped him enter it on the computer and then print out copies on small cards. He handed one to every customer with an enthusiastic, "Thanks for shopping with us". A month later, the store manager shared with Barbara how Johnny's line was three times longer than any other checkout. The addition of more cashiers made no difference—they all wanted Johnny's 'thought-for-the-day'. People who used to shop only once a week declared they would now come in every time they went by—just to get Johnny's special thought. A few months later, the store manager again shared how Johnny had transformed the entire store. Every department had thought of ways of making loving memories. The floral department would pin unused or broken flowers on an elderly woman or little girl. Everyone had so much fun creating the memories.<sup>17</sup> Needless to say, their customer-base increased significantly, but how much joy along the journey!

### The challenge

In Ellen White's opinion, "the strongest argument in favour of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian".<sup>18</sup> Love. It's an irresistible reality. It's transformational. It's the magnetic pole that pulls the needle on our compass towards Godliness. To love is to answer the call spoken by Christ Himself, "Love one another as I have loved you". It is the essence of sanctification, discipleship, 'living in the light', and 'walking the talk'; the nucleus of the 'fruit of the Spirit', 'letting your light shine' and 'feeding His lambs'.

So what love-memories could we plant heart-deep in the lives of those in *our care* this week?

“What love memories can we plant in the hearts of those in our care this week?”





It's a question worthy of regular focus. And in the grappling and mulling, let us not forget:

- When we create deep connections with our students and between our students—that's love.
- When our inquiry of 'performance' consciously appreciates others' strengths—that's love.
- When we do the unexpected random act of kindness—that's love.
- When we make learning transformational, touching the heart and the soul with things that matter—that's love.
- When we arrange successes for our students—that's love.
- When we celebrate the success of others—that's love.
- When we follow through with promises—that's love.
- When we don't let them give up on themselves—that's love.
- When we look beyond the behaviour to the thoughts and feelings that are motivating it and deal with those—that's love.
- When we say what we really mean and really mean what we say—that's love.
- When people really do matter most—in everything—that's love.

This is not a touchy-feely invitation. It's a solid, indisputable commission from the God of the universe. It isn't a new message, but it *is* a new day, and in our humanity, it's a thought we need to hear again...and again...and again. So go on—breathe deeply of God right now through personal connection, and then breathe Him into all your encounters—just for today. In a very real sense, ultimately, *you* are the special character of your school. *You* are the agent of God's breath in the life of your classroom. Breathe Him in, breathe Him out...breathe Him in, breathe Him out ... For all the meaningful memories that will really matter to those around you come directly from Him. In *Him* we live and move...and breathe and love. Now that's bottom-line-essential, *very* special character. **TEACH**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This statement in various forms appears in the *Integration deed of agreement* between the Ministry of Education and Seventh-day Adventist Schools in New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> Manning, B. (2005). *Ragamuffin gospel*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah Press, p.100.

<sup>3</sup> Source unknown.

<sup>4</sup> White, E. G. (1903). *Education*. California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, p.18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.30.

<sup>6</sup> Rob Bell explores this concept in the *Nooma* DVD, *Breathe*.

<sup>7</sup> Joel Barker is a business visionary. Unsourced quotation.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:16-20

<sup>9</sup> Kinnaman, D. (2007). *Unchristian*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>11</sup> Tozer, A. W. (2004). *The pursuit of God*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., p.11.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer, P. (2000). In Kessler, R. *The soul of education*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p.v.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Gillespie, B.V. (2005). Lecture: *A grace-based ministry to youth*. Loma Linda University: California.

<sup>15</sup> Prentice, C. (2006). *When people matter most*. Wellington: Dunmore Publishing Ltd.

<sup>16</sup> Roberts, K. (2007). *The lovemarks effect: Winning the consumer revolution*. New York: Powerhouse Cultural Entertainment Books, Precis

<sup>17</sup> Blanchard, K., & Glanz, B. (2005). *The simple truths of service*. USA: Blanchard Family Partnership, Glanz Communications, Inc., McMillan Media and Simple Truths.

<sup>18</sup> White, E. G. (1942). *Ministry of healing*. California: Pacific Press Publishing Association. p.470.

## Commitment conversations

Take the time to discuss these questions as a staff:

1. What are the first three adjectives you think of when you think of your school?
2. What are the first three adjectives you think of when you think of Jesus?
3. What intentional traditions, rituals, practices are in place in your school that really celebrate people (not so much their *doing*, but their *being*)?
4. How do you provide time in your life to be alone with God and 'breathe' Him in?
5. Think of your students. Who currently challenges you the most? Dig deeper, what might be happening for them? How can you communicate care as well as your boundaries and expectations? What surprising act of caring could you do for them?
6. How can you leave a signature of caring with all your students today?
7. In what ways do you nurture a caring environment as a staff team?

## Why parents are so bossy

### School as a service

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#### Introduction

**This article looks at the nature of schools from a services marketing perspective and uses this perspective to understand what happens in schools.**

#### First, a couple of short stories

After leaving the school where he had attended from kindy to year ten, Jason decided to return for a visit a couple of months into the new year. He arrived in the playground at recess time and was greeted by past friends and younger students who knew him well and sought to talk with him.

The new school principal, noticing a stranger at the centre of a lively group of students, approached Jason and asked if he had checked in at the school office to receive a visitor's ID pass. To which Jason responded, "I'm not a visitor, I belong here".

A strong sense of belonging can develop over many years and can be a very powerful influence in the minds of both students and parents. On the other hand, the reverse is also true. Feelings of alienation can grow out of poor decisions by administrators, as the following account demonstrates.

A fairly small, private high school in a large Australian city needed to accommodate an intake into year 11 from several other schools. The smaller feeder schools only went to year 10 so their students needed to migrate to a school that offered year 11 and 12. To make allowances for the extra students, the school opted to accommodate only the best academic students of the composite group. The school decided to cull the less academic of its students by 'dropping' its poorer performers. Many of these 'culled students' had been at the school from year 7 through to 10 and were, no doubt, with their families and friends, loyal supporters of the small school. Many of these students had parents and friends who had also been to the school or had associations with the school in some way. The students were devastated to be asked to leave. In addition, resentment for the new comers built as they represented the forces of social disruption.

That was nearly 20 years ago. Neither the parents and their friends nor the students and their friends have forgotten. They still tell the story of

betrayed loyalty. The school never again had the problem of too many students.

#### Why they think they own the school

Schools are more than a 'community of scholars' or learners, teachers and interested others who embark on an interactive journey of discovery. The school is the equivalent of the neo-lithic village, a microcosm of the 'global village' where everyone knows something about almost everyone else.

School employees are often confronted by a parent (or student) who acts as if they own the school. They act and talk as if they know more about the school and how it should be run than the school administration and teachers, and in short, think they own the place.

Kevin Roberts, CEO Worldwide, Saachi & Saachi in his book, *Lovemarks*, gives an insight into this issue. He discusses brands, products and services that have developed a loyal and supportive clientele where the relationship has gone beyond the normal relationship a loyal and supportive customer has with a valued brand or trademark. He says, "Lovemarks are owned by the people who love them" (Roberts, 2004, p.133). Considering the length of the relationship that parents have with schools and their school communities, is it any wonder that schools have become 'lovemarks' to their constituents. Schools are more than mere brands, services or products. They are 'owned' and experienced, if not 'loved', by their constituents.

What are the factors that contribute to these powerful feelings of ownership? The answer probably lies in some of the following observations:

- The relationship between parents, students, the school and wider connected social groups is shared, observed and seen as 'semi-public'. These relationships are often the object of much discussion and critical assessment by individuals within these groups. Judgements over perceived fairness and propriety of school actions and events are closely scrutinised and widely discussed.
- The relationship between the parent and the school is multi-faceted in that it involves joint care for social and academic adjustment, and

“Is it any wonder that schools have become 'lovemarks'?”

emotional, creative and physical development of the student in the school and home context.

- The relationship with the school is multi-layered in that parents deal with staff operating at various levels within a hierarchical organisation; from school principal, deputy, department heads, and teachers to other school personnel, canteen volunteers, transport workers and classroom volunteers. These relationships are scrutinised and assessed by the school community.
- Long term relationships often span up to thirteen years, the life span of school attendance for a child. Parents often form life long friendships centred on common activities and experiences with the school and child as the focal point.
- Parents have strong emotional bonds with their children and are emotionally involved in the school experience of their child. Because of their parental role (especially when the child is young), they use their position of experience to make numerous value judgements on behalf of the child.
- Parents place huge investments of time, effort, emotion and money into the child and his or her experience at school. Consequently, most parents are very engaged in their child's response to the experience of school.
- Since parents and students know and interact with the administration, teachers, other parents and their children, they form networks of various types. As a result, they develop different levels of loyalty, affinity, and friendship.
- During the school experience, parents (and students) play multiple roles and have multiple points of contact with the school and the community it serves. Parents can be found on the school's board of management; sitting outside the principal's office with a recalcitrant offspring; helping to run the canteen, library or transport system; listening to junior students read; helping with class homework and projects and much, much more.

The school's relationship with its stakeholders is multi-layered, intertwined and incredibly complex.

## Ownership and loyalty

Strong relationships lead to feelings of loyalty and feelings of ownership. Loyalty is an assertion, a response to a positive relationship, while ownership is a state of mind that empowers one to hold, manage and control. Ownership turns relationship management around so that the consumer wants to become more involved, has feelings of custodianship and protectiveness and is empowered to develop a stronger relationship.

## More about services ownership

Schools provide education, not counted in terms of 'goods or chattels' but as a service. Service has been defined as "a deed, a performance, an effort" (Rathmell, 1966). Now think of the nature of services and how it leads to a growing sense of belonging in school participants to a strong sense of ownership by this same group.

## Services and schools

In making sense of what happens in schools, some understanding of services marketing will be helpful at this juncture.

Services have four generic characteristics that pose difficulties for the customer (the student) and the service provider (the school). According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985), these characteristics generally have been:

- Intangibility: Education is an experience, a service, it cannot be packaged.
- Heterogeneity (variability): Each student will have different needs and expectations of their educational experience. The school will respond with varying degrees of flexibility to accommodate choice of curricula, extra-curricula offerings, and teaching and learning styles.
- Perishability: Services, like education, cannot be saved and inventoried, making supply and demand difficult to synchronise. Education takes place within a context of 'real' time; it cannot be stored, rolled up or stowed away for a more convenient time. Education cannot be taken down from the shelf and given to the next customer who wants to be educated.
- Simultaneity of production and consumption: The student participates in and consumes the educational experience as it is produced in the school.

There is a fifth characteristic that is often overlooked but which can be added to this list of service challenges.

- Ambivalence of ownership: The customer gets an experience but not the ownership or the means to produce the experience. Often the only tangible evidence of ownership of an education is a framed diploma or an improved performance in a number of skills.

Because customers are in the 'service factory' and participate in the 'manufacture of the service', they often have an intimate knowledge of the process, and develop powerful feelings of loyalty and ownership.

## Ownership in schools

Schools are very dynamic social and cultural systems that exist to foster 'education': intellectual,

“*Strong relationships lead to feelings of loyalty and feelings of ownership*”

academic, social, cultural, emotional, physical and spiritual development. Because of the intangible nature of services, the protocols that are derived from them are often learned and negotiated from a position of power by school administrators and from a position of uncertainty and unfamiliarity by parents and students.

The uncertainty in the nature of ownership on the part of customers can lead to conflict that often centres on the diverse agendas that the stakeholders have for their participation in the education experience. The outcomes desired by principals, administrators, teachers, students and parents are not always well aligned.

Although they participate on many levels, neither the parent nor the child owns any part of the school. However, they feel they have ownership rights because they have contributed to the activities of the school on many levels.

“Be prepared for frequent discussions over ‘turf’”

### Difficulties with a strong sense of ownership

There are some difficulties that come with a strong sense of the feeling of ownership by stakeholders: parents, relatives, friends, students and their friends. The stakeholders want to set agendas, control aspects of the school, have their say, be listened to and be taken seriously. These are generally appropriate and legitimate demands but they need to be carefully managed.

### The need for management of feelings of ownership

Schools where the sense of ownership by stakeholders is strongest are probably more successful at ‘educating’ than those where the feelings of ownership are low. However, successful schools have clearly defined roles, strong organisational structures and strong leadership that defines the different stakeholder roles. Stakeholders need to know what parts they can own, parts where they have shared ownership and areas where they have no ownership.

This being the case, the relationships between stakeholders needs to be carefully managed. Feelings of ownership strengthen when stakeholders feel that they can set the agenda in their area of concern and that they have some control of what happens to them and the people and things that they are interested in. On the other hand, lack of feelings of inclusiveness, loyalty, ownership, or being able to set the agenda, produce feelings of frustration and indifference.

### What to do?

What should a school administration do about this issue of school communities wanting to own and then ‘boss’ the school.

- The first thing is to recognise that this is a natural and legitimate feeling from your stakeholders.
- Keep the lines of communication open and current so as to avoid pressure building, problems going unresolved or battle lines being formed.
- Be prepared for frequent discussions over ‘turf’—who should be doing what and when? Set up robust arbitration systems to resolve any disputes.
- Clearly define areas of responsibility so stakeholders can hold onto their turf and feel comfortable and empowered in the contribution that they make in their specific area or role.
- Give stakeholders roles that match their capabilities and feelings of ownership so they can feel that they are contributing.
- Recognise the value in both cooperative ownership and private space.
- Schools are a group enterprise: parents and relatives, students and their peers, school teachers, assistants, committees and the principal. All these people have a part to play in the operation of a school. A school administrator’s role is to facilitate the synergies for success.
- Roles should be set democratically or in a representative way with appropriate boundaries like job descriptions, organisational diagrams and flow charts. When the boundaries for stakeholders are delineated, they can feel free to manage their arena and can be constrained to the role.
- Principals need to acknowledge that they cannot run every aspect of the school by themselves and that they need to generously share the responsibility, where appropriate.

The school will run best if principals and school administration share their vision and empower others to contribute through well-defined structures. You have heard the old cliché, ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’, neither was your school. It takes a lot of cooperative effort by a lot of cooperative people to build and keep a school functioning effectively. Like Jason (in the initial illustration), your stakeholders will consider your school a ‘lovemark’ and say that they ‘belong here’. Use this phenomenon to build your school. **TEACH**

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## Surviving the first year What helps principals last the distance?

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### Abstract

**This research study investigated the induction experiences and perceptions of a group of novice principals in a national, Christian, independent school system. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate discussion, elicit experiences and present recommendations about providing support for novice principals. The study found that eight of the nine principals experienced difficulties with role clarification, administration issues, financial management, time management and the isolation in the principal's position. Initial shock in the role, policy development, lack of leadership training, staff relationships and information overload were also serious issues for the group. From both the literature and the interviewees' perceptions and comments, recommendations for systemic improvements are made regarding the needs of newly appointed principals.**

“*Eight of the nine principals experienced difficulties with role clarification, admin issues, time and financial management, and isolation*”

### Introduction

#### The role of the principal

The role of the school principal involves the leadership and management of a school community, a role which is constantly increasing in complexity. In the context of the novice principalship, schools have been described as complex, high-pressure, difficult to master and intolerant of beginner's mistakes (Lashway, 2003). Lane (2000, p. 99) described modern, western principalship within the context of its society:

Principals have a mandate to improve student achievement, maintain a safe campus and keep pace with a constantly changing environment against a backdrop of violence in schools, technological revolution and increasing workloads.

The first year or so can be the most difficult time for a novice principal who lacks experience and is often only just beginning to develop the range of skills that are necessary to manage such an enterprise (Daresh & Male, 2000; Sackney & Walker, 2006). Allison (1997, p. 39) is one of many writers to comment in detail on the difficulties principals

face, emphasising the constant pressure of the principalship:

School principals face very busy and highly unpredictable work days with many individuals and groups competing for their time...many principals are overworked, constantly under fire, and unappreciated...confrontation, conflict, and compromise are constants which principals face on a daily basis...they are becoming increasingly faced with more pressure, more aggression, more change, and more conflict than ever before.

Constantly changing and additional responsibilities such as provisions for students with special needs, risk management, accountability, community involvement and accompanying policy changes together with a correspondingly increased workload, have contributed to the pressures facing school principals (Beeson & Matthews, 1992).

### Orientation and induction

Orientation, is here defined as the initial introduction to the position of principal at a particular school. Information about the school in general, its ethos, strengths and challenges as well as particular information about the staff, students and parents are provided. In addition, a wide range of documentation such as academic results, policies, strategic plans etc., would be expected to be shared with a newly appointed principal to assist in their orientation to the position. Orientation is usually managed by local school and School Board personnel.

In contrast, the process of induction, by which the principal undergoes intentional learning experiences to develop the necessary skills of educational leadership and management in situ, occurs over a longer period of time. Further, while induction programs may have local input, there is usually a systemic contribution from within both state and private systems. Induction is particularly important because while devolution of authority continues throughout Australian education systems, the complexity and intensity of the principal's role is increasing, and “more than ever before” is being required of principals (Hewitson, 1996, p. 20). Given the legal accountability this devolution brings with

it, the urgency for immediate competency upon appointment is very apparent.

## Purpose of study

Induction of beginning principals in Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) schools had not been previously studied and so this study set out to investigate their experiences and whether these were comparable with those reported in the literature. Previous research studies about novice principals (Dunning, 1996; Daresh & Male, 2000; Aiken, 2001; Bush & Jackson, 2002) have provided suggestions for improving the quality of induction. In this study the participants' own perceptions of their needs and suggestions for induction improvements were also explored in depth. The difficulties they experienced were studied to determine if these could have been avoided with specific induction activities. The data thus gained was used to formulate practical recommendations for improvement in the induction of beginning ASA principals.

Fewer and fewer teachers wish to move into the principalship and worldwide, education systems are finding it increasingly difficult to fill leadership positions (Barnett, O'Mahoney & Miller, 2002; D'Arbon, 2004). The complexity of the role and the lack of support from employing bodies contribute to the situation that Barnett et al., describe as a 'looming crisis'. Did the principals in this study feel a lack of support in their novitiate? An earlier investigation of the experiences of teaching principals in NSW found that within ASA schools, the turnover of principals was higher than for the corresponding state or Catholic groups (Murdoch, 2003). Murdoch also found that little induction was provided for the ASA principals in the specific locality he examined.

## Specific issues for beginning principals

In studies of beginning principals from both Australia and overseas, similar difficulties and themes are found again and again. These are very briefly addressed here:

### Shock

Daresh and Male (2000, p. 95) described shock as, "The culture shock of the transition" and wrote: "Nothing could prepare the respondents, both American and British, it seems, for the change of perceptions of others or for the intensity of the job."

### Administrative and financial issues

Schools today are complex businesses with a high degree of administrative detail and financial responsibility required for their management. A very common difficulty for novice principals in Australia

and internationally is learning to handle the core administrative and financial management of a school—hundreds of small pieces of information, routines and processes together with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

### Social and professional isolation

Many principals feel quite isolated and anxious in their role as leader of a school, particularly where they may be inexperienced and not have a network of experienced colleagues to whom they can refer for advice in difficult situations. As a result of this major change in their professional lives, many felt "isolated, overwhelmed and disenchanting" with their new position as principal (Aiken, 2001, p.147).

### Relationships with staff

Upon appointment to the principalship the change in relationships can be a very difficult adjustment for beginning principals. From the role of colleague, friend and confidant to the role of supervisor and manager for those same peers or teachers at another school, creates a major change in relationships. The cohort of workmates upon whom they once relied for daily support and collegial advice is now gone, and novice principals find they have to establish a network at a new level. This new network is usually outside their own immediate locality, necessitating travel or distance communication. At the same time they have to develop a positive working relationship, albeit at a different level, with their current teaching and ancillary staff. Described by Beeson et al. (1992, p.37) as the "most persistent theme" for the new principals, relationships with staff covered a wide range of aspects of human resource management such as socialising, managing conflict, and balancing supervision and support.

### Information overload and insufficient time

Often, in attempts to provide the beginning principal with useful information, these efforts become an additional difficulty because of an information overload and lack of time to address the material properly.

### Time management

Not only do principals find they lack time to attend to all the information they need to master instantly, they report that the whole area of time management is a common concern (Daresh & Male, 2000). Many principals have moved from a 'set-timetable' classroom to the principal's office where the day can often be described as "chaotic and fragmented" (Caldwell, 1992, p. 36). Learning to adjust to rapid and unexpected changes, as well as the need to

“Many new principals feel quite isolated, anxious and overwhelmed in their role as leader of a school”

prioritise and delegate in order to accommodate work is a major shift in thinking and behaviour.

### Policy and curriculum reviews and development

Policy and policy development are the frameworks upon which school management operates. Educational policy is more than mere rules; it provides guidelines and safety nets for professionals working in the field of education. Policy review and development, however, may be pushed aside in order to accommodate the insistent demands of day to day operation, as was felt by all of the eight principals studied by Beeson et al. (1992).

### Leadership

Leadership can be described as the core business for school principals, and yet it is sometimes ignored as a topic for study and training in favour of the management aspects of the role (Biggs, 1992; Bowman, 1996).

### Management aspects of leadership

Dunning's 1996 study of primary principals in Wales, revealed that the sampled principals held generally negative perceptions about the adequacy of the training provided and their preparation for specific management tasks.

### School and community issues

The dimension of parent-politics was noted by the majority of principals in the study by Bowman (1996) including the need for conflict resolution, group decision making skills, the development of rapport with parent groups and understanding the norms and expectations of the school community.

### Student discipline issues

Principals may find student discipline to be a major concern (Daresh & Male, 2000; Beeson et al. 1992); however, this was not a common experience in the research literature.

### Communication

Principals want to spend time meeting with staff but do not want to impose on their busy teachers (Beeson et al., 1992). Beeson's study also reported that many principals made use of printed news and information bulletins to both inform and seek input.

These recurrent, specific issues for beginning principals and how often they were reported in the 13 studies reviewed are illustrated in Figure 1.

### Issues associated with induction

#### Irregularity and inconsistency of induction programs

Induction programs have experienced some specific difficulties. Daresh and Male (2000) noted that some support / induction programs for new principals in Britain were not funded beyond the first year and soon disappeared. Even those programs that were approved through legislation were passed without the provision of sufficient funds, which accords with similar experiences in Australia (Shields, 1997). Inconsistency in induction programs, geographically and over time, was also pointed out by Bowman (1996) as a major concern.

#### Induction needs within the private education system

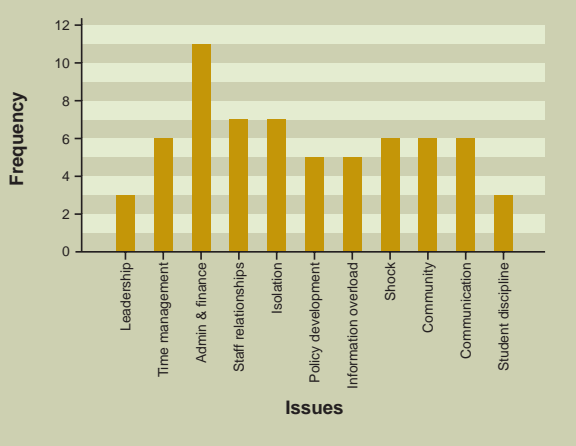
Within the private education system, induction programs are a relatively recent development. Fontaine (2001) conducted research into the experiences and perceptions of seven beginning principals in Catholic Schools in Western Australia. The principals considered an induction program was essential; that a formal structured handover between outgoing and incoming principals was needed, and that mentoring and networking programs needed to be in place. Clearly, the needs felt by their state school colleagues are replicated in the private system.

#### Delivery of induction programs and professional development

Government Education Departments and Independent School Systems have been offering professional development for principals in areas of management and leadership for some time, often in the form of seminars. However, it is doubtful that seminars are the most effective way of delivering these learning experiences, particularly when the learning relates as much to practices and beliefs as to information or facts. The research literature,

“  
Leadership  
is the core  
business  
of school  
principals  
”

**Figure 1: Major issues for novice principals in the research literature (13 studies)**



according to Robertson (1992), shows that principals want their learning structured in particular ways, not only to meet their knowledge needs, but also to conform to adult learning expectations. Adults need to know why they have to learn something, and they learn more effectively when the material is presented experientially and in a problem solving format. Further, adults appreciate learning material of immediate value and it is important for them to be respected for their prior knowledge (McCabe, Ricciardi & Jamison, 2000).

Understanding the principles of adult learning has caused a shift from the lecture and rote approach used in the past to a focus on the cognitive processes that go on behind overt behaviour. Cognitive perspectives explore the way individuals organise their knowledge (described as schemata) and then how that knowledge is translated into action (Leithwood & Hallinger, 1993). The concept of metaphor has been used to gain further insight into the use of schemata (Dana & Pitts, 1993). For example, the deliberate focus on examining metaphors used by the principal and then purposefully changing them through continuous interaction between the principal and the researcher, to alter the direction of practice, was a successful strategy. If principals see education and the storing of information in the brain as a factory warehouse to be accessed as needed (a common metaphor) they immediately limit their perceptions and view of education. Education is then seen as a passive entity i.e. knowledge, rather than an interactive process. Dana and Pitts (1993) focussed on changing the metaphors used by principals in order to accomplish change in their practice. The authors go on to say that many of these workplace metaphors have become so ingrained in professionals' thinking that they have, as it were, become invisible and, therefore, professionals are unaware of the need to change their thinking.

The benefits of an interactive learning experience between a novice principal and an experienced person (researcher or veteran principal) were mentioned by Barth (1990, p. 68). He noted that difficult times, which he described as being 'in hot water', actually provided an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth for the principal, providing that there was helpful, non-judgmental assistance and guidance through the process of reflecting on and improving professional practice.

The concept of reflective thinking, particularly where this is mediated, facilitated or guided by a third party who has appropriate expertise, may be one of the most useful ways of developing the covert thought processes mentioned by Leithwood

and Hallinger (1993), and thereby addressing the daily problems which principals have to manage. Several research studies have reported that beginning principals have found reflective thinking, and discussion of issues with colleagues to be particularly helpful for broadening and sharpening their thinking about professional practice (Robertson, 1992; Daresh & Playko, 1994; Ginty, 1995; Bowman, 1996). It is not surprising therefore, that mentoring is becoming an increasingly important ingredient of induction programs (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Hall, 2008).

Hart's 1993 study used problem solving and reflection, which required the learner to "constantly and consciously draw links among formal knowledge, recommended actions and predicted outcomes" (Hart, 1993, p. 341) thus providing a bridge from theory to practice.

Comparing apparent contradictions in research by Male (2001), which reported on the benefits of deputy principalships and internships and Hart (1993) which proposed a more theory-focused approach, it would appear that the experience of an internship, acting or deputy position, gives beginning principals a sense of familiarity with the routines of administration and therefore less shock when actually faced with the role. However, this does not necessarily mean that their professional practice would be at the level that it might attain if experiences were coupled with reflective thinking and problem solving based on current theory.

Another approach that has proven effective in assisting principals to reflect and to integrate theory and practice is that of cohort grouping (McCabe et al., 2000). Often university course linked, this grouping provides support and encouragement for the participants, leads to improved participation, creates academic performance opportunities for group and individual reflection and discussion, and facilitates social bonding that continues beyond the particular project or program (McCabe et al., 2000). Cohort grouping developed with a new group of principals has the potential for both professional development as well as personal support.

An important conclusion from the consideration of cognitive perspectives in relation to the provision of induction programs/activities for novice principals is the need to provide time and opportunity, even challenge, to engage in reflection, practice and further reflection to achieve improved outcomes in professional practice. It is essential that professional development for the newly appointed principal include a practical application of the theory, time to reflect and an appropriate person (i.e. a colleague or researcher) with whom to reflect.

**“Interactive learning experiences between a novice principal and an experienced person provide an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth.”**



## Method

The subjects included nine principals who were in the second, third or fourth year of their principalship in ASA schools (Primary and K-12) throughout Australia.

A semi-structured interview approach was used because it would permit a number of different issues to be addressed. The advantage of the semi-structured interview is that while the interviewer is leading the process of obtaining information from the interviewee, there is sufficient freedom in the approach to permit the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses as well as to follow leads as they emerge (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Data collection was by face to face and telephone semi-structured interviews based on a series of questions which had been mailed to participants prior to the interview. A finding of the 1992 study by Biggs was that supervisors tended to 'serve-up' induction programs, but not 'ask the inductees' what they felt they needed most. To address this gap, the questions in this study were designed to elicit the principals' own perceptions of what an induction program should contain, their reactions to frequently used professional development strategies and modes of delivery, the strategies and activities they had found helpful or ineffective, and their overall conclusions regarding ideal induction programs for principals in the future.

## Principals' comments

Actual comments by the principals were very revealing:

**Shock:** *"And so that was a huge shock to me quite honestly." "not knowing the ropes and so on...it's a very daunting task." "I knew there was a lot of work, and I knew it would be a lot of hours, but I had no idea of the number of things that you would be asked."*

**Role Clarification:** *"I had no idea...Basically I just blundered on from one thing to the next, asking questions as I went...if I'd had some sort of plan to follow." "A lot of it I just had no idea what I was supposed to do...I would have appreciated some sort of a manual. A principal's handbook that told me how I should proceed."*

**Policy:** *"If I could tap into a resource that said here is a list of policies, adapt them for your circumstances." "I've spent so much of my last two years writing policy. It's taken up a lot of time I'd rather have spent doing other things."*

**Financial:** *"Where do I get my funding, how do I get it, how do I access it, and who do I contact?" "The biggest stress I have, the thing that keeps me awake the most at nights at the moment, is the financial side of things."*

**Isolation:** The social issues of isolation, loneliness and relationship changes were stronger for the primary principals, than for the secondary principals, which may reflect a difference in the cultures of the two sectors as well as the fact that the primary schools were

situated in more rural and distant locations. One principal, in charge of a small primary school in a location distant from the Education Director and Education Office was unable to attend regular school administrator's meetings conducted in the capital city of the state. To do so would have necessitated a day driving to and from the meetings, meaning at least three days' relief teaching costs, or a \$400 return flight plus one day's relief costs. Either option, on a monthly basis, was beyond the financial capacity of this small school, thus the principal remained largely physically isolated from system colleagues.

*"But the job of the principal is very lonely. It can be a very lonely job because you go through days where you don't sit down at all, you don't find time to sit down, even have your lunch some times. No one's aware of that. No one picks that up during the day."*

**Relationships:** *"I found relationships to be one of the most difficult things of being a principal... that I was no longer part of the group...and you suddenly realise you're different from your staff."*

**Time:** *"Basically, if you want to get work done, you just stay late." "The amount of work I had to do, the amount of work that's expected from an Adventist principal just knocked me for six. I mean, it's bringing work home every night until 10:30."*

**Leadership:** *"The most important thing I did was the Master's leadership degree at Avondale with law, accounting, HRM, change, culture etc. I think there should be further studies taken by principals."*

The questions were deliberately kept at a fairly general level in order to have the subjects suggest their own ideas. Response, interest and empathy were demonstrated by the interviewer; however, there was a conscious attempt not to lead the questioning but to see whether the interviewees produced information similar to that recorded in the research literature and to each other. Hence, while some interviewees did not mention a particular aspect that is found in the literature, or which was mentioned by a colleague, it cannot be concluded that this experience did not occur for this particular interviewee, but rather that it did not leave such a strong, lasting impression within the interviewee's recollections and beliefs that they felt impelled to mention it in the interview. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed.

## Results

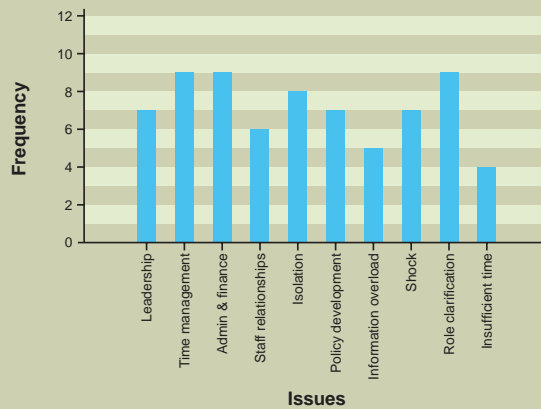
The transcriptions were examined for similarities and emerging themes. The emerging themes were then compared with findings in the literature and additional issues that the principals in this cohort considered important were noted. Ten common themes emerged from the data, representing issues of concern to the beginning principals in the current study, these are shown in Figure 2. Time management, administration and finance and role clarification were the three highest ranking of the 10 key issues for the novice principals in the current study, with nine out of a possible nine responses.

Figure 3 demonstrates the similarities between the principals in regard to the common issues they experienced.

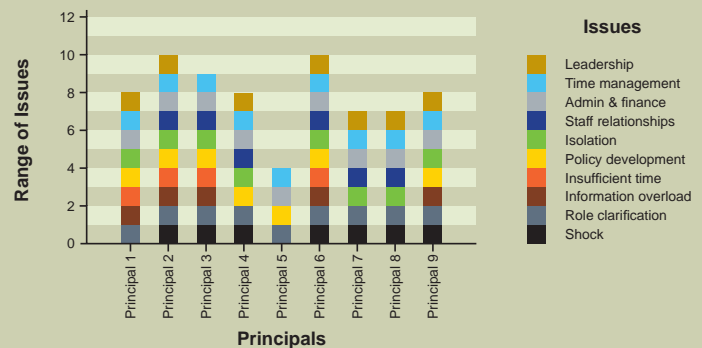
Clearly, there was great similarity in the perception of important issues between the principals themselves, except for Principal 5, who had moved into the principalship from a previous role in government administration and had received leadership training.

From Figure 3 it is clear that all of the nine principals (100 per cent) commented on issues associated with role clarification, difficulties with administration issues, financial management, and time management. Most principals (eight, or 89 per cent) commented on the isolation they felt in the principal's position. Seven or 78 per cent, talked about the shock they experienced on initial appointment; the need for, and the time spent, on policy development; and the lack of leadership training. Six principals or 67 per cent, regarded issues with changed staff relationships as a serious concern for them. Five of the principals or 56 per cent, spoke of the problem of information overload with all of the material they were trying to master and four, or 45 per cent mentioned insufficient time

**Figure 2: Issues for ASA novice principals**



**Figure 3: Comparison of induction issues for interviewees in this study**



to attend professional development and training, including sessions with a mentor. It must be noted that these comments were made spontaneously and not as a result of specific questioning or probing by the interviewer.

The majority of principals in this study did not receive a formal induction program during the first year of their principalship. Two had been able to participate in the recently established, two-day 'New Principals' Conference', which they greatly appreciated, but they expressed a desire for more interaction with participants both during the conference and again, later in their first year. When commenting on professional development they had experienced in their first year, a minority expressed frustration that they had not had much input into decisions regarding professional development activities, including the

**“The majority of principals did not receive a formal induction”**

“  
*The novice principals wanted more interaction during the conference program as well as ongoing support for networking*”

New Principals' Conference, nor had they been surveyed to find out their perceived strengths and weaknesses, or their perceived professional development needs.

On the other hand, most of the novice principals spoke very positively about the support they had received from their local Education Director in the field and it was clear from these comments that the Education Director had become a defacto mentor for some.

Communication difficulties and community difficulties were, according to the literature, significant issues for novice principals; however, the latter was not mentioned by the interviewees in the present study and the former, only barely. A possible explanation is that the principals in this study were all Seventh-day Adventist church members themselves, in charge of Seventh-day Adventist schools with a proportion of the student population (although not all) also Seventh-day Adventists. This means that they would be likely to interact with the church/school community and see each other regularly at church services and social activities on weekends, in fact, they may have known each other for some years, fellowshiping and joining in church programs together. This does not mean that they would not have disagreements and misunderstandings from time to time; however, it is likely there would be a much closer relationship between the principal and the parents than might be found in a state school.

By contrast, the principals in the literature review did not have issues with role clarification or insufficient time to attend professional development programs, as mentioned by the novice principals in the current study. A possible explanation for this is that state education departments have addressed policy, calendars of returns, expectations of the principal, generic bureaucratic requirements, and mandated professional development programs for a far longer period of time than has been the case in ASA schools. ASA schools have been, in the main, fewer and smaller than state schools (in 2008 there are 51 ASA schools in Australia) and the corresponding educational bureaucracy, and policy making have not developed to the same extent.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The comments made by all principals in this study were extremely helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the current support mechanisms available to ASA novice principals. With regard to their beginning experiences and induction, the principals in this study believed that while most of them had not received a formal induction program, the recent innovation of a New Principals' Conference was most valuable and should be

continued and expanded to address the main issues that caused difficulty. These issues included very specific training in budget management, time management and role clarification. The novice principals wanted more interaction during the conference program as well as ongoing support for networking, possibly through cohort grouping. A formal link to a mentor (possibly more than one, within and outside ASA) was also perceived as a valuable professional development option. These principals placed great value on the regular principals' meetings held in their state on a monthly or quarterly basis, although those who were geographically isolated regretted their inability to participate. None of the principals had been formally linked with a mentor, which they would have appreciated, however, they did speak highly of their local ASA Education Directors and appreciated the support they had provided.

Today's principals need to 'hit the ground running'; preparation programs, appointment of mentors and facilitated induction programs are critically essential for their survival, enjoyment of the role and excellence in outcomes for all members of the school community.

### Recommendations regarding the induction of principals in Adventist Schools Australia

1. That newly appointed principals undergo a mandatory orientation program which includes time spent at the school meeting staff, students and significant school community members before actually commencing the appointment,
2. That novice appointees are provided with a complete, formal handover from the previous principal with mandated, detailed information on the school calendar, procedures and practices, sources of information, finances and personnel,
3. That novice appointees are linked to mentors as soon as possible, both within the ASA system and beyond, if possible. On-line support through the local conference education director working with the national education office is needed. Further, that time and costs for meeting with mentors are budgeted,
4. That the local Education Director facilitate visits for the novice principal to comparable schools,
5. That novice principals are encouraged to use the ASA website and its resources, and further, that these be broadened to include proformas for recurring school administrative tasks,

6. That regular monthly administrators' meetings include a teleconference section so as to cater for those unable to attend because of geographic isolation; alternatively, provision of a financial subsidy to enable attendance,
7. That the current two-day conference for new appointees (held in term 1) include a pre-conference survey to determine levels of knowledge and expertise and that the conference be extended to provide an opportunity for a further two-day professional development towards the end of term 3,
8. That most presentations at the New Principals' Conference and at other P.D. events be offered in a workshop mode to encourage reflection and networking. Further, that these events always include a feedback and evaluation procedure,
9. That the current New Principals' Conference include a health and stress management component, and a workshop on the relational aspects of the principalship, the changes that are likely to occur and the best ways of managing these,
10. That from the New Principals' Conference, a formalised network between each particular cohort of novice principals be generated,
11. That ongoing professional development be provided or facilitated at a local level by ASA Education Directors (e.g. through the Independent Schools Association) in the area of leadership and related skills; and that this be delivered through a workshop format incorporating seminar, discussion, reflection and group problem solving,
12. That serious consideration be given to developing a Principals' Handbook in an easy to read, handy reference style. **TEACH<sup>®</sup>**

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# The mechanics of Intelligent Design—good enough to teach?

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## Abstract

Considerable debate has taken place in the last two years over whether or not Intelligent Design (ID) should be taught to high school students. This paper examines some of the basic features of ID as set out by its major proponents. It also outlines the arguments of detractors who would argue that ID is not science, but religion or creationism in disguise. These suggest that ID is a type of ‘god of the gaps’ argument which then languishes when mechanisms accounting for the appearance of complex objects or systems having the hallmarks of design are elucidated by further scientific research. It is also noted that while the complexity, functionality and apparent purpose of biological systems may have the appearance of being designed, other explanations exist. Further, it is noted that design theory is unable to speculate on the mechanism(s) leading to their formation. It is also observed that the design discussion has some general concepts which go beyond the specific ID framework and with which many more Christians in science resonate. Internationally, ID has not featured in school science curricula and attempts to integrate it into Australian school curricula should be very carefully evaluated with respect to the experiences of the global educational and scientific community.

“While ID describes complexity, it offers no explanation for the development of the systems it studies”

## Introduction

Judging by the rapid accumulation of books, articles and websites over the last ten years or so the Intelligent Design (ID) argument has certainly made its mark on the scientific community. As will be made evident later, discussion has spilled over into the public arena and is used by a variety of conservative Christian groups as an argument against evolutionary theory. In addition to debates raging in the USA on the teaching of ID in schools, in 2005 the then Australian Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson publicly stated that he had no problem with the teaching of ID alongside evolutionary theory in schools.<sup>1</sup> He further added

that it should not replace evolutionary theory but be offered as an alternative.

This sparked lively discussion among several groups in Australia including scientists, educators and school administrators. Professor Michael Archer (Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of New South Wales) instigated a public letter on behalf of scientists and school teachers denouncing the proposal. This letter appeared in many Australian newspapers on October 20, 2005 further fuelling the controversy.<sup>2</sup> A common major objection to ID in this context is that it is not science but simply religion (or creationism) in another guise and has no place in the science class. Three years later, how should we approach the controversial topic of teaching ID in schools?

## Core features of the contemporary intelligent design argument

ID, as a way of looking at the complexity of living organisms and their components, was developed and championed by Michael Behe, a professor of biochemistry well known for his landmark book, *Darwin's black box*.<sup>3</sup> ID examines the detailed complexity observed in biochemical systems and structures. Coupled with recent advances in biochemistry and molecular biology, ID proponents use this staggering complexity to challenge naturalistic evolution as an explanation for the existence of these systems and structures. On the other hand, many ID adherents believe in conventional scientific time scales and in evolution as the major player in producing the current diversity of life forms. It is worth noting that while ID describes complexity, it offers no explanation for the development of the systems it studies.

ID has been used by various groups and in a variety of ways to argue for an intelligence behind the universe. In some spheres this is the Christian God of the Bible, but many religions and other groups such as the New Age movement could also be sympathetic to ID. Yet for many ID purists, the existence of a designer is not inferred, evidence of design is the goal of all investigations.

Arguments from design are not new. In the early

1800s, Anglican clergyman William Paley presented a now well known illustration that still encapsulates the basic essence of the design argument:

In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever. But suppose I had found a watch on the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place...that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive—what we could not discover in the stone—that its several parts are framed together for a purpose, e.g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are or placed in any other manner or in any other order other than that in which they are placed...no motion at all would have been carried out in the machine...<sup>4</sup>

Paley envisioned design as the purposeful arrangement of parts to achieve a particular objective or function. He noted that changing the arrangement of such parts results in loss of function. Continuing this line of reasoning, Behe argues that the hallmark of ID is the concept of ‘irreducible complexity’ which is readily observed in

A single system which is composed of several interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, and where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning.<sup>5</sup>

Behe illustrates the basis of irreducible complexity using the common household mousetrap. A mousetrap consists of five parts—a wooden base, a spring, a hammer (to break the mouse’s back), a sensitive catch (releases when slight pressure is applied) and a metal bar (connects to the catch and holds the hammer back when the trap is charged).<sup>6</sup> He argues that it is irreducibly complex because all the components are essential if it is to function as designed. If the hammer was removed the mouse could not be pinned to the wooden platform. If there was no spring, the hammer and catch would sit loosely and the trap would fail to function. In fact, if any single part was not present the trap would be completely ineffective in catching mice.

Using this simple model as an illustration of design, Behe attempts to demonstrate his concept of irreducible complexity in a host of biochemical systems and structures ranging from the molecular machinery of bacterial flagella to the biochemistry of blood clotting mechanisms.<sup>7</sup>

Behe argues that his concept of irreducible complexity in biochemical systems challenges naturalistic Darwinian evolution:

An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly (that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition non-functional. An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing, would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. Since natural selection can only choose systems that are already working, then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act on.<sup>8</sup>

However in recent years, as judged by most scientists, including many sincere Christians, this central element of ID has been successfully challenged. As will be discussed later, mechanisms accounting for the evolution of so called irreducibly complex systems such as bacterial flagella have been described.

## The detection of design

### The work of Bradley and Thaxton

In the years just preceding the publication of Behe’s work, Bradley and Thaxton noted that some classic design arguments used to argue for the existence of an intelligence behind the universe can also be explained by natural causes. The complex organisation observed when snowflakes are examined microscopically is often used as one such example. These authors observe that

The snowflake’s structure is nothing mysterious or supernatural. It arises by the natural process of dendritic growth that accompanies the phase change of H<sub>2</sub>O from liquid (water) to solid (snow).<sup>9</sup>

From this, it is apparent that at least for some parts of the natural world the appearance of design can clearly be explained by natural processes.

These authors also suggest another type of observed order on the basis of information theory. Information theory was first developed during the 1940s at the Bell Telephone Laboratories. It describes the science of message transmission using either a real language or symbolic one such as Morse code or for the biochemist, even the genetic code found in the DNA molecule.<sup>10</sup> While the first type of order (for example, snowflakes) can be explained by natural physical and chemical laws, the second type

Is not a result of anything within the matter itself. It is in principle opposed to anything we see forming naturally. This kind of order does provide evidence for intelligent causes.<sup>11</sup>

“*Behe argues that his concept of irreducible complexity in biochemical systems challenges naturalistic Darwinian evolution*”

These authors use Mt Rushmore (where the faces of four American presidents are carved into a cliff face) as an example to illustrate this second kind of order. When one observes the formation from many different angles the conclusion can be reached that they are indeed modelled on human faces, and completely foreign to naturally occurring rock formations. Because of the nature of the carving, one can conclude that an intelligence was the cause rather than some sort of natural process.<sup>12</sup>

Bradley and Thaxton suggest that complex structures are specified by large amounts of information.<sup>13</sup> In order to produce complex structures like Mt Rushmore a lot of organised instructions are required which contrast with the random activities of erosion. This type of reasoning was a basic forerunner of many ID arguments and was then extended to include biological complexity.

### The illusion of design

Understandably, many have reasoned that the biological sphere shows complexity of structures that in principle resemble Mt Rushmore. However, critics of ID have pointed out that even though living organisms and their various components may look like they are designed, there is no scientific way of determining whether they are the result of intelligent causes. Examining an existing functioning biochemical, anatomical or physiological system that may have arisen through a naturalistic (or even theistic) evolutionary process or resulting from an act of special creation will still appear to be designed simply because it functions and fulfils a purpose. In other words one is not able to tell from examining the inferred design detail of a system or structure how that particular system or structure came to be. Even atheistic evolutionists who have serious objections to the design movement in general insist that nature resulting from the pressure of natural selection will appear to be designed. Richard Dawkins states in his book, *The blind watchmaker*, that: “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose”<sup>14</sup> and

Natural selection is the blind watchmaker, blind because it does not see ahead, does not plan consequences, has no purpose in view. Yet the living results of natural selection overwhelmingly impress us with the appearance of design as if by a master watchmaker, [they] impress us with the illusion of design and planning.<sup>15</sup>

### The work of Dembski

Another well known pioneer of the ID movement, William Dembski, has proposed an analytical method for detecting design. He claims that design is actually empirically detectable.<sup>16</sup> In other words,

there are well-defined methods that, on the basis of observational data, are capable of reliably distinguishing intelligent from undirected natural causation of a given system or object. Dembski has postulated a three stage explanatory filter for detecting intelligent design (Figure 1).<sup>17</sup>

According to Dembski, if an event or observation is affirmed at the final layer of the filter then one can be justified in inferring that the event involved design. The explanatory filter asks questions of that event or object in the following order: Does a natural law explain it? Does chance explain it? Does design explain it?

According to Dembski, if there is a high probability of explaining the existence or operation of a given system then natural law is the best explanation (for example, there is a high probability that when a suspended object is released, it will fall to the earth according to the law of gravity). If the answer to this first question is no, then one can move comfortably to the second test question. If there is a good probability of chance explaining the system under study, then let it be so. But if the probability of law and chance fail to offer an explanation then one can assume the best explanation is one of design. This is especially true of specified, small probability events, for example producing an information rich molecule like DNA, with a specific base sequence, from a random pool of nucleotides.

Dembski has further developed this model and argues that an intelligent cause is responsible for an effect (or object) if it can be demonstrated that the effect (or object) is both complex and specified. Using written language as an illustration, he indicates that a single letter is specified but not complex. A long sentence of randomly jumbled letters is complex, but not specified while a Shakespearean sonnet is both complex and specified.<sup>19</sup> In other words, a meaningful sentence and one composed of jumbled letters are both complex, but they differ in that the meaningful sentence is composed of letters deliberately arranged in such a way that a pattern corresponding to intelligible English is recognised. He argues that specification implies purpose, and this is the product of intelligent design. One could easily apply such an analogy to the conversion of substrate to product molecules in a series of dependent enzyme-mediated reactions; the pattern of components in the sequence is deliberately arranged for a given purpose and thus exhibits both complexity and specification. In other words, the sequence makes biochemical sense. In fact, such an analysis could be applied to a sequence of nucleotide bases in DNA, a sequence of amino acids in a protein, or a host of other examples in biochemistry or molecular

“One is not able to tell from examining the inferred design detail of a system or structure, how it came to be”

”

biology. While design is inferred according to Dembski's criteria, the mechanisms accounting for the development of such systems cannot be determined.

Dembski has since refined his arguments and suggests that in addition to complexity and specification, contingency needs to be established.

Contingency ensures that the object in question is not the result of an automatic and therefore unintelligent process in its production. Complexity ensures that the object is not so simple that it can be explained by chance. Finally, specification ensures that the object exhibits the type of pattern characteristic of intelligence.<sup>20</sup>

One could consider such automatic or unintelligent processes as being the physical or chemical laws of nature leading to snowflakes (the first type of order observed in design suggested by Bradley and Thaxton). This is also reflected in the first stage of Dembski's explanatory filter, where law may best explain the occurrence of a given event. Dembski makes the point that in his application of the term complexity, it also describes a form of probability. He suggests a relationship between complexity and probability:

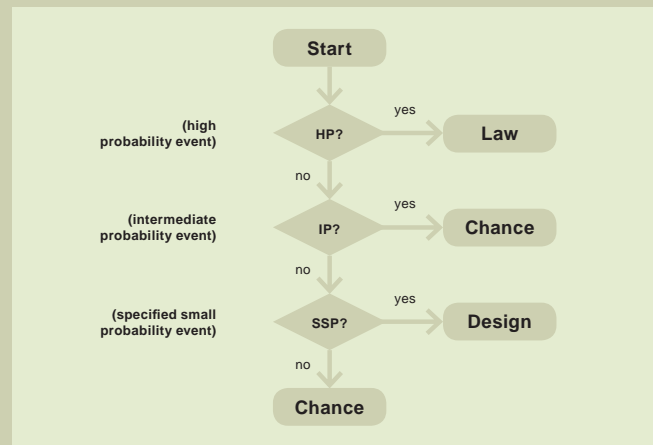
Complexity and probability therefore vary inversely: the greater the complexity, the smaller the probability. Thus to determine whether something is sufficiently complex to warrant a design inference is to determine whether it has sufficiently small probability.<sup>21</sup>

Thus increasing complexity can be equated with decreasing probability, so that highly complex and ordered events become increasingly improbable. Dembski derives another explanatory filter where the three levels of the filter are contingency, complexity and specification (Figure 2).<sup>22</sup>

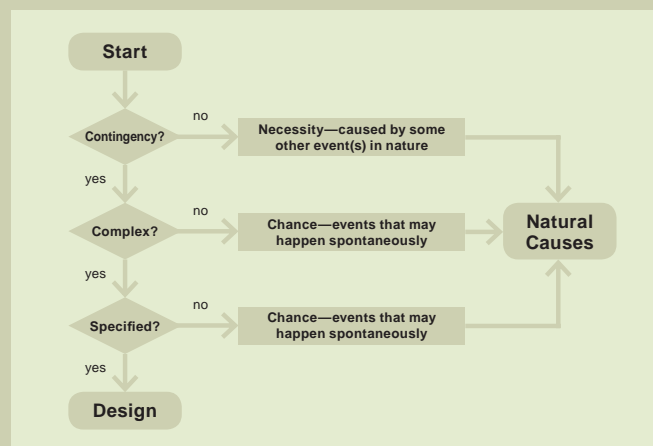
When an event or object is analysed using this new filter, the first question concerns contingency. Is the event contingent? Can a natural law or other event be excluded from its explanation? If no, then the event can be attributed to necessity. If yes (natural explanations or laws can be excluded) then it passes to the next level of the filter—the question of complexity. If no is the answer at this level, the event may best be explained by chance, an event that happens spontaneously. If yes is the answer, the event is complex, it passes to the question of specification. If the event is not specified, it can be attributed to chance. If the event is specified its cause is best explained in terms of design.

According to Dembski, naturalism operates on the fact that nothing outside of nature can explain

**Figure 1: Dembski's original explanatory filter.<sup>18</sup>**



**Figure 2: Dembski's modified explanatory filter.<sup>19</sup>**



natural events. Things happen by chance or necessity:

Events therefore happen either because they were caused by other events or because they happened spontaneously. The first of these is called "necessity", the second "chance". For the naturalist, chance and necessity are the fundamental modes of causation. Together they constitute what are called "natural causes". Naturalism therefore seeks to account for intelligent agency in terms of natural causes.<sup>24</sup>

Dembski makes a credible attempt at adding rigour to design arguments. In conjunction with



“**Dembski's explanatory filters offer a significant attempt at establishing evidence of design in biological systems**”

Behe's concept of irreducible complexity, his explanatory filters offer a significant attempt at establishing evidence of design in biological systems. Biochemical systems are highly complex and information rich. In other words they are highly specified and according to Dembski, they have a very low probability of occurring naturally. However, as credible as the attempt may be in establishing evidence of design it sheds little light on how the system under study came to be.

### Is ID an alternative scientific option to naturalistic evolutionary theory?

For many scientists (both theist and atheist), ID's failure to offer explanations of mechanism means that it is a less than viable alternative to naturalistic evolutionary theory when it comes to explaining the origin and development of life on earth. Arguments raised by the ID movement generally tend to be from the negative: "Things are just so complex I can't imagine natural evolutionary mechanisms accounting for this". This type of reasoning comes close to a 'god of the gaps' type of argument where unknown steps in a process are ascribed to God's activity. Such positions can then become untenable if advances in scientific knowledge offer explanations. As science develops and new theories and explanations fill in the knowledge gaps, God is squeezed out of the picture. Further, many ID purists do not have a problem with concepts related to directed or theistic evolutionary processes producing complex biochemical systems that then may be analysed for design.

### Evolutionary convergence

Evolutionary convergence is an example of how developing scientific thought may fill in the gaps in scientific knowledge and suggest an answer to ID's challenge to evolution being unable to produce complicated biological systems and structures. Palaeobiologist and 2005 Boyle lecturer, Simon Conway Morris has considered and further developed the concept of evolutionary convergence in considerable detail.<sup>25</sup> In evolutionary terms, homology refers to the situation where a particular biochemical, anatomical or physiological feature is observed in different species with common ancestral descent. However, where the same or very similar feature is found in quite unrelated species the term used is evolutionary convergence. Evolutionary convergence suggests that evolutionary mechanisms seek the same solution to similar biological needs resulting in the evolution of the eye, ability to smell, echolocation and even intelligence.

Morris' book *Life's solution: Inevitable humans in a lonely universe* is full of detailed examples of

evolutionary convergence.<sup>26</sup> According to Morris, this convergence may be the result of a type of molecular programming in molecules leading to complicated biochemical structures exhibiting a tendency to combine in converging ways. For Morris these restricted pathways of evolutionary development supplement what he sees as the insufficiency of natural selection alone. Driven by a type of molecular pre-programming, anatomical and physiological structures develop, with intelligent life as the inevitable end result. These restricted converging pathways give rise to many of the recurrent biological themes found in many diverse species. He is convinced of the

Uncanny ability of evolution to navigate to the appropriate solution through immense hyperspaces of biological possibility.<sup>27</sup>

### The anthropic principle

It is interesting to note that Morris' views on evolutionary convergence resonate with the anthropic principle which suggests that the universe appears fine tuned for life in terms of such diverse features as gravitational attraction, strong and weak nuclear forces, the existence of atoms, the properties of the water molecule, and the nature of the earth's atmosphere. The universe appears just the way it should in order to arrive at the development of life. For further contemplation of the anthropic principle the reader is directed to books such as *The Goldilocks enigma*<sup>28</sup> by Paul Davies or Michael Denton's *Nature's destiny: How biology reveals purpose in the universe*<sup>29</sup>.

Denton, author of *Evolution: A theory in crisis*<sup>30</sup> (a major challenge to naturalistic evolutionary processes) examines the fitness of a wide variety of essential factors for life as we know it on this planet. These factors range from the carbon atom to the very interesting idea that humans are uniquely adapted for the use of fire, argued by Denton as the essential ingredient for the development and advancement of technology. Denton suggests that given the complexity of the cell and its constituents, organic evolution would have to be the result of some kind of directed program rather than a consequence of random undirected processes. He posits that the complexity of organs such as eyes and lungs argues against current undirected Darwinian evolutionary mechanisms. Denton concludes that the entire universe, from molecules to galaxies, is uniquely tuned and perhaps programmed for one purpose, the development of carbon-based life with humankind as its eventual climax.

## ID and Christians

Francis Collins, author of *The language of God*<sup>61</sup>, a devout Christian and long-time head of the Human Genome Project, is not surprised by the readiness of some evangelical Christians to embrace ID. He sees this as a backlash against those outspoken evolutionists who insist only on an atheistic platform with respect to evolutionary processes.<sup>32</sup> However, he warns that those who do readily accept ID may find their faith jeopardised as ID arguments crumble:

If believers have attached their last vestiges of hope that God could find a place in human existence through ID theory, and that theory collapses, what then happens to faith?<sup>33</sup>

## ID and scientific method

Collins shares the concern of many thoughtful Christian scientists with respect to the scientific validity of ID. Unfortunately, ID lacks a fundamental characteristic of sound scientific theories—the ability to predict other findings and hence the ability to prompt further experimentation.<sup>34</sup>

As mentioned, ID describes complexity of existing systems and structures but does not speculate on mechanisms that bring them into existence. Science as a discipline is based on observation, experimentation and the development of theories, which are in turn tested and modified where necessary after further testing and experimentation. Thus science may be considered a self correcting endeavour. However, ID, while being essentially descriptive of complexity, can't really be tested in a scientifically rigorous manner. It is simply not possible to do 'design experiments' as one would perform 'science experiments'.

The core of ID, irreducible complexity, has also come under scrutiny and the irreducible complexity of many biological structures is now being questioned as science fills in the mystery surrounding them, "suggesting that ID proponents have made the mistake of confusing the unknown with the unknowable, or the unsolved with the unsolvable."<sup>35</sup> Bacterial flagella have been used as a prime example of irreducible complexity. But considerable homology exists between the structural components of bacterial flagella and those of bacterial type-III secretory systems.<sup>36</sup> Flagella secrete the protein flagellin in order to construct the flagellum using the same components and mechanisms by which type-III secretory systems secrete proteins (the rod and ring complex) that allow bacteria to comprise eukaryotic targets. Rather than being uniquely irreducibly complex, flagella may be thought of as specialised type-III secretory systems.<sup>37</sup>

A further challenge to faith results from the use of ID by some as a type of proof of an intelligence behind the universe. While, as noted earlier, many ID advocates stop short of speculation on an intelligence behind the universe, many do not. If one puts a lot of weight on ID being an argument for a creative intelligence in terms of the Christian Scriptures which describe a loving creator God, then one is also obliged to consider and accommodate the design seen in tooth and claw (this includes the predators and parasites of the natural world).<sup>38</sup> One can't help but admire the unique apparent design of predators such as the great white shark or the cheetah that equip them for hunting and catching prey. This is an area that seems to have attracted little attention and where little has been written at present. Yet if we take ID seriously, we must address the application of this type of design in a Christian world view.

## ID in school curricula

Internationally, there has been considerable debate concerning the teaching of ID in schools. Perhaps for the reasons noted above, ID does not currently appear in either science or religion school curricula in Australia or overseas. In 2004 Dembski lamented the fact that even if ID were allowed in schools there was a lack of a suitable curriculum and he urged the development of such.<sup>39</sup> As yet an ID curriculum has not appeared. Development of an ID curriculum would be difficult as topics in science curricula (as in the case of individual topics within any scientific discipline) develop from a scaffolding of scientific facts and theories built upon over many years of thoughtful research. Currently, the general consensus of the scientific community would indicate that ID is not science and thus would not have a part in a science curriculum. At present, ID seems to be disconnected from the main body of science and while it applies itself mainly to descriptive biochemistry it still awaits adoption by the wider scientific community. This situation seems to be unlikely to change in the near future with the prospect of ID remaining an orphan for some considerable time.

In Australia there is no mention of ID in either science or religion school curricula. Furthermore, as in most other countries, senior school curricula are already bursting at the seams and there would be a significant challenge to find a place where ID might be legitimately included. Recent international developments would indicate that senior school syllabi might do well to distance themselves from including ID as any part of a formal science class in schools.

“Collins warns that those who do readily accept ID may find their faith jeopardised as ID arguments crumble”

“The experience of the international community suggests a high degree of caution be exercised with respect to integrating ID into school science or religion curricula”

Perhaps the most controversial public debate concerning the teaching of ID in schools took place in the District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, December, 2005. A law suit was filed by parents of students against the Dover Area School District that required ninth-grade biology students to be read a statement that indicated that ID offered an alternative explanation for the origin of life when compared with Darwin's view.<sup>40</sup> Expert witnesses in the area of science and religion, such as Professor John Haught, successfully argued that ID is not science and that advocates of ID share

A kind of theological confusion of science with religious ideas, and they tend together to propose that this should be wedged into the science classroom.<sup>41</sup>

The court ruled against the Dover School Board on the grounds that ID was not science and

Cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents...as stated, our conclusion today is that it is unconstitutional to teach ID as an alternative to evolution in a public school science classroom.<sup>42</sup>

In the United Kingdom the interaction between science and religion is taken seriously in school curricula. The *Science and Religion in Schools Project* (funded by a John Templeton Foundation Grant) was launched in April 2002 and the first materials were published in 2006.<sup>43</sup> A particular strength of this project is that the importance of dialogue in curriculum development is well recognised:

Any successful work in this area must involve cooperation and discussion between university experts and experienced school teachers.<sup>44</sup>

In the UK science and religion is taught from primary school through to high school and curriculum materials are being well developed<sup>45</sup>, but it is noteworthy that ID does not appear to feature in the curriculum materials developed by this innovative group. Advice is offered by the *Science and Religion in Schools Project* with respect to the inclusion of ID in school science curricula:

In 2007 the Department for Children, Schools and Families issued guidance on the place of creationism and intelligent design in Science lessons. This was clearly in response to the concern of some in the world of Science that creationism and intelligent design were being presented as scientific theories; as opposed to philosophical or theological positions in their own right. The DCSF guidance states that there is no place for teaching about intelligent design or creationism in Science but that these theories

would be covered in Religious Education, Citizenship and History, with a clear emphasis on RE as the main place for such discussions.<sup>46</sup>

And further, with respect to the teaching of ID in religious education classes:

If it is not possible to present intelligent design or creationism as scientific theories in Science then teachers should not present them as scientific theories in religious education.<sup>47</sup>

The experience of the international community of educationalists and scientists would suggest a high degree of caution be exercised with respect to notions of integrating ID into school science or even religion curricula.

## Conclusions

In keeping with present international trends it would be inadvisable to include ID in school science curricula on the basis that ID has been deemed to be unscientific. Caution should also be exercised concerning the introduction of ID into school religion curricula if it is being presented as a type of scientific theory.

Given the global interest in ID in recent years as a way to point to an intelligence behind the universe, there may be a sense of disappointment that ID has not measured up to expectations. Yet there are other more rigorous avenues that may be explored. The anthropic principle (the fine tuning of the universe for life) may be used as a vehicle for the investigation and teaching of complex scientific phenomenon to students. For example, students may be guided in a problem based learning approach when studying the fine tuning of physical and chemical constants, gravity, nuclear forces, the structure of the carbon atom, the water molecule, or the make up of the atmosphere. All have a long history of scientific investigation and rigour, and even the study of the history of their investigation and elucidation teaches a student as much about how science developed historically as it does about the phenomenon being studied. The anthropic principle seems a much more persuasive argument for those looking for evidence of the work of an intelligent cause behind the universe. **TEACH**<sup>®</sup>

*The next volume of TEACH will include an article discussing a form of the design argument which is more widely accepted by Christians.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> David Wroe, 'Intelligent design' an option: Nelson. *The Age*, August 11, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The full text of this letter may be found at: <http://www.science.unsw.edu.au/news/2005/intelligent.html>

<sup>3</sup> Michael Behe, *Darwin's black box*. (New York: Simon and

Schuster, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Le Gros, *Paley's natural theology*. (London: The Christian Evidence Committee of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1885), 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Behe, *Darwin's black box*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-44.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-73 and 74-97.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Walter L. Bradley and Charles B. Thaxton, "Information and the origin of life," in James P. Moreland, ed., *The creation hypothesis*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1994), 203.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The blind watchmaker*. (New York: Norton, 1986), 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> For an earlier discussion, see Ewan Ward and Marty Hancock, "Intelligent design: The biochemical challenge to Darwinian evolution," *Christian Science and Spirituality*, 2 (2001): 7-24.

<sup>17</sup> William A. Dembski, "Redesigning science" in William A. Dembski, ed., *Mere creation: Science, faith and intelligent design*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1998), 98-108

<sup>18</sup> Adapted from: William A. Dembski, "Redesigning science" in William A. Dembski, ed., *Mere creation: Science, faith and intelligent design*. 99.

<sup>19</sup> William A. Dembski, *Intelligent design: The bridge between science and theology*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1999), 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-134.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from: William A. Dembski, *Intelligent design: The bridge between science and theology*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1999), 47.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>25</sup> Simon Conway Morris, *Darwin's compass: How evolution discovers the song of creation*. (2005 Boyle Lecture) (www document: [http://www.stmarylebow.co.uk/?Boyle\\_Lecture:2005](http://www.stmarylebow.co.uk/?Boyle_Lecture:2005)) August 16, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Simon Conway Morris, *Life's solution: Inevitable humans in a lonely universe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Davies, *The Goldilocks enigma: Why is the universe just right for life?* (London: Penguin, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Michael Denton, *Nature's destiny: How the laws of biology reveal purpose in the universe*. (New York: Free Press, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Denton, *Evolution: A theory in crisis*. (Bethesda, Md.: Adler & Adler, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Francis S. Collins, *The language of God*. (New York: Free Press, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>36</sup> Ian Musgrave, "Evolution of the bacterial flagellum," in Matt Young and Taner Edis, eds., *Why intelligent design fails: A scientific critique of the new creationism*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 72-84.

<sup>37</sup> Robert M. Macnab, "The bacterial flagellum: Reversible rotary propeller and type-III export apparatus." *Journal of Bacteriology*, 181 (1999): 7149-7153.

<sup>38</sup> Ward and Hancock, "Intelligent design: The biochemical challenge to Darwinian evolution," 21.

<sup>39</sup> William A. Dembski, *The design revolution: Answering the toughest questions about intelligent design*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2004), 321.

<sup>40</sup> *Dover Area School District School Board press release for biology curricula*, November 2004. (www document: [http://www2.ncseweb.org/kvd/exhibits/DASD/2004-11-19\\_DASD\\_press\\_release\\_Biology\\_Curriculum.pdf](http://www2.ncseweb.org/kvd/exhibits/DASD/2004-11-19_DASD_press_release_Biology_Curriculum.pdf)) July 29, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> John Haught and Adam Shapiro, *Conversation with John Haught on evolution, intelligent design and the recent Dover trial*. (www document: <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/ArticleDetail/tabid/68/id/9482/Default.aspx>) July 29, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Case 4:04-cv-02688-JEJ Document 342 Filed 12/20/2005 Page 136-137 (www document: [http://www.pamd.uscourts.gov/kitzmiller/kitzmiller\\_342.pdf](http://www.pamd.uscourts.gov/kitzmiller/kitzmiller_342.pdf)) July 29, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> *Science and Religion in Schools Project*. <http://www.srsp.net/>

<sup>44</sup> Martin Rogers, *The science and religion debate in schools across the world*. (www document: <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/10327/Default.aspx>) July 29, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> *Science and Religion in Schools Project*.

<sup>46</sup> Science and Religion in Schools Project. *Some guidance on the teaching of creationism and ID in schools*. (www document: <http://www.srsp.net/new/guidanceid.html>) July 29, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*



# Dealing with historical movies in the History and English classroom

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## Abstract

**Movies based on historical events can be of value to the teacher of History and English. Unlike documentaries however, they are not used as much as they might be in the History classroom, because as essentially fictional texts, they pose problems of interpretation for the historian. Given a correct understanding of how history and cinema interact, and how the cinema differs as a historical source from conventional records, the History teacher can make the most of movies as texts that reveal not so much what happened in history, but rather the importance of the event to later generations. Senior English teachers, who face the challenge of teaching the nature of representation in various texts, could also find a better understanding of history and cinema useful. Movies are sources that allow the student to explore issues of bias, representation and interpretation, and they have the added potential advantage of being texts that are intrinsically interesting to students.**

## Introduction

While the use of documentaries is common in the History classroom, an under-used potential resource is movies based on historical events. Senior English teachers have a slightly different challenge in meeting syllabus needs on the nature of texts in different genres and media, especially in the Advanced course, section C, Representation and Text. Historical movies have the advantage of offering a compelling narrative which can engage the interest of young History and English students in ways that written texts or conventional pedagogic methods might not. However, historical movies present a number of issues which must be understood and addressed before their benefit can be maximised in the classroom. The primary concern of movie makers is the box-office; their films must work as cinematic entertainment first, to which the demands of history must be subjected, or run the risk of producing a worthy but dull movie. Cinema itself has particular codes and generic limitations

which shape the nature of its historical dialectic. Despite the problems, historical movies can be a very rich resource for History and English teachers who know how to use them. To make the most of historical films, we need to consider the relationships between three areas: history, fiction, and film.

## History and fiction

David Lowenthal's book *The past is a foreign country*<sup>1</sup> contains the best concise coverage of the issues of history and fiction. In the chapter *Knowing the past*, he argues that the past is alien—the foreign country of his metaphor. Both the historian and the fiction writer give us access to the past by making its foreignness familiar, by explaining it in terms of the present, and by giving it structure and shape. Contrary to the claims of some historians, who set themselves up as telling *the* truth, their work can never simply record the past; it always provides a construct of the significance of the past. This involves a process of selection of evidence and a weighing of value. As such it always involves interpretation, which inevitably brings into play the writer's own perspectives, ideology and inherent biases. Historians undertake a selective shaping, clarifying, tidying and elucidating in order to provide a coherent knowledge of the past. This is always done through hindsight, through giving the past a structure and significance which was not there when the events were happening. Inevitably, the historian orders the past according to the framework of the present. Thus each age writes history according to its own concerns. This of course removes the notion that history is an absolutely true record of the past. It does, however, give some light on the past, and approximates the truth.<sup>2</sup>

The debate between historians over the nature of history has continued, especially as post-modern approaches have shaken the certainty that perhaps influenced older writers. Some scholars have emphasised how the boundaries between history and fiction have been far less distinct than historians might have acknowledged in the past. Hayden White, for example, argues that history is essentially the same as fiction through history's use of genre types

“Historical movies offer a compelling narrative which can engage the interest of students in ways that written texts might not”

and narrative frames which impose on history a fictive orderliness and purposefulness absent in the events themselves. Others, like Noel Carroll, have countered White by insisting that while historians select and shape using literary conventions, their work is still distinct from that of fiction writers because of the need for historians to remain faithful to standards of external and (relatively) objective evidence that do not apply to writers of fiction.<sup>3</sup> However, the dilemma is most evident in the genre of historical fiction, which owes something to the traditions of both history and fiction.

Historical fiction, like history, strives for verisimilitude to give readers a feel for the period. But where the historian is forbidden either to invent or to overlook relevant material, historical novelists are free to invent or ignore characters, motives, and events as best suits their purpose. Novelists may recreate the past without the obligation to be fair or objective. This subjectivity allows fiction to explore elements of the past that a historian cannot properly contemplate—the hidden and unrecorded, particularly of motive and character. Arguably, the historical novelist offers more in some respects than the historian, because the novel brings the past to life. Historians may dispute the implication that they do not bring the past to life, but they must concede that they work within tighter constraints than novelists, for whom invention is a legitimate resource.

Like history, written and cinematic historical fiction speaks to the present, but uses the past to address contemporary issues. There are four motives for moving present issues into the past. The first is to use the past to authenticate authority in the present, in much the same way as successive recent Australian Prime Ministers Paul Keating and John Howard have evoked the Anzac Legend to legitimise their actions or policies. The second is more subversive, exposing unpalatable present truths through the safety valve of a setting in the past. The third is an escape into nostalgia, seeking a lost golden age, again in the manner of Howard evoking Australian values that he feared new generations might be losing, and the fourth is the search for origins to discover the foundations of a civilisation or culture, as with many of the brashly nationalistic Australian period films of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> These motives imply an engagement between the novel or the movie and national myths, with the text acting either to affirm or deny the validity of the myths.

As documents addressed to the present, historical films are indicators of what a nation's filmmakers consider to be important historical events and values for their own times. Hence a study of historical fiction film offers useful insights into the

mythic significance of those events for the culture that upholds them.

As we have seen, the relationship between history and fiction is often problematic. Many works of historical fiction and film inhabit a grey area between the discipline of history and the freedom of expression of fiction, a territory that Lowenthal terms “faction”. He describes it as “a compromise that claims the virtues of both while accepting the limitations of neither”. He notes the tendency for television history to indulge in this, claiming adherence to the facts while freely inventing, adding perceptively that “visual images are more convincing than written accounts”. The power of faction lies particularly in the popular belief that history is the facts, the objective truth, the reality of the past. By imitating history's fidelity to detail and authenticity, faction is able to pass off its inventions and ideological stances as truth.<sup>5</sup>

### Truth, realism and film

Film and television present a particular difficulty in this area, because of cinema's habitual imitation of reality. In the first instance, the camera mimics human eyesight by recording events in a way that is similar to how we see them in real life. The camera does this by its very nature, as opposed to painting for instance, where the artist is not bound to record a literal image of the subject. The authenticity of film is further heightened by the use of realist cinema codes such as realistic sets and costumes, chronological time, and editing techniques, which cloak the constructed nature of film in a naturalistic disguise. This reality is so persuasive that some war journalists, for example, have measured the reality of actual combat by how closely it corresponded to what they had seen in movies. Further, film may appear real because it offers an emotional world that viewers can relate to. Even melodramatic soap operas or non-naturalistic cartoons may be rated realistic by viewers who recognise their own personal conflicts in the heightened drama of television. The problem is that films often appear as unmediated reflections of the truth, whereas in fact they always construct a truth. Contrary to popular belief, the camera always lies. It always takes a point of view, and influences through what it reveals or leaves out of the frame. Lighting, camera angle, shot size, film stock and other technical aspects further add bias to the apparently objective image. To make the most of historical movies, we need to identify what version of reality they construct, and by what means filmmakers authenticate that reality.

Historical films go one step further in identifying themselves as truthful. Fiction films characteristically anchor themselves to some referent, some cultural

“*Historical film inhabits a grey area between the discipline of history and the freedom of expression of fiction*”

code such as genre which allows us quick access to its meanings. The genre characteristics of the western, for example its incredible sharp-shooting heroes, are widely recognised, regardless of their lack of correlation with reality, but few, if any, confuse these codes with reality.

The history film, however, uses a referent of a different nature. By borrowing the trappings of events generally known to have happened in the past, historical films use as their referent something external to the creative processes, something that existed before the movie. Therefore audiences tend to give it an objectivity and actuality that genre codes cannot match. The existence of genre codes depends entirely on the literary and cinematic fictions of writers and filmmakers, but the past exists as cultural and historical capital, regardless of and independent of the arts (although it survives in popular consciousness through the mediation of historians and artists), and this independence lends considerable authenticity and realism to the historical film.

The nature of documentary films helps us understand the issue of referents more clearly. Bill Nichols argues that the external referent separates fiction from documentary, saying that the fiction film bears a metaphoric resemblance to reality, whereas the documentary is perceived more as a replica than a likeness. "Instead of a world, we are offered access to *the world*."<sup>6</sup> He states that the filming of a death in a documentary means that an actual death took place; in fact not just a death, but *the* death that was portrayed. A death in a fiction film, however, indicates an event that has only occurred within the discourse of the film. In making a distinction between the metaphor of fiction and the indexical nature of documentary, Nichols quotes Jerry Kuehl as saying:

At the heart of documentaries lie truth claims, and these claims are based on arguments and evidence. Did Khrushchev ever lose his temper in public? Film of him banging his shoe on the desk at the U.N. may not convince everyone; film of Telly Savalas wearing the Order of Lenin and banging a desk on the set at Universal City will convince no-one.<sup>7</sup>

This is only partly true, for what needs to be remembered is that Telly Savalas, while not the index of truth, still bears a closer relationship to the historical world than another fiction film which might have invented an event by a Soviet President that never occurred. Because Khrushchev actually banged his shoe, Savalas' performance has greater potency. Thus the metaphor of the historical film is a much stronger signifier of the actual than the metaphors of most fiction films, which is what makes historical films so powerful and persuasive

as history. So, in using movies in the classroom, we need to identify the external referents used to authenticate their view of history.

Hence, historical fiction films blur the distinction between fact and metaphor to varying degrees, but the apparent truthfulness of a film will depend to a large extent on the relationship it constructs between the historical world and its story. Historical dramas range across a spectrum from fictions to fictions. The latter adopt various strategies to authenticate their truthfulness. The classic American film, *The birth of a nation* (1915), has moments of re-enactment which aim to recapture on film historical events which preceded the camera, and takes them very seriously, giving them elaborate footnotes in the inter-titles. D. W. Griffiths, the director, felt that in the future films like his would replace history books, and people would be able to see objective history as it was, without the confusion of differing historical opinions. While historians and film scholars take issue with the simplistic view of that era, people today can still confuse historical movies with history. At the other end of the spectrum, some films merely adopt a historic setting in which to enact their acknowledged fictions, while other films position themselves at various points in between. But regardless of where films position themselves, the best that historical movies can do is to give an image, an interpretation, rather than a definitive view.

## Cinema as historical text

Fiction film presents additional problems for the historian generally unaccustomed to working with moving images. Historians typically expect more from film than it can deliver. One hazard is the sequential nature of the medium, where event follows event, without time for the viewer to stop and reflect. Hence film gravitates towards narrative rather than analysis, and atmosphere rather than fact. It is very poor at abstract ideas. This does not mean that historical drama is free of interpretation; indeed it tends to be more expansive and explicit in its interpretations than does history because it is less obligated to correspond to the known evidence. But it does so through the force of emotional rather than rational persuasion.

Characteristically films are more cryptic and simplistic in dealing with historical complexities; written histories, which allow for variable-paced reading, re-reading and reflection, are more likely to represent the complexity of reality. Alternate possibilities are usually ignored in films, where cause and effect are usually simply and directly linked, giving history a certain air of inevitability. This is generally forced on film-makers because of the limited time they have to present their subject

“Griffiths felt that films like his would replace history books, and people would be able to see objective history as it was, without the confusion of differing historical opinions”

(usually around two hours and rarely more than three), and because greater complexity has the potential to confuse the viewer, who is forced to watch usually at a single pace and without pause. Historians are rarely allowed such simplicity, having to juggle a multitude of contributing factors with a host of possible outcomes. Historical film rarely questions its sources, usually offering a superficial view of events. At best, film can offer multiple readings of a single event by showing it through the eyes of various witnesses, a technique which is growing in popularity in fictional film, but is yet to have a big impact on historical movie making. Perhaps its best recent incarnation is in the two films of Clint Eastwood, *Flags of our fathers* (2006) and *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), which offer empathetic American and Japanese perspectives on the battle for the island in 1945.

Some historians are annoyed at the simplifications of film history, but this overlooks the fact that the various media have different strengths and weaknesses in communication. The moving image is relatively weak in conveying abstract ideas, such as class conflict, but can express with great emotional power a particular instance of that conflict through a narrative revolving around individual characters. Hence film's tendency is always towards the particular, rather than the general. The manner in which films generalise is through the portrayal of individuals who act as representative types already familiar to the audience, usually drawn from well-known genres or national mythology. These particular characters, through their mythic associations, implicitly embody a generalisation. So, when using historical movies, we need to identify the use of types, and their mythological origin, and what generalisations they stand for.

Another problem for historians is what is perceived as the errors that films perpetrate. As we have observed, the very nature of film means that history must be simplified, and this is where some 'errors' occur. In a fifty minute documentary, a commentary must be no longer than 1500 words or else the audience:

Will be repelled, not informed. The consequences of this may be quite sobering to an academician: it is that whatever the writer wishes to say ought to be said in the equivalent of ... a *fifteen-minute* lecture. There is no way around this. If he tries to say more his audiences will understand less.<sup>9</sup>

Film's principal mode of communication is through its images; historians trained in the written word constantly evaluate what is said and are unfairly critical.

Furthermore, the high cost of film production

means that filmmakers must ensure that their product will reach the largest possible audience. Filmmakers make what they think will sell, and often draw their subject matter and their perspectives from popular literature. If this is at the expense of thorough research and historical accuracy, then so be it. In the end it is the producer who bears responsibility for the failure of the film; historians rarely have to face up to the commercial realities of film and television. It is true that historians often have to accommodate the financial considerations of book publishers, but historical works can be published economically, often with grants of a few thousand dollars, to specialised audiences in a way that is virtually impossible for the cinema. Even fiction can be published relatively cheaply in comparison to the multi-million dollar budgets of the average movie.

Besides, cinematic histories are not about conveying information but about sharing some of the passion and enthusiasm of the producer for the subject. Movies are not intended as precise historical documents, and for historians to worry about 'mistakes' is a mistake itself. Often a factual error is deliberately used to create an appropriate mood, as happened in the 1969 movie *The Battle of Britain*, where a Luftwaffe officer gives a Nazi salute instead of a military one. The effect transformed an otherwise dull scene by highlighting conflicting ideologies, but famed German ace and historical advisor General Adolf Galland stormed off the set in protest at the travesty of the facts.<sup>9</sup> In any case historical films should not be watched for the history they purport to show, but for what they can tell us about the values of the society that made and watched them.

The problem of historical accuracy still exists, however, for while teachers may recognise the tenuous relationships between history, film, and truth, students are often not so discriminating. As we have seen, filmmakers adopt many strategies to make their films more credible, and when these are overtly or implicitly given the label of 'truth' or "true story", they are often read as being true in every respect. A university tutor commented to the author about how difficult it was to get her first year students to read about the Gallipoli campaign—they felt they already knew the facts because they had seen Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli*.

Similarly, distinguished journalist Sir Simon Jenkins took issue with four popular historical films of the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Shadowlands*, *In the name of the Father*, *JFK*, and *Schindler's list*, for deliberately dressing fiction as fact. He admired the films as films, and acknowledged the right of filmmakers to invent, and the power of "falsity [to] tell [its] own sort of truth", but deplored the way

**“Movies are not intended as precise historical documents; often a factual error is deliberately used to create an appropriate mood”**



in which “the film business should no longer be able to tell a lie from a truth”. His argument was with filmmakers who say, as the director of *In the name of the Father*, Jim Sheridan, did, “I can’t draw conclusions, I can only put the facts as I know them”. Jenkins added: “But he puts facts that he knows to be untrue”, then listed the distortions the film made.<sup>10</sup> His opposition was not to filmmakers distorting, but to those who then insisted that their films were still the truth, rather than acknowledging them to be fictional re-presentations of historical events. His argument was that, by passing off distortions and outright inventions as reality, these filmmakers used the same techniques they so often deplored in the villains of their films—using lies for political and personal advantage. This is a valid point. Films that deal with factual topics are dishonest if they adopt strategies that conceal their constructed nature and fictitious elements. It is no point arguing the right of literary constructs to manipulate and invent if they have passed themselves off in the guise, not of fiction, but of truth, reality and fact. There is, of course, no problem with films taking an ideological stance; in fact not only is it virtually unavoidable, it is one of the key functions of fiction to raise moral, ethical and philosophical issues. The problem is when filmmakers and promoters insist on the objectivity of their portrayal, that their philosophy and morals are the only truth on the subject. In using historical films in a teaching context, we need to ask what claims to truthfulness they make, and how those claims are received by their audiences.

“The most valuable use of historical movies is not so much as documents about the events, but as documents about the significance of the events for the culture that made the films”

## Conclusion

In effect, the most valuable use of historical movies is not so much as documents about the events, but as documents about the significance of the events for the culture that made the films. American movies about the Civil War or the Vietnam War may be poor sources of fact and chronology, but they are fascinating testimonies to the attitudes of Americans towards those conflicts at the time the films were made. Similarly, films about the convict era or Gallipoli reveal more about why these events are important to Australians than they may tell us about the actual period. The teacher of History or English will ask students to consider the attitude of a movie to its subject. What interpretation does it offer of the event? How does it connect the issues of the past with current concerns? Older historical movies often reveal shifts in social attitudes. Compare for example the representations of gender roles and ethnic minorities in older films. They offer revealing evidence about historical change. Movies also offer interpretations about the emotional significance of events, which history frequently lacks the evidence

to discuss. Films invite us to ask: How did this event affect people emotionally? Most of all, discerning teachers can use movies to motivate students to interrogate the evidence, to question why a particular representation emerged. As part of the syllabus requires students to investigate issues of bias and representation, and question the nature of evidence, films can be a stimulating way of studying potentially dull historiography and textuality. Oh, and one last word: as documents, movies can also be a lot of fun.

## TEACH<sup>R</sup>

Daniel Reynaud lectures in, and has published books and articles on, the interaction of history, fiction and film. His most recent book is *Celluloid Anzacs: The Great War through Australian cinema* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2007).

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<sup>2</sup> Lowenthal, 235-237.

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<sup>4</sup> Leger Grindon. (1994). *Shadow on the past: Studies in the historical fiction film*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Lowenthal, 229-231.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Nichols. (1991). *Representing reality: Issues and concepts in documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 109. Italics in original.

<sup>7</sup> Nichols, 115-116.

<sup>8</sup> Jerry Kuehl, “History on the public screen II,” in Paul Smith (ed). (1978). *The historian and film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 177. Italics in original.

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## Service learning in India

**Jason Hinze**

Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

### Introduction

**I have always enjoyed trying to do two things at once. Watching TV while ironing, talking on the phone while driving (hands free of course), and eating breakfast while reading are three recommended combinations. It feels great to be able to combine two tasks that compliment each other. In fact, at times, you would be considered a little strange if you were to do one task without the other. Ironing, by itself, is mundane, using your mobile in a stationary position is contradictory, and I am yet to see anyone reading the Weet-bix packet at a time other than during breakfast. Some things are meant to be done together. As we are discovering at Avondale College, 'learning to teach' and 'service learning' is another such pairing.**

"Service-Learning is often defined as an approach to teaching and learning in which service and learning are blended in a way that both occur and are enriched by the other" (Jeffrey, Anderson & Kevin, 2001). For the past two years a group of pre-service teachers studying at Avondale College have chosen to complete one of their practicum requirements in schools in India. This option forms part of a new Service-Learning Initiative offered in the Faculty of Education. This initiative gives education students the opportunity to gain practical teaching experience in a school where their skills, educational background, and willingness to serve are desperately needed.

On June 21, 2008, a group of nineteen people, seventeen students and two lecturers, boarded a plane from Sydney to Calcutta, then travelled to the remote town of Bodh Gaya in northern India. The plan was to place the pre-service teachers in one of two schools that had been set up for poor and orphaned children who would otherwise have no access to education. The local teachers in the schools had no training and little teaching experience. Having the pre-service teachers work alongside the local teachers created an exciting learning opportunity for all involved. Not only were the school students exposed to new ways of learning but both the pre-service teachers and local teachers learned about creating a learning environment and facilitating learning.

There is no doubt in my mind that we were able

to have an impact on the schools and community we went to serve. Presently, the two schools have a combined enrolment of over two hundred students. Without the support of the Avondale College pre-service teacher groups, the schools would most likely be closed. The pre-service teachers (this is the second year of this project) have been able to serve this community by going there to offer practical assistance and support; in addition, they've also raised money to purchase resources for the schools. In the two years that I have been leading this project, I have seen the schools change, the teachers develop and most importantly the school children grow as a direct result of the time and support that the pre-service teachers have provided.

Despite the fact that the impact on the local school and community was beyond what was expected or even hoped for, this has not been the focus of the memories shared by the pre-service teachers. Conversations are dominated not by what was achieved or the service performed but by what was learned as a result. We are the ones who have changed, we are the ones who have new hope, and we are the ones who have experienced growth.

The pre-service teachers were required to maintain a journal in which they recorded and reflected on their teaching and learning experiences. The comments below are extracts from these journals; they highlight the fact that when service and learning come together, each one enhances the other. The result is a rich learning experience.

### We learnt about the world's needs

"By the time we had travelled by taxi from the airport to our hotel in Calcutta, I felt like I had landed on another planet. I knew that India would be different, but could never have imagined or been prepared for what we experienced." (Jared Martin)

"Lining every street are bodies. How do any of them survive? I feel unsafe. How do they survive? What do they eat? Maybe rice? Where does it come from? So many bodies. What problems could we have that could compare to this? We are here. We have seen. How can we speak so casually of what we see? My heart is breaking. I am helpless. But I cannot be distant. I see them when I close my eyes. So many sleeping. They have nowhere to go. There are so many. Too many! I don't want to look, to stare. But I don't want to forget." (Elyse Cameron)





# Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

“Our trip to India revealed the need that exists in the world today and, more importantly, the responsibility we have to answer that need.” (Sandro Bastos)

## We learnt about the value of education

“I will never forget how grateful and eager to learn these kids are. It has shown me the great need for education in the world. The world needs me.” (Krystle Fisher)

“Today was amazing. I left school feeling like I had accomplished something great!” (Ashleigh Bell)

“Even though they tell you all your life how valuable education is I never really understood this until India. Knowledge and education is such a craved and treasured commodity there. Students are just bursting to know more, to learn about the world and to become something better. I felt so privileged to be able to share with them the knowledge I have, to inspire them to learn more, to show them a God who cares.” (Jess McNeill)

“Seeing a school with so little, where the students want so much to be helped, reminds me of the value of education. We take this gift for granted every day of our lives.” (Elyse Taylor)

## We learnt about teaching effectively

“For me it was exciting to see how the kids’ enthusiasm to learn grew and grew the more they were exposed to our teaching strategies. It was so rewarding and it reminded me what being a teacher is all about ... I still can’t believe they thrashed us in cricket!” (Klinton Neirinckx)

“I learnt today that teaching can not happen without trust.” (Jessica Merchant)

“No day so far has followed the exact plan I mapped out; however, it has emphasised the importance of being flexible.” (Kaylee Robbie)

“I realised that if I just have fun, they learn so much better. Obviously we’ve been told this over and over but I saw it in action today.” (Jessica Merchant)

“I have learnt that with a little patience, creativity and love anybody can learn.” (Emma Keegan)

“Today seemed extra challenging for some reason. The kids seemed to be really restless and rowdy. I learnt, through the struggles of using a translator, that good teaching is not just content, it’s more about how it is delivered.” (Kaylee Robbie)

“I learnt the importance of allowing the children to show their work to others. It gives a sense of accomplishment to the student.” (Josh Smith)

“I’m finding the lack of resources and computer access frustrating but it is making me so much more appreciative of the privileges we have in Australia. While I am struggling a little bit now with planning my lessons, this experience will make me more creative and resourceful as a teacher.” (Kaylee Robbie)

“Yesterday we had the students stick craft materials onto the shape of numbers. Today we integrated

Mathematics into Physical Education. The kids appeared to really enjoy the classes and were able to learn in a fun way. It worked really well. We are getting better at integrating a range of different subjects into one lesson.” (Patrice Patel)

## We learnt about teaching students from a different culture

“This trip has helped me understand more of Indian life and culture and how different other cultures can be. This will make me more culturally aware and accepting in my own classroom.” (Kaylee Robbie)

“We are all equal—no matter who we are or where we live or what we do.” (Ashleigh Bell)

## We learnt about the value of service

“Seeing all the poverty in Calcutta was a really big eye opener for me. When I teach back home I will be really intentional about making sure my students are aware of how fortunate they are. I would also like to instil in my students the value of service and selflessness so that my students can make a difference in the world that we live in.” (Kaylee Robbie)

## We learnt about how to love

“Even through their poverty, they showed such kindness and love and were the highlight of my trip.” (Natasha Knopper)

“The relationships we built have enticed us to continue a bond of friendship with these people.” (Andy Matthes)

“Bright orange garlands were thrown around our necks and all the children stood around us, singing a welcome song. For the next two hours, I was showered in petals, my skin touched and pulled and children climbed all over me. It was a truly humbling experience.” (Mikaela Prout)

For the first 17 years in Calcutta, Mother Teresa worked as a Geography teacher and then as a Principal at Saint Mary’s High School. Like all great teachers, she had the ability to combine the art of teaching with the act of service. From my experience with this project, learning to serve is an integral part of effective teaching and I can think of no better tool for creating effective teachers than giving them the opportunity to teach, serve and learn all at the same time.

This sentiment was summed up by Mikaela Prout, one of the pre-service teachers, when she wrote, “India is amazing, the teaching experience invaluable and personally, it has changed my life!” TEACH

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[Photography: India Team]

## Potential plus

### Why orphans matter to teachers and their students

**Brad Watson**

Lecturer, International Development Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Avondale College, NSW

#### Introduction

**What can Australian and New Zealand school students and teachers learn from a relationship with a small orphanage in rural Cambodia? Would it be inspiring and fascinating or tragic and depressing? Would students be interested and engaged or would it make extra work for busy educators already overwhelmed with the realities of classroom management, curriculum and extra-curricular activities? These are questions I recently asked staff in five schools and the answers were surprising. Unanimously, without hesitation, they indicated that their schools had already adopted an orphanage, were considering doing so or would welcome the opportunity!**

“Teachers may not realise the magnitude or urgency of the problem of orphan care”

Unfortunately, teachers may not realise the magnitude or urgency of the problem of orphan care. By the year 2010 it is estimated that South Africa alone will have an orphan population (largely due to HIV and AIDS) of approximately two million.<sup>1</sup> In 2003, 43.4 million orphans lived in Africa with another 87.6 million orphans in Asia.<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, the world's leading child development authority, estimated that in 2003 there were 143 million orphans under 18 years of age in 93 countries of interest.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising that well informed, compassionate teachers are increasingly asking what they can do to help.

The term 'orphan', however, is widely misunderstood and many students and teachers have an inaccurate perception of what being an orphan involves. Not all the children in the statistics above were uncared for and most studies of orphans note the existence of a surviving parent or a care arrangement with extended family.

Teachers will know well that children experience disadvantage on a variety of levels. In Sub-Saharan Africa double orphans are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of school attendance<sup>4</sup>, nutrition, personal security and mental health. HIV orphaned children experience significantly more stigma, and may experience more depression, anxiety, psychosomatic reactions and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms than other orphans.<sup>5</sup>

Just as different school models exist in Australia, each with their unique strengths and weaknesses, orphan care models differ too. The most common types of orphan care include residential care facilities, adoption and foster care programs, and support by relatives or other community members.

In deciding which orphans to help, school principals and teachers should be aware that traditional institutions probably provide the easiest vehicle for support, communication and resourcing. However, it may be wise to support orphanages that take in children only as a last resort, or that commit to high ethical standards of care and place children in foster care, within their community, where possible.

A 2004 World Bank report concluded that

Whenever possible, orphaned siblings should remain together and with their kin and in their community of origin. When relatives are not available, placement in families willing to adopt or foster a child is the most appropriate solution. Institutions should always be considered a last resort, and small-scale foster homes should be favoured over residential placements such as orphanages.<sup>6</sup>

The *Children on the brink* 2004 report<sup>7</sup> is highly critical of institutional orphan care models and these criticisms should be considered when entering into sister-school arrangements between Australian schools and orphanages in other countries. The report argues that: traditional residential institutions usually have too few caregivers; children are more likely to miss out on affection, attention and social connection; children are more likely to be segregated by age and sex; and that institutional life tends to promote dependency rather than autonomy.

Of concern to teachers will be criticisms in the report above that for orphans in institutional care, transition away from institutional life can be difficult; social and cultural skills may be underdeveloped; children may be isolated from important social security nets; long-term vulnerability of children may increase; and children may lose access to family land and resources. In addition, the cost of care per child is substantially higher than family care, consuming resources that could be used for many more vulnerable children in less formal models.



# Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

Given the overwhelmingly negative perception of institutional care mechanisms for orphans, governments and aid organisations have become more intentional in supporting models that are perceived to avoid the pitfalls listed above. Schools wanting to offer support to orphans should do so too.

International Children's Care (ICC) Australia, is a small, Christian child sponsorship NGO based in Victoria and affiliated with ICC International. Their innovative ICC Village Model of orphan care is based on groupings of family homes in which house parents (usually a married couple) model family life to a maximum of twelve children of mixed age and sex, on a campus with up to ten other homes. ICC Australia promotes a broader development approach in which their homes and centres increasingly act as a hub for community development activities (a lighthouse). Only as a last resort—when avenues for family support, foster care and community placement have been exhausted—will a child enter ICC Children's Homes. Dean Beveridge, the CEO, writes "The emphasis is to keep the child in the highest level of care".<sup>8</sup>

Phillip Lodge, a teacher at Chairo Christian School in Victoria, is enthusiastic about his school's ongoing sister-school relationship with an ICC orphanage in Cambodia and is also a board member of ICC Australia. Having personally volunteered at the school with his wife and children (teaching English), he passionately supports fundraising and points to the success of 'Middle-Fest' an annual small business event run by students from which a share of profits are used to provide playground equipment for orphans. Amongst other benefits, he notes that his own teaching has been enriched, student self-esteem and community spirit have been generated, and students have been inspired by the orphan children and their stories of survival and hope. A regular newsletter is circulated to parents and Phillip points out that "poverty is also featured in integrated thematic units of study in the 5-6 and 7-8 coursework in Bible, English and Humanities".<sup>9</sup>

## Interview

The following transcript consists of extracts from an interview with Merylyn Beveridge, International Program Manager for ICC Australia in the Asia Region. Merylyn is especially pleased with the sister school arrangement with Chairo and hopes other schools will participate in similar exchanges.

Given the stringent criticism of institutional models of orphan care, and ICC's classification as an institutional model, it was appropriate to ask the difficult questions about cost-effectiveness, sustainability and philosophical positioning.

**Brad:** Merylyn, you have been involved with ICC since it was established in Asia in 1991. Given the

strong criticism that exists of traditional orphan care models, what makes ICC's orphan care model unusual?

**Merylyn:** Brad, from the beginning, in the late 1970s, ICC chose a model that was much more than just food and shelter. It was designed for the social, cultural, emotional, spiritual, mental and physical development of the child. The ICC Village model is based on the family unit and not an institution or dormitory. Children are placed in the ICC Village when there are no options for them in a community based care situation.

**Brad:** There has been a lot of doubt about traditional orphanage and orphan care models in recent decades. Do children miss out on affection, attention and social connectedness if they are placed in a traditional orphanage?

**Merylyn:** That's valid. We believe that children need care in a family environment so we don't place children in impersonal dormitories. Instead, we use a cottage, group-home plan where children are placed in individual homes located on small acreages. Local couples parent a group of 10 to 12 children who socialise, work and play together. They also mix with families in up to 10 other homes thus giving them a small village experience too.

**Brad:** A common criticism is that institutional care can create dependency, making it very difficult for some children to reintegrate into society when they leave.

**Merylyn:** Yes, it is something that we always have to be on guard against. Children need to know how to engage with their own culture and society, and they need the skills to function outside the ICC Village when it comes time to leave. Vocational skills are also an important part of the ICC philosophy, which is why we have farms and workshops as well as formal schooling in a local school. Measuring dependency and autonomy is difficult and we do have many children who have been greatly traumatised. You would expect them to have greater needs.

**Brad:** It is said that one weakness of institutional care is that it isolates children from important social security nets. How do you respond to that?

**Merylyn:** That can be true. In our ICC Australia program we ensure that the children are engaged in activities associated with the wider community. We also endeavour to keep them connected to their own communities wherever possible. However, we need

“It may be wise to support orphanages that take in children only as a last resort”

# Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

to keep in mind that many of the children we support in the ICC Villages have no social security net at all. In the Philippines most children are referred directly from social services. As I said before, children in our homes may have been traumatised, abandoned and in some cases be on the verge of death. What some academics probably don't consider is that children in our care are not just 'dumped' when they leave. Their net happens to be the ICC home and Village itself, which is like a real family.

**Brad:** Something that worries community development purists is the observation that some families may use orphanages as an economic-coping mechanism until the child becomes older.

**Merilyn:** That is very true, and again, it is something we have to guard against. ICC homes should be a last resort and we have become increasingly committed to screening children to ensure that other care options in their best interest are not available in their communities. We also have to be on guard because sometimes families want a child cared for until they become a productive asset and that creates a dilemma because the child can be exploited.

**Brad:** Talking about alternatives, is the cost of care in ICC homes substantially higher per child than informal family care and if that is the case, why persist with such a model?

**Merilyn:** The ICC village is designed to cater for the children who totally fall through the cracks of the broader community development programs we operate and informal family care networks. There is no doubt that the ICC Village model of care involves higher costs. But, when calculating costs you have to compare the needs of the children and the quality of care, not just the unit cost for each child.

ICC Australia is committed to a broader community care program. The community based programs in areas surrounding our centres include micro enterprise training, vocational training, health education and intervention, agricultural training, and others. ICC Australia sees these programs as fighting the orphan problem on the front line by building capacity in the local community to care for orphaned and destitute children. More and more of the children we help are actually supported in their local communities...In many countries in Asia where we are working, the governments are keen to encourage foster parenting of orphans in local families. We can use our centres for those who have absolutely no other option and also the centre can be like a Lighthouse in the communities for helping families in extreme poverty with such things as skills

training and micro finance. In this way we can be a preventative to the orphan problem escalating in the area. Through ICC Australia's Lighthouse program, and under ICC Australia's supervision, we encourage more informal community based structures. As researchers have recommended, ICC Australia is actively supporting local communities in caring for orphaned and vulnerable children.

**Brad:** Merilyn, what do you think about those who argue that child sponsorship is an expensive, time-consuming, ineffective method of helping poor children and that it meets the needs of sponsors more than the needs of children?

**Merilyn:** Wow. Where do I start? ICC is conscious of the many problems with institutional care and philosophically we are opposed to traditional, western orphanages that were the result of the Industrial Revolution. In terms of what we do, I see a lot of benefits...We have a personalised, family care model, not a dormitory model. Each family does function as a family unit and our house parents are supervised and resourced. What we do is easily monitored, the staff are carefully screened and there are checks and balances in place. You don't get all that in an informal community network. Our children have very good health care and even psychological care. Also, I have observed benefits in bringing children together who have had similar experiences and circumstances. Very hurt children have a better chance in our homes. What else? We preserve heritage and culture in a deliberate way. Relatives are encouraged to visit homes but when vulnerable children return home we support them so they are not exploited. What we do is not cheap but the quality of care is very high. We often operate elementary schools on the site to ensure the children have added support in gaining good foundations in education. They also have access to a farm and supporting industries and vocational training aspects, which adds to the cost.

**Brad:** Is the cost justified when you could help so many more children in community care programs?

**Merilyn:** We think so. But there is also a pragmatic consideration. Our donors expect high levels of care and we can provide that in the ICC Villages. We will continue to work with our donors to use the ICC homes in conjunction with community development and support for other models of care when that suits children with different circumstances and needs. There really is no one-size-fits-all rule. Having said that, we have become convinced that our future direction will be keeping our centres for those who have no other options. Also our centres will provide

“We have become increasingly committed to screening children to ensure that our care option is in their best interest”

programs that will enable poverty stricken extended families in the community who truly love their orphaned relatives, to be released from extreme poverty and thus be able to care for their relatives.

**Brad:** What benefits do you see in sister school programs where students and teachers form a relationship with teachers and orphans in a developing country? Is that something you would like to see more of? For example, I was recently talking to Leyton Heise, Chaplain at Avondale Schools. He mentioned an Avondale Schools initiative to adopt an orphanage in Cambodia and get year 12 students to visit for a life-changing service experience instead of flying to the Gold Coast for a holiday or schoolies week after the HSC.

**Merilyn:** Yes, a sister-school relationship can be a good thing, especially for your students. There does need to be some training and negotiating if students visit orphans, so they fit in culturally and it becomes a positive experience for both groups.

## Concluding Comments

Schools can engage with orphanages in poor communities and the outcomes are exciting. Enthusiastic students who are socially aware can both help orphans and learn from them. Phillip Lodge asserts

Our school has a number of staff and students who are supporters of ICC. Students who raise money realise the power of their work to help free some people from poverty...the students learn they can be proactive and make a difference... those who have visited the orphanages were touched by the relationships that developed. The Khmer children were vibrant, happy people.<sup>10</sup>

There are, however, several suggestions to consider in forming a sister-school relationship.

1. Work through a credible organisation that can provide your school with regular feedback and motivation.
2. Ensure that the orphanage itself is credible and aware of the pitfalls of institutional care.
3. Remember that the benefit to students is in the ongoing relationship and raised consciousness of development needs. A quick fundraiser is a poor substitute for quality interaction and learning.
4. Do not underestimate the power of goodwill and altruism. Helping unselfishly may improve staff and student morale.
5. Facilitate culturally sensitive student and staff visits to sister-schools or orphanages.

Students need to know that impacting on one life is enough. Martin Luther King famously said "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of

true education". While some might contest the idea of character, and wonder if service does build character, I would agree with Lady Nancy Astor who once said "Real education should educate us out of self into something far finer; into a selflessness which links us with all humanity." Linking a school to an orphanage in a developing country is one way of linking students, unselfishly, to the needs of humanity. Although it represents extra work for a busy teacher, it provides the sort of richness for which the best education is known. **TEACH**

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Desmond and Gow, 2001, p.5.
- <sup>2</sup> UNICEF et al, 2004, p.3.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.7.
- <sup>4</sup> Monasch and Boerma, 2004, p.S57.
- <sup>5</sup> IRIN Special Report, 2008.
- <sup>6</sup> Subbarao and Coury, 2004, p.39.
- <sup>7</sup> UNICEF et al, 2004, p.19-20.
- <sup>8</sup> Beveridge, 15.09.2008, personal email.
- <sup>9</sup> Lodge, 15.09.2008, personal email.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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“*Linking a school to an orphanage in a developing country is one way of linking students, unselfishly, to the needs of humanity*”

### ICC Australia contact details

*Schools wishing to become involved in an ongoing relationship with orphans may contact:*

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Email: [info@iccaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@iccaustralia.org.au)

## “What am I doing here?”

Teachers share their passion and vision for teaching



**Linda Versteynen**

Teacher Wellington Adventist Primary, NZ

### 10 reasons I teach...

1. Because I love it
2. To make a difference in their lives
3. To show them what Jesus is like
4. Because God loves children
5. Because it gives me an opportunity to keep them growing towards Jesus
6. Because I'm passionate about children's learning, and seeing them progress
7. Because children are fun, open, transparent and real
8. Because they teach me about life
9. Because it is rewarding
10. Because they are a mirror and quickly show me my character.

This year God has shown me new things about what it means to be a teacher. After working in state schools for the last seven years, I've seen a wide range of teaching styles and techniques and have grown in ways I never thought I would, both personally and professionally. But the thing missing was Jesus! Now that I teach in a Christian school I can talk about Him as much as I want. I love how their faces light up when we do—the spontaneous comments they make and their simple truths about Him.

The children teach me so much about what it means to know God and be connected to Him. I pray that my teaching will always reflect God's love in action and words. My main objective for teaching now is to draw children close to the love of God, to teach them He is real and powerful and that He cares for each of them. I praise God that my motives for teaching have changed—that it's not just about ploughing through curriculum and never-ending assessments.

I am pleased to say that the reason I'm at Wellington Adventist School is because of Jesus. I consider it a privilege and a huge responsibility to teach His kids. May there be less of self in my room and more of Him. I seek answers, wisdom, knowledge and strength from God so I can do the enormous task put before me. It is only by His

grace and saving power that I live. May my life, teaching and whole character be patterned on the Master teacher, Jesus Christ.

I commit every plan, conversation, smile resource, meeting, interview, song, drawing and dance into His hands. May my teaching be effective, authentic, relational and thoughtful of Jesus.

### Moments that make it all worthwhile...

1. When they say powerful and spiritually discerning truths about God
2. When they 'get' what you are teaching and are motivated to share what they know with others
3. When they teach other children
4. When we laugh at ourselves
5. When they get excited about what they have learned
6. When you see progress
7. When they hug you and say 'I love you'.

**Angelia Reynolds**

Teacher, Balmoral Adventist School, NZ

I don't remember why she asked the question—perhaps her lecturer had set it as an exercise for her first practicum or maybe she herself was curious. Anyway, there it was, 'What ten qualities should a great teacher possess?'

I had never made such a list before, so on a summer's evening, I took some time to reflect on those qualities that I felt would be essential for a teacher to be and to practise.

### My ten qualities of a great teacher

1. A deep, living relationship with the Master Teacher—Jesus
2. A genuine love for her students
3. A passion for her work
4. An eye set on the 'big picture'—kids for God's kingdom
5. A desire to constantly improve herself as a professional
6. An open, honest and teachable spirit
7. Creative flair

“*I consider it a privilege and a huge responsibility to teach His kids*”



8. Orderliness
9. A desire for personal excellence from herself and her students
10. A beautiful smile—on the lips and in the eyes.

What do you think? How does this list compare with yours? What would you change? Our lists will always be unique to each one of us. The qualities you choose for your own list will be benchmarks for you to work towards, ten points to ponder and reflect on. These goals will help you keep your head above the curriculum-driven frenzy that can, at times, eat us all alive.

I find teaching a hugely exciting and demanding mission; it keeps me growing exponentially as a professional and as a person.

Why not grab a pen and paper now and, in the quietness of your classroom, create your own list. Go on. It will be worth it.

## Janese Cameron

Teacher, Palmerston North Adventist School, NZ

### What inspires me

Knowing I am an incredibly valuable masterpiece because God created me that way, blows me away. It is His grace that makes me priceless.

He gives me the passion to go to school each day. His willingness to work through me (a broken vessel) amazes me. He does it despite me! I can only try to do my best and let Him do the rest.

As a teacher, I endeavour to bring joy into my classroom by using humour, having fun times with my class and allowing the children to pray for each other every day. Thus, we are creating 'golden moments' to be remembered forever.

It inspires and motivates me to see the gains made by students who have struggled with their learning—I love those magic moments when they 'get it!' The hugs from students are special too. As they run to embrace me, I can't help think of the children running to be with Jesus. My prayer is that they get to meet Him and see Him through me.

## Kevin Petrie

Principal, Hamilton Adventist Primary, NZ

### The secret of success

There are numerous things for which we require

constant reminders. In our household you'll find teenagers receiving verbal refreshers to brush teeth or take a shower. I suspect we adults are no better. God Himself patiently reminds us of lessons He intended us to learn eons ago.

A little while back, my year 7-8 class became involved in discussing 'human ways' vs. 'God's ways'. The students were given a number of scriptural scenarios, then asked to provide common sense, logical, 'human solutions'. For example: An axe head falls into the water. The students were adamant that, given long enough, they could have found it. How about the pot of poisoned stew? Well throw it away, of course! As for the well with bitter water—dig a new one. Namaan would have been sent to the infirmary, the Shunamite's son would have received a beautiful funeral, and the boys who teased Elisha about being bald would have received a week of after-school detentions! As for warfare and international policy, a few talents of gold spent on Egyptian mercenaries should suffice to assist against the Syrian invaders.

Yet through each of the Biblical accounts of these events, we find a 'Lord of the illogical', giving scant time to human reasoning and logic. It made me consider how easy it is for individuals and institutions, especially in times of blessing, to subconsciously entertain the ludicrous notion that mortal wisdom somehow contributes to success. How frightening to catch myself making a decision without consulting God, particularly when immersed in a situation that in the first year at this job, would have elicited much prayer. Experience may be a great teacher but it is no substitute for seeking God's will. If you're as fully human as I, you'll possibly see this reflection in your own mirror.

Thorough planning, strategic excellence, and a focus on 'best practice' are of undeniable importance but they're not what really brings success. We need to better understand that God works in wonderful ways in spite of our efforts, not because of them. The Old Testament book of Joshua gets it right when it speaks of the various kings and lands Joshua conquered. The account ends with the reason why, "because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:42).

Looking back over the last few years, despite the myriad of things I could have done better, I can confidently add; "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." (Joshua 23:14) TEACH



*“Experience may be a great teacher but it is no substitute for seeking God's will”*



## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***The essential 55: An award winning educator's rules for discovering the successful student in every child***

Clark, R. (2003). New York: Hyperion.

#### **Marion Shields**

Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Avondale College, NSW

This delightful book is a New York Times Bestseller and it is easy to see why the author was awarded the Disney Teacher of the Year Award in 2001. The author's background provides a hint of the contents of this enjoyable paperback. Born in rural North Carolina, Ron Clark grew up in an extended family that included his grandmother. He writes:

She, along with my parents, gave me a true southern upbringing, which included respect, manners, and an appreciation of others. In addition to these ideals, I was shown how to enjoy life, take advantage of opportunities, and live every moment to the fullest.

Funds were scarce so following high school Ron accepted a teaching scholarship. However, despite his teaching qualifications, Ron was determined not to be a teacher as he preferred a life of travel and adventure—anything but work! Ron's mother had a different perspective and 'strongly' persuaded him to visit a local school with a particularly difficult 5th grade in need of a teacher. To his surprise it was love at first sight—he hasn't looked back!

Ron writes in an interesting and fast-paced style. This book is a practical guide for teachers everywhere. As Ron says:

Once I became a teacher, it became evident to me that many children aren't exposed to the type of guidance and opportunities that I had when I was growing up.

*The essential 55* are Ron Clark's personal guide to how life should be lived and appreciated. While the focus of these fifty-five rules is school and student related, it is broadly applicable to everyone. Guidance about successful relationships, courtesy, respect, honesty, unselfishness, leadership and kindness

contribute to a world view that is positive and responsive. It is a great sourcebook about having high standards, aiming for excellence and making education relevant and exciting. The Essential 55 probably should be compulsory reading for all those entering parliament!

*The essential 55* rules begin with:

When responding to any adult, you must answer by saying "Yes ma'am" or "No sir." Just nodding your head or saying any other form of yes or no is not acceptable. (Rule 1)

"Obvious!" you say? Yes, of course, but how often is this rule actually articulated in classrooms, particularly within the middle school years?

Rule 42:

When we return from a trip, you will shake my hand as well as the hand of every chaperone. You will thank us for taking the time to take you on the trip, and you will let us know that you appreciate having the opportunity to go. I am not concerned with being thanked: I am concerned with teaching you that it is appropriate to show appreciation when someone has gone out of his or her way to help you.

Yes, the 55 rules are commonsense and basic, but, if consistently applied, they have the capacity to transform school communities. The Essential 55 are timely reminders of the way teachers can raise classroom morale, school tone and levels of enjoyment in learning together. Some teachers who have adopted *The essential 55* introduce and practice a new rule each week.

For each of *The essential 55* rules, Ron explains the rationale, how he introduces it in the classroom, how it is applied and the benefits that follow. Along the way, he adds humorous anecdotes he has experienced during the journey. The book is not overtly Christian, but its underlying philosophy certainly is.

Ron Clark now inspires teachers, parent-teacher associations and school boards across the United States; his final words say it all:

If this book has done nothing else, I hope it has inspired you to make more of a difference in the lives of children. Guide them as they grow, show them in every way possible that they are cared for, and make special moments for them that will add magic to their lives, motivate them to make a difference in the lives of others, and, most important, teach them to love life.

Well worth the purchase! **TEACH**

## Soul shapers: A better plan for parents and educators

Roy, J. (2005). Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

### Lyndon Darko

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After years of supervising detentions, processing suspensions and organising after school work for students, I have come to the realisation that these general methods of behaviour modification rarely have any long term effect. The same offenders turned up on a regular basis to spend 'quality' time with me. This book helps us understand why such methods of behaviour modification have not been very successful.

Soul Shapers, by Jim Roy, is a book for all teachers. It provides insight into and case studies of student learning and management as it examines what three sources, William Glasser, Ellen White<sup>1</sup> and the Bible say about the relational aspects of dealing with school children.

### Intriguing aspects of Roy's model

**Choice theory**—Roy uses Glasser's theory to propose that all behaviour is chosen. We have direct control over our thoughts and actions but only partial control over our feelings and physiology. It is like the four tyres of a front wheel drive vehicle. The front two tyres are the ones we control—thoughts and actions, whilst the back two tyres, feelings and physiology, are kept in line by the fact they are trailing tyres. Hence, people need to learn to control their thoughts and actions as this will enable them to make positive choices that reflect an understanding of the impact of those choices. White is used to support this view: "Right thinking lies at the foundation of right action" (White, 1923, 248). Jesus' ministry, which revolved around choice, is also used to strengthen this position.

We need to carefully examine our methods of behaviour management with the aim of developing students who can internalise the choice-making process.

In view of the fact that we teach a generation that largely lacks internal values, how do we achieve this internalisation of choices? Roy suggests teachers need to make constant efforts to fit the work to the students; facilitate a creative, non-coercive, non-adversarial environment; show students how to self assess; model how work is to be done; and listen to student input.

**Leverage (coercion)**—As a secondary teacher, I have often used recess or lunchtime as leverage to get work completed in class. Conversely, I also used rewards like stickers or stamps to leverage work output. Roy advises that these techniques do not guarantee the best work from students and that they damage relationships.

After reading this book, coercion feels like a dirty word. Roy suggests that if you have to use leverage to get students to complete work, you probably need to examine what you are teaching and how you are teaching it. "True education is not forcing the instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened...[then]...the instruction given impresses mind and heart" (White, 1952, 41).

**Assessment**—Driving students to complete assignments to obtain grades is, in itself, counter productive to true learning. Roy suggests that our learning should be in response to a God-given, innate sense of wonder and curiosity rather than the need to succeed.

### Difficulties with Roy's model

**Psychology**—Choice theory relies on an understanding of human behaviour and the ability to bring students to the point of realisation and self-awareness. Many teachers do not understand the psychology behind choice theory or have the necessary counselling skills to implement it effectively.

**Time**—Choice theory relies heavily on building relationships with students. However, numerous issues have eroded the time teachers have available for developing relationships with students.

Although I was challenged and stimulated as I engaged in Roy's discussion, he left me with more questions than answers, but that was the author's intention. This book would be an excellent springboard for provoking debate regarding development of a sound plan for soul shaping in the new millennium. **TEACH**

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Ellen White (1827-1915) was a woman of remarkable spiritual gifts. She wrote numerous articles and books on topics such as religion, education, social relationships, evangelism, prophecy, and nutrition. Her writings on education have had a significant impact on the worldwide Adventist Education system.

### References

White, E. G. (1923). Fundamentals of Christian education. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association.  
White, E. G. (1952). Education. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

## Blog of a beginning teacher

**Braden Blyde**

Secondary english teacher, Prescott College, SA

**She was looking for a job, and I, being the supportive husband was serving as research assistant. We searched hard through the seemingly ever-shrinking font; our finger tips becoming stained with the black ink of fruitless labour.**

To be honest, my mind had been wandering for quite a time. I'd been thinking about school again. Sunday morning, cup of tea and steaming toast in hand and my mind was still trapped in the classroom.

The job ads had me cornered. They screamed at me. They interrogated me, "How are your students being prepared for these opportunities? What are you doing that will get them into these roles?"

I had no comeback. "We read novels" or "I teach them how to spell and how to construct sentences" just didn't seem to cut it.

While she continued to search for the perfect position, I began philosophising about job ads and teaching. I had to get honest about myself, my classroom practice and even my profession.

We can't teach all the specifics these jobs require—not even the fundamentals. There is not time in the day, or space in the curriculum. There are too many niche markets to even attempt it. Instead we search for skills and knowledge that are broadly applicable. "We are generalised instructors", I concluded. "We work to till the soil, to prepare it for the seed planters and waterers of university lecturers and inspired mentors." This realisation made me feel good—my work was essential in preparing students to tackle these bold 'position vacant' headlines. I was suddenly warmed, but it could have been from the hug I had received as she passed by.

I could hear the whispers of the tabloid pages, but there were more discoveries to be made this Sunday morning. I returned to the job ads and looked harder, looked closer, looking for my influence, my answer to these concise ads.

As I looked I came to another realisation. Most of these ads weren't calling for knowledge or specific skills, but attitudes, habits and character. It's not what a potential employee has in their tool bag that counts, but who the tool bag is wrapped around.

Statements such as, "willing to take on a challenge", "works co-operatively in a diverse team environment", "able to work unsupervised" and "has an eye for detail" filled each section from Accounting to Sales.

Again I was taunted by the pages in front of me, "What are you doing to build these traits in your students? How is your study of Shakespeare, your

explanation of onomatopoeia, your 1000 word essay due in two weeks building great, influential employees?"

I savoured the warmth of my second cup of Bushels as I thought. In staffroom discussions we often commend (or lament the lack of) commitment, resourcefulness and drive of students. But how much time is spent explicitly, or at least intentionally, teaching these values and habits?

If this is what employers are looking for in candidates, am I doing all I can to prepare my students? Are the twenty-five young minds and hearts in front of me growing into people that will be successful and happy in the work place? Or am I simply filling their tool bags without building the owner?

The thoughts were getting all too deep for the time and the day. I closed the paper and searched for a distraction, the foot long lawn caught my eye as I passed by the kitchen window (a dutiful husband will wash his own dishes after all—even on a Sunday morning) reminding me that the backyard needed some attention.

It wasn't until later that evening that the haunting questions of the morning paper returned. Was I really building my students' future success? Was my approach to teaching focusing on the head, while neglecting the heart?

We snuggled up as the sun sank low over the steel stacks and warehouses of the Port Adelaide marshland and turned to the scriptures to close the day. Seemingly possessed by infinite wisdom (in addition to beauty), she turned to Micah 6:8 and my musings began to solidify.

She read, "*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*"

"As a Christian teaching in a Christian school, this is the selection criteria I want my students to meet", I thought. She smiled, somehow confirming that she had understood my silent struggles.

There was no mention of active voice, subjectivity or motifs (or titrations, factorisation or meiosis). God is seeking workers who practice justice, mercy and humility—the characteristics, attitudes and habits of success—not necessarily the skills we usually measure in schools. Funnily enough, the employers placing the ads in this morning's paper were after the same thing.

I went to bed a changed teacher. We will still read the novels and still analyse poetry, but tomorrow my classroom will be different.

She has a job now. I still read the job section every Sunday. The lawn needs mowing again. **TEACH**

“Am I simply filling their tool bags without building the owner?”