



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE

Horizons
of Hope

FOUNDATION STATEMENT:

Pedagogy

in a Catholic School



What is Pedagogy?

Pedagogy is often described as the art and science of how students will be taught and supported to learn. The Greek roots of the word pedagogy – *to lead a child* – brings to mind the image of Greek pedagogues walking alongside their charges (Smith 2012). The origins of the word indicate that it is the relationship between a young learner and their teacher, as well as the relationship between learning and teaching that is critical (Loughran 2010, p. 36).

Recognition of the relational component allows for Pedagogy to be reconceptualised as a collaborative partnership between all in the learning community. Reverence for the sacred dignity of each learner provides a foundation for pedagogy in a Catholic school, with individuals sharing responsibility for their work, making substantive, negotiated decisions, and working interdependently. There is teamwork, and learning from and contributing to the learning of others.

The Flash of Lights

I used multi-coloured pastels with rainbow dots everywhere to represent God's love. God's love can be found in so many places in so many ways through so many people. [Cuora, Year 5/6]

In a teaching and learning environment, where experiences matter, pedagogy is able to be recognised through such things as intellectual challenge, support for learning, linking and relevance, and sensitivity to diversity, all of which extend learning beyond the subject matter alone. (Loughran 2010, p. 37)

Deep learning, that extends beyond the boundaries of subject specific content, calls for strong engagement with 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, undated) and citizenship (Fullan & Langworthy 2013) to engage learners. These skills prepare learners to be collaborative problem solvers who strive to contribute to the common good in today's world.

Deep learning in a Catholic school unfolds as a process that respects the diverse cultures, worldviews and backgrounds of students and actively engages them with Catholic beliefs and values relevant to their learning. A Catholic pedagogy which enables such learning is one that empowers learners to seek truth, and to question and critique the prevailing cultural, political, and philosophical ideas within the world around them.

Deep learning in a Catholic school unfolds as a process that respects the diverse cultures, worldviews and backgrounds of students and actively engages them with Catholic beliefs and values relevant to their learning.



How is Pedagogy enacted in a Catholic school?

Pedagogy in a Catholic school is much more than the techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place (Siraj & Taggart 2014). Pedagogy in a Catholic school seeks to develop **deep learning** and to create **animated learners**, inspired by the Gospel and led by the Holy Spirit to act for justice and strive for the common good.

Catholic pedagogy is different because; it is harnessed in the service of the mission of the Catholic school and because it is animated by Catholic understandings of culture, the human person and creation more broadly. If the research into pedagogy indicates that our twenty-first century students learn best when they have agency as learners, when they are treated as learning partners and when learning is 'real-world', then these characteristics should shape the pedagogies enacted in a Catholic school, just as they should in other types of schools. (Sharkey 2015, p. 25)

Encountering

A key element of pedagogy in a Catholic school is encounter. Encounter happens when the sacred dignity of each person in the learning community is honoured as the foundation on which deep learning for all is built. Encounter is the space where the other reveals the presence of Christ. All learners in a Catholic context intentionally engage with a disposition of witness through questioning and deep listening; and through noticing and assenting to the Spirit at work in this space.

Every Christian is called to go out to meet others, to dialogue with those who do not think as we do, with those who have another faith or who have no faith. To encounter all, because for what we all share in common is that we were created in the image and likeness of God. (Francis 2013)

A space of encounter is opened when all learners bring an openness to transformation, a search for truth, and a willingness to build genuine relationships with God and others. It happens when

creation inspires awe and wonder, when different views shake and shift perspective, when the teachings of the church and life intersect and the Spirit moves and transforms.

Encounter is relational. It is through relationship that we know ourselves, are valued and understood. This animates learners to develop personal beliefs and virtues, engage in respectful challenge and create new spaces and contexts for thinking and relating.

Pedagogy in a Catholic school seeks to develop deep learning and create animated learners, inspired by the Gospel and led by the Holy Spirit to act for justice and strive for the common good.

Seeking Truth

All knowledge begins with a wondering but it proceeds on the assumption that there is some truth to be known. God is the source of all truth and learners strive to reach for this truth in their journey.

Pedagogy in a Catholic school intentionally pursues truth. It taps into the world of the learner to uncover what matters to them with deep questions of life and faith. When they are challenged

to engage with these deep questions, spaces are opened up for them to think critically and deeply, to see layers of meaning, and to re-imagine themselves and the world. When seeking truth learners are encouraged in a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world and their learning, as well as a deeply held sense of personal responsibility for self, others and all of creation.

