

# Raise

RAISE THE CHILD CHANGE THE WORLD

ISSUE 2



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My school  
took me to  
NASA in the USA!

Mary Blee  
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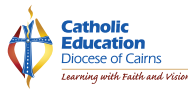


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# Being a Parent and a Teacher during COVID-19

**Some of us may still be recovering from our recent home learning experience, whether good, bad or ugly. So, it's nice to take some time to reflect on this unique experience and what it has taught us.**

JULIE DORE

It's the first time something like this has happened in our lives; but we just got on with it, like we always do, and we have come out the other side; some of us a bit worse for wear, but we survived! It's amazing to see just how resilient people can be, especially our children; we can learn a lot from them. Most children just took it in their stride, as if to say, "Oh, this is what life is like now, okay then" or "So I don't go to school for a while, okay".

I'm not saying it was all rainbows and lollipops for everyone, as I also saw firsthand how some children and adults didn't cope with the changes at all, and how people were stressed out due to financial, family and relationship problems. It was and continues to be a hard time for a lot of families, and I'm not ignoring the hardships people have faced recently and may continue to face.

I'm just going to reflect on my home learning experience, both as a parent and as a teacher. I have been teaching for 15 years, and parenting for six years, and this was a big learning experience for me in both roles.

## A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE - 'THE BAD'

- Difficulties getting your child to do their home learning. To sit, focus, complete it all in a reasonable time. With the added arguments over differences in how we are showing them how to do it, compared to how they are taught at school, e.g. "My teacher said we do it this way, you're doing it wrong, you're not my teacher!" And too much time on devices, leading to techno tantrums.
- Trying to work from home at the same time as doing home learning with your child. This is practically impossible as children don't care about your deadlines, meetings, or being quiet.
- Keeping siblings occupied. Either siblings that are doing different school work, having to monitor more than one child at a time, or keeping younger siblings entertained. You are only one person, so keeping siblings away from each other trying to do school work, keeping them quiet, or busy for more than a Bluey episode or a bowl of snacks is not possible.
- Parents not knowing the content or how to use the technology. This is not a dig at parents, it's content they haven't thought about in at least 20 years or programs they've never had to use before. Even content in Prep, "What's a phoneme?" Let alone any grades higher than this, and high school... forget it! Google and Siri have had a good work out during this time, and as a teacher I've been the 'phone a friend' option on more than one occasion.
- More stress on relationships. This is probably an understatement! How do you change the whole dynamic of your family overnight? You don't; and that's why this was so hard. Parents went from helping with school work, to in some cases, being their child's teacher, IT support, and counsellor.
- Less of the things we enjoy. A lot of the fun things in life, like friends and freedom were gone, and replaced by work and stress. This threw out our work/life balance and some people lost their mojo.



### A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE - 'THE GOOD'

- Seeing first-hand how your child is going with their schoolwork. You knew what they were talking about, could see their strengths and weaknesses as a learner, which subjects they enjoy, and how to make the other subjects more enjoyable for them.
- Learning new skills. Apps like Seesaw and Google classroom. As well as knowledge, like languages and music. It was good to also refresh the things you learnt a very long time ago.
- Learning how to teach your child better. You could see the different strategies they were using at school and help your child with these. As well as see what type of learner your child is, whether they prefer written, visual, auditory or physical learning.
- No school lunches, uniforms, or rushing in the mornings. Need I say more!
- More time with your child to get to know them better. Priceless! It might not have felt that way at the time, but they do appreciate you just being with them.
- Have more to talk about with your child. There were no more questions of, "What did you do at school

today?" with replies of, "Nothing". You could talk about and even extend on their learning.

### A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE - 'THE BAD'

- No face-to-face contact with students. It was like the best part of being a teacher, 'being with your class', was taken away. Which meant no funny incidents to make the days enjoyable and the time pass quicker. This was replaced by staring at a screen and sitting down all day.
- Huge workload initially to get all the home learning sorted. It took some getting used to and a lot of trial and error.
- Regular duties, meetings and Zoom. As essential workers' children were still coming to school it was not only online teaching that we had to plan, deliver and check, but the daily duties, face-to-face and virtual meetings that went with being at school as well.
- Hard to teach new concepts. We could only use home learning as a revision of concepts already taught; any new concepts would need to be revised when school went back to 'normal'. This also means not being able to cover as many concepts in the year.