Learners are empowered to have a strong voice in the learning process, to take risks in a safe environment and also to be unsuccessful at times. Such learning environments position learning as exploratory, with students encouraged to persist, and to puzzle things out for themselves. In this way, learners open up to possibilities of the future and begin to create new directions for humanity.

Ecstatic

I used coloured pencils to make this drawing on paper. I intend to communicate the energy that is produced when deeply connected and entwined with nature. (Catherine, Year 12)

Pedagogy in a Catholic school embraces dialogue that grapples with ideas, reveals tensions, and provokes further exploration.

Being in Dialogue

'What is special about dialogue is the distinctiveness of the other. It is the very otherness of each person, speaking from a different viewpoint, that makes dialogue productive.' (Fisher 2009, p. 10) Dialogue is a communal search for truth. It is based on trust, deep listening of another's narrative and openness to being transformed.

Pedagogy in a Catholic school embraces dialogue that grapples with ideas, reveals tensions, and provokes further exploration. Each learner brings their own story and worldview to the dialogue and, as a participant, is both inquirer and learner. It creates a space for substantive conversation that does not have a fixed outcome. Rather,

it appreciates and embraces a multiplicity of voices and worldviews in its search for understanding and new possibilities. Learners come to their own stance around questions that matter in dialogue with the Catholic tradition.

While the viewpoints of all students are respected, there is a clear commitment to providing a systematic and sustained engagement with Catholic beliefs or teachings. Those who take the dialogue option know how to engage students with Catholic beliefs and values without imposing these beliefs and values on the students. They also know how to create spaces where the students feel free to share their own understandings and viewpoints, even as they engage with the Catholic story. (Sharkey 2015, p. 29)

Making Deep Connections

The Catholic tradition understands human beings as being already deeply connected. Central to pedagogy in a Catholic school is a learning community supporting learners to make connections – with self, others, ideas, faith, cultures and new ways of understanding and being in the world.

Pedagogy in a Catholic school invites learners into a rich intellectual space which enables them to explore the connection between the Catholic tradition and other traditions. Such a rich intellectual space connects disciplines so that big ideas and questions can be explored holistically, adding meaning to the lives of learners. It therefore sees the nature of learning as connected, rather than as

discrete, isolated elements. Pedagogical choices in a Catholic school are sensitive to the entitlement, the context and the narrative of each learner.

Pedagogy in a Catholic school intentionally develops self-awareness that enables action, interaction and movement within learning and teaching. Learners understand that knowledge can be challenged and co-created. They are aware of their own thinking and learning, and manage and monitor learning growth. Pedagogical choices within the learning environment empower learners to make connections between ideas and with the ideas of others. They are able to create new knowledge and come to a deeper understanding of their place in the world.

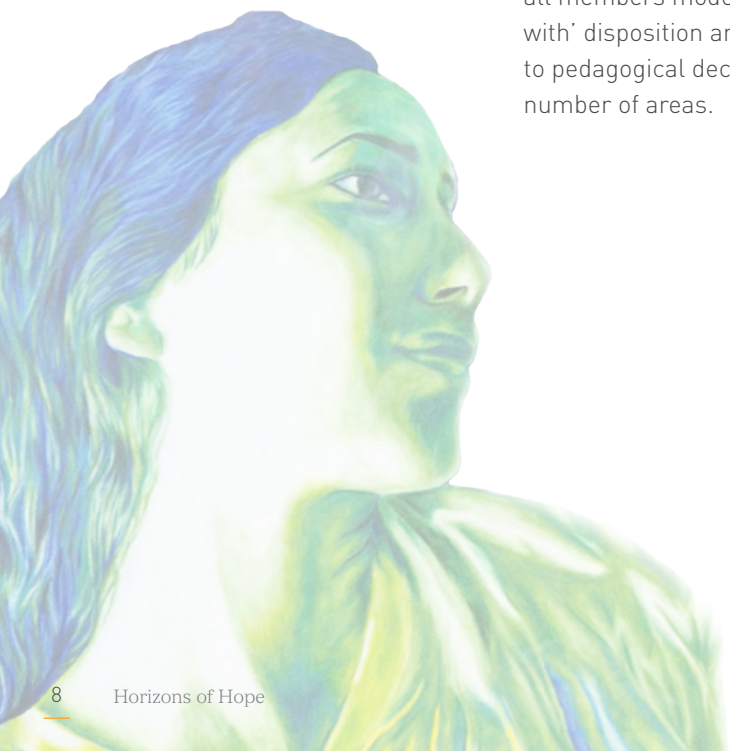


The Learning Community

Pedagogy in a Catholic school asks everyone in the learning community to care for, to be in relationship with and to inspire others. It involves a learning community working and learning alongside each other and being present in all aspects of the learning process.

In effective learning communities all members model a 'learning with' disposition and contribute to pedagogical decisions in a number of areas.

- **As Witness** faith is presented as a living faith and an attractive option with a humble and supportive attitude.
- **As Specialist** deep knowledge of matters concerning Christianity, Catholicism, and other religious and philosophical traditions is offered.
- **As Moderator** students' issues, experiences, thinking and Catholic tradition are brought into dialogue.
- **As Co-inquirer** an inquiry disposition, truth-seeking and passion for transformative learning is modelled.
- **As Designer** clear, differentiated and engaging learning paths for students that progress their learning are planned and implemented.
- **As Activators** each individual is a deliberate agent of change. Learning and teaching is visible and each person is fully immersed in their own learning as well as the learning of others. (Hattie 2009)



Pedagogy in a Catholic school asks everyone in the learning community to care for, to be in relationship with and to inspire others.

Why is Pedagogy in a Catholic school important given the Vision and Context?

If Catholic educators see learning as a journey of endless possibilities, where students are energised to seek meaning and explore questions about the world around them, they need to be discerning and considered in pedagogical choices. Educators need to ensure that learners are intellectually and behaviourally engaged, and also emotionally invested in learning that is personally meaningful. This ensures the full flourishing of each student across religious, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains. Here, students are supported to grow in virtue and to embrace a view of themselves and the world that leads to peace, justice, and the prospering of the whole of creation.

This is what peace looks like
*My artwork is what peace looks like.
 It represents what I see when I think
 about or feel peaceful. (Lily, Year 5/6)*

Honour the sacred dignity of each person

There are choices made in pedagogy that display the belief that everyone can be successful and supported to see their lives as being shaped by the God who is at work in all of creation. All learners are considered in the learning space and how best they learn, engendering a culture of high expectations held by the teacher for each learner as well as a belief of high expectation within and between individual learners.

Search for truth and engage with the deep questions of life

Pedagogy in a Catholic school considers the questions learners have and how a culture of inquiry and questioning within the learning spaces can be created; a culture that enables learners to be engaged in the big issues and questions of life as well as complex religious and moral questions.

Embrace difference and diversity

Pedagogy in a Catholic school embraces an openness to transformation, to hearing and considering all the voices in a school community as an opportunity for learning and understanding about self, others and God.

Build a culture of learning together

Pedagogy in a Catholic school enables all to flourish and learn together through authentic partnerships with families, peers and others as well as providing opportunities for real collaboration that involves contribution, exchange, negotiation, communication and collective action.

Make a difference in the world

Pedagogy in a Catholic school develops learners who are agents of positive change that imagine new futures and identify worthwhile solutions all while working and acting for justice and the common good.

Educators need to ensure that learners are intellectually and behaviourally engaged, and also emotionally invested in learning that is personally meaningful.

Resources

What resources are available to support Pedagogy in a Catholic School?

- Horizons of Hope: Learning and Teaching in a Catholic School (Learning Schema) (Catholic Education Melbourne 2016)
- Curriculum Renewal Resources (Catholic Education Melbourne 2015)
 - Design Elements
 - Aspiration, Approach and Planning for Learning and Teaching in a Catholic Context: whole school design
 - Unpacking the design space: Teachers as Designers.
- Learning Hermeneutically diagram (Catholic Education Office Melbourne 2012).

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Acknowledgments

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The Flash of Lights

Cuora, Year 5/6

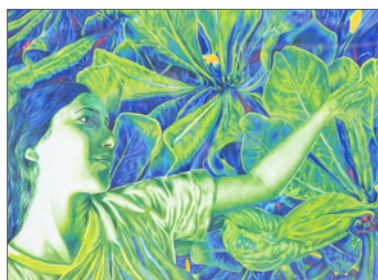
St Anthony's Primary School,
Alphington



Faith brings us together in all worlds

Tarun, Year 5/6

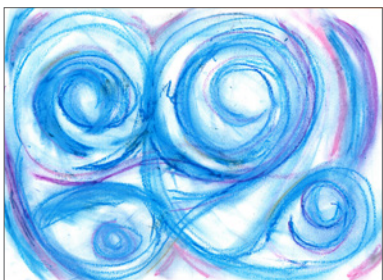
St Kevin's Primary School,
Hampton Park



Ecstatic

Catherine, Year 12

St Monica's College, Epping



This is what peace looks like

Lily, Year 5/6

St Anthony's Primary School,
Alphington



Cast your net

Prep class

Sacred Heart, Sandringham

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