- Not actually getting to teach the lessons. Teachers are great at explaining concepts, then re-explaining them however many times and in however many ways they need to, to be sure each student understands what to do, how to do it, and why they're doing it. Not being with them also meant it was difficult to give an accurate judgement on their work as you didn't know how much help they were given.
  - Students not completing home learning. With different family circumstances for each child this meant that not every child was getting the same access, time and experience with the work being sent home. Some children did every task and more, and some did none. And it's hard to compare given the uncertain times that some families were experiencing. For some, home learning was not a priority.
  - Improved technology skills for teachers and students. Teachers became pros at using Seesaw and Zoom and students were a lot better with technology when they returned to class.
  - Parents could see firsthand how their child was going with their schoolwork. It gave parents a chance to see for themselves all the things you've been saying, e.g. they struggle with... they need to work on... they are good at... they would benefit from...
  - Parents got a glimpse of what it's like to be a teacher. And if teaching one child was a challenge... now imagine teaching 25-plus children, all with different abilities, needs, backgrounds, etc. Maybe society will have more respect for the teaching profession after COVID-19.
  - The best part was seeing how excited the children were to come back to school. To see their friends, be back to 'normal', play, chat, laugh and learn. Their new appreciation and gratitude to just be back at school was inspiring. They really missed it and are happy to be back. Let's hope this lasts a while.
- A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE - 'THE GOOD'**
- More time for collaboration. We were able to discuss planning, ideas, people's strengths, share the work load, and have more consistency among classes.
  - No behaviour issues. If students were mucking around in Zoom then you could just mute them, turn their video off, or send them out of the meeting.

*Julie is a teacher at St Gerard Majella School, Woree and author of Prepping for School Success*





# Grandparents in Education: Meet Paul Brookes

**Builder, father, grandfather, volunteer and Chess Club coach, Paul Brookes is a man of many hats.**

The father-of-four recently retired his builder's cap and has since been able to spend even more time with his five grandchildren scattered around Cairns and the Tablelands. In between doing school pick-ups and soccer drop offs, Paul also spends two days a week volunteering at his grandson Nate's primary school, St Joseph's School, Parramatta Park.

Paul is the official Chess Club coach and, along with his wife, Sharon, who also volunteers to read to the kids at school, is a regular at the school and a much-valued member of the school community.

For Paul, family clearly means everything and being able to see Nate daily is something Paul is so grateful for. "Having grandchildren is like falling in love again," Paul tells Raise. "Maybe it's my nature, but I've always been a real family person."

## COACHING CHESS CLUB AT ST JOSEPH'S

When Nate started school at St Joey's, Paul started Chess Club. "Twice a week I go there before the recess bell goes and set up all the boards and pieces in the library. I really love it because a lot of little preppies and grade ones come in. They don't have any idea about the game, but they want to learn."

Paul has taught chess to students for five years now and many of the students keep coming back every year. Paul also accompanies the club to tournaments where the kids get a chance to compete against students of all ages in the area.

## THE BENEFITS OF CHESS

Chess is a wonderful hobby for kids as it improves their memory, concentration, problem solving skills and so much more. Chess Clubs seem to attract a diverse range of learners and the club at St Joseph's is no different.

"Even though I'm not that good at chess, I love it. I love the interaction with the kids and I love teaching them."

## THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

For Paul, volunteering at Nate's school is second nature. Although Nate isn't a keen chess player anymore, he still visits his granddad every lunch hour and the other chess students are over the moon to see Mr Brookes twice a week.

His dedication to the school doesn't go unnoticed, according to St Joseph's Principal Gavin Rick.

"Paul's visits really make an impact and he provides support for many of our students each week when he attends the school. I think there are many students, not only Nate, who feel he is there in support of them," tells Gavin. Which, Paul confirms, he most certainly is.

In addition to Chess Club, Paul also tries to attend as many masses, liturgies and assemblies as he can. He and his wife Sharon are also volunteer Pyjama Angels and spend one day a week with kids from disadvantaged homes, helping them with their reading and schooling.

## WHY GET INVOLVED: VOLUNTEER

1. Volunteering at St Joey's and in the general community has certainly enriched Paul's life and he encourages all grandparents who have the time to consider giving it a go.
2. "I obviously love my grandchild and love spending time with him. But it's nice to be around all the kids. They are interested and they want to learn."
3. "One thing about St Joey's is that they really encourage volunteers. It's such a great school, so devoted and you'll want to keep coming back. I certainly do." Often schools will require help for special days like Under 8's Day, Shrove Tuesday and fetes.

# Helping Our Children Become Their Best Selves

| MAGGIE DENT



IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO RAISE THE PERFECT CHILD, BUT WHAT WE CAN DO IS HELP OUR CHILDREN BE THE BEST EXPRESSION OF THEIR UNIQUE SELF.



**I've been chatting with many parents and teachers recently about the pressure and angst which many of us feel about making the 'right decisions' and doing what 'is right' for our children.**

There is still a strong sense of competitive parenting in our communities and many mums particularly are still striving to be perfect parents, which puts stress and pressure on children to also be perfect.

Be reassured there is no perfect. There can be days when our intentions and honourable expectations line up with the stars and we can feel that we've had a good day and that positive outcomes have occurred. We also need to recognise we can do exactly the same things the next day and have a really crappy day where very few positive outcomes occur. This is normal. When you have one of those crappy days you are not a bad parent.

Meltdowns, night terrors, sibling arguments, fussy eating, sleepless nights, lipstick drawings, and small bumps and bruises are all biologically normal occurrences when raising children. Every single stage of your child's development will have a gift and a challenge.

Do you remember when you couldn't wait until they could walk? And then you couldn't find them and they ran away from you in shopping centres? Do you remember when they couldn't talk? And now there are seriously times where you wish they would talk less?

Parents are our children's number one teacher even after our children have begun schooling. I firmly believe every parent wants their children to grow up to be happy, healthy, capable, strong, kind and resilient. And that is a noble and fabulous intention. Remembering that every single child is born a one-off miracle, I believe we need to also hold a strong intention to nurture the uniqueness of every child.

We need to embrace that every child has come with a unique blend of genetics, temperament, neurological possibilities and physical capacities that makes them who they are.

I often chat with parents who have children with extra challenges who instead of being seen as children with disabilities — they get frustrated because their children can be seen by some as 'less than' — they see them as they should be: as children with unique needs, wants and desires.

Our biggest challenge I believe as parents is to help our children become the best expression of themselves regardless of what they look like, how they stack up on the

endless standard tests available, what gender they are, what culture they belong to and all the other diverse ways that we categorise people and children. Every single child has potential and our focus should be on supporting every one of them to realise that.

*So, what can help us raise our kids to be the best (or close to it) expression of their unique self?*

**FIND OR CREATE A CARING SUPPORTIVE VILLAGE**

Have other family, friends or community folks around who accept our kids as they are — not just as they could be. I know of such a circle where the mamas meet each week for a long play in a park on Fridays. One of the village's boys has some delays in self-regulation and he is prone to impulsive behaviours that can accidentally hurt other kids. All these mamas help him and his frazzled mum to guide him to make better choices. They welcome him and his mum regardless of his unique way of navigating the world as a little boy.



## EXPOSE YOUR CHILD TO A WIDE VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES

As wide as possible. We never know what may become a preferred pastime or favourite activity. I have met grownups who grew up in suburbia yet discovered a love of the great outdoors on a camping holiday and have ended up becoming environmental warriors and some have even become farmers!

## IDENTIFY CHALLENGES EARLY AND HELP OUR KIDS TO BUILD CAPACITY AND AWARENESS

No matter what the challenge may be — under-developed gross motor skills, speech challenges, Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) and low social awareness as many children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have — we need to ensure we see our need to increase capacity rather than needing to ‘fix our kids’. These challenges can often be the beginning of a life purpose. I have met adults who had hearing problems who went on to work with children with speech and hearing challenges. I have also met many grownups who had a serious childhood illness or experienced a serious accident who later become nurses or doctors.

## NAME AND NURTURE YOUR KID'S STRENGTHS

Even as toddlers you can often start to see some innate strengths in your kids. One of my granddaughters has fantastic upper body strength — she can climb really high!

Her parents and I identified this upper body strength when she threw herself out of her cot at 14 months of age with her sleeping bag on! For other toddlers they can remember all the words to songs, or they seem to be fascinated by building things, or have a fascination for bugs and grubs. Do your best to encourage these strengths and nurture them. I know of kids who have turned a love of frogs into a life-long career as a frog-amphibian biologist. Many kids who learn to cook with their grandmother have gone on to become passionate, capable cooks and chefs.

## HONOUR YOUR KIDS' NEED FOR FREEDOM AND AUTONOMY

This can be difficult, to learn to both trust and respect your child's need to make their own choices. Thankfully, unstructured play is a fabulous way to ensure we avoid over-directing our kid's lives and prioritising this as much as possible in the first 10 years of life will give this biological need plenty of time to evolve and grow.

## BUILDING EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL AWARENESS

Human relationships are more than simply important; they are biologically essential for wellbeing and survival. The digital landscape

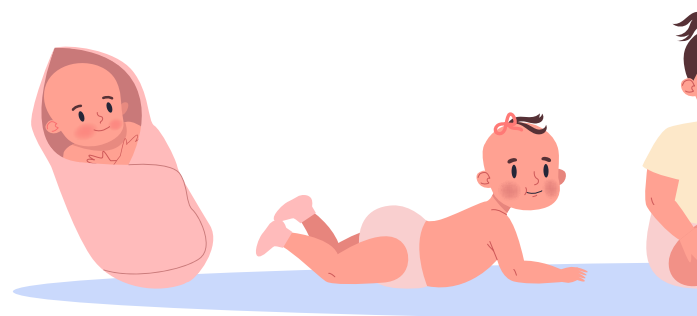
has displaced much of the time that children played with other children and we have seen an increase in kids' anxiety and bullying. We must prioritise human conversation between humans, because the ability to feel connected needs it. Later in life, intimate relationships need humans to be able to communicate needs, wants and to be able to share joy and delight as well as to share moments of adversity.

## FOCUS ON BUILDING RESILIENCE

Resilient kids and adults do better in life on all levels. They have more grit, persistence and they recover from adversity better and sooner. We cannot learn emotional buoyancy without experiencing moments of challenge. Embrace moments of failure and unexpected setbacks as teachable moments, not signs of something being wrong or bad. I have written about ways for building resilience for over a decade and know that parents can really give their children an expectation that while life can throw a curved ball at times — it's what you do with it that matters.

## PRACTICE IMPROVES PERFORMANCE

This message needs to be frequently alluded to in our homes so that it





becomes a norm when a new hobby, or sporting pursuit or life passion presents itself. You may notice there is a strong innate passion when a child discovers something that may be a 'spark' of possibility that may become a life-long interest or career pathway. As a child I loved to write and often wrote poems and stories as a way to entertain myself and heck I never wrote my first book until I was 47!

### NEVER CRUSH DREAMS

Even when our kids tell us they hope they can grow up to be a dog, Elsa from Frozen, an astronaut or the next Serena Williams — let's just smile and allow that to be OK. When we use logic to explain why these dreams are impossible, we can stop them from dreaming altogether.

### SHARE AND CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS STORIES FROM INSPIRED KIDS

Especially those who have experienced extra challenge and diverse life journeys. To start with there is Campbell Remess, who as a 12-year-old boy began making bears for kids in hospitals and has since become famous for his goodwill gesture, which has now become a movement world-wide. Just recently, I heard about Molly Steer who has become a passionate

environmental warrior. Brant Garvey is a fabulous example of a boy born missing a lower leg who has turned his life into one of enormous purpose inspiring others to realise their best selves.

Another great example is Harrison Craig who has struggled his whole life with a stutter but sang amazingly on The Voice and went on to win the popular music reality TV show.

One of my students who failed my final-year English class and failed to graduate went on to sell a software company for over \$2 million in his early twenties — he was a great example of a boy who had found a way to shine in his own way. Given our often self-absorbed, self-interested and selfie-focused world, finding a way to be authentically original may be the secret to happiness and success.

### FINDING A PATHWAY TO BEING OUR TRUE SELVES

Doing something that makes us feel good about ourselves while creating a life of purpose — might be something we need to ponder when raising our kids. Given how many university-educated people

are unable to find jobs in the field of their training, we might need to reconsider the social norms about prioritising higher education over other life pathways.

Maybe we need to focus our kids in the direction of wellbeing first, because healthy people will be more effective in the working world whatever that may be. Given our incredibly exciting, ever-changing world, it may help our kids to be ready for work possibilities that have not even been created yet. Food for thought for sure.

So, good parents, maybe relax about making the 'right choices' and doing what's best and just be mindful of discovering who your child really is and celebrate their uniqueness to help them shine at being that person.

*Maggie is a parenting author and educator, and host of the ABC's Parental As Anything podcast. Her new book, From Boys to Men: Guiding our teen boys to grown into happy, healthy men is out now. This article was originally published at [maggiedent.com](http://maggiedent.com)*



# Changing Spaces of Schools

CAITLIN FRANCIS



**Chalk and talk classrooms of the past are evolving, as schools embrace flexible learning solutions, modern technology and innovative student spaces. Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) are helping schools meet the modern learning needs of students now and in the future, without compromising on structure and values.**

## WHAT ARE INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (ILES)?

Classrooms across the Far North are transforming, based on new understandings about how students learn and what supports are needed. Flexible spaces, such as ILEs, allow for greater student choice regarding the best environment to meet their personal and learning needs, whether they're working in small groups, individually or

collectively as a class. Teachers create a range of flexible zones where students can feel focused, comfortable and ready to learn. While they may or may not have dedicated desks, students have the freedom to explore their dynamic environments rather than sitting in one spot for the entire lesson. With options to collaborate on the couch, gather on some bean bags or dive in at a desk solo, students are inspired visually, mentally and physically by their surrounding spaces.

"It's a different type of learning space and it really engages the children," explains Paul Rayner, Principal at St Augustine's School, Mossman, which offers students a dedicated STEM lab.

"It allows our students to think and work as scientists and mathematicians do. Students can use creativity and collaboration to explore the whole notion of science and mathematics in a real-world experience."

The STEM lab at St Augustine's is set up for 'vertical learning'. Whiteboard spaces on walls enable students to stand and problem solve their ideas before returning to their workspaces in the centre of the room, rather than working in a traditional classroom configuration.



Students can look around and see what their peers are working on, providing opportunities for collaboration and engagement. The start of 2020 saw students tasked with a series of mini challenges, including the creation of bridges, boats, catapults and more. Kids were involved in every aspect of construction, from design phase through to manufacture.

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF MODERN LEARNERS

Schools are choosing to adopt flexible learning solutions to cater to the needs of modern, 21st century learners. Today's students are using critical thinking, problem solving, research and collaboration to further reinforce learning concepts. Students can choose the method of learning that suits their needs from options such as writing, drawing or using technology such as videos and apps. This style of agile learning meets the individual needs of each student and helps develop the critical skill of adaptability while boosting confidence, engagement and student outcomes. Teachers can also work in teams to generate shared learning experiences for a wider range of students, further encouraging collaboration and teamwork from leaders as well as peers.

"Our learning environments allow teachers to far better meet the needs of our learners as they can quickly modify the spaces to comfortably deliver differentiated learning in small groups. The quality of learning in the habitats has far exceeded what I imagined in terms of our learners being focused, calm,

happy and engaged," tells St Joseph's School, Parramatta Park Principal Gavin Rick.

"I know that what we have created best meets the needs of our students both for now and the future. Learning is a social endeavour and our learning habitats reflect this."

Teachers have undertaken extensive ongoing professional development in order to tailor classes to these specialised spaces, and parents have reported that their kids are very enthusiastic about the new learning environments. As data is used to inform teaching, targeted learning groups can be formed to suit students' specific needs. Teachers, and Learning and Teaching Assistants (LTAs), provide instruction and feedback in small groups, amplifying the potential for each child to grow.

"Our teachers work together in teams, each with at least one LTA to build upon their individual and collective strengths for the benefit of all learners," Gavin says.

"Our learners have a range of adults to teach and guide them each day, rather than one teacher, and this is powerful."

St Joseph's parent Alicia Prince tells: "I have asked my children several times if they would like to go back to a classroom with desks and each time get an overwhelming 'NO WAY!' – they love having the flexibility to learn in a space that suits them without the restrictions of a conventional classroom."

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

It is expected that more ILEs will be developed throughout schools

to continue to meet the needs of today's students. Research suggests changing the physical and spatial design of the traditional classroom, combined with progressive teaching philosophies, can improve general wellbeing and learning outcomes.

"As traditional schooling models and infrastructure becomes less relevant for the modern world, the appearance of learning spaces which are agile and flexible will increase," Gavin says.

"I am excited by this prospect and believe that our learners deserve the very best quality in the environments we place them in."

At MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter, every learning space has been designed to provide an agile learning environment. A formal handwriting task may be done at a formal desk and chair, but a research task may be worked on a mat where a group can sit comfortably together.

"If we want to nurture students who are creative innovators, independent thinkers, problem solvers with strong social skills, and the ability to adapt, we have to 'think beyond the walls' of the traditional single cell classroom and embrace the design of our school which better reflects the world in which our children will live, work and contribute," says Luke Reed, Principal at MacKillop Catholic College.

"We need our children practised in thinking critically and creatively for the world in which they will live and lead."

*Caitlin is a Cairns Catholic Education Digital Media Officer*

# Student Of Space: Meet Mary Blee

**It may be one small step for mankind, but it was one giant leap for 14-year-old Mary Blee as she recently travelled to the USA for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity at Space Camp (also known as the Actura Space School Program expedition), which included several visits to NASA.**

The St Monica's Catholic College, Cairns student traded in the Far North heat for a space suit and helmet and boldly went where countless kids only dream of going – to Space School.

Officially known as the CASE Space School International Study Program, the school provides students with an opportunity to experience leading STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) learning environments, from in-class to out-of-class settings.

At this stage, St Monica's Catholic College is the only school in the region offering the program and Mary was one of just a handful of students across Australia and New Zealand who made the journey.

## A SUMMER IN SPACE

"I left Australia during the December Christmas school holidays to embark on a two-week expedition at a Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama and Houston, Texas," Mary tells Raise.

She was accompanied by St Monica Catholic College science teacher Wanda Metcalf and a group of girls aged 12-16 from all over Australia and New Zealand. The students enjoyed several out-of-this-world experiences, including attempting to moonwalk on a one-sixth gravity chair and experiencing the feeling of zero gravity. For Mary, her favourite activities included training to be an astronaut in flight and mission simulators and operating landings on the moon.

"Expanding my knowledge of astronomy and meeting girls my age who have big aspirations just like me" were also favourite memories for the Year 9 student. Mary also met and had dinner with former NASA astronaut Nicole Stott, explored local science museums and observed outer space at the planetarium.

"What was most surprising was how special the space camp made us feel, as if we were real astronauts. It made us feel more welcomed and eager to wake up every day to try something new and amazing."

## A DREAM COME TRUE

For Mary, this opportunity was one she'd been dreaming about since she was very little.

"I've always dreamed of reaching for the stars and my dad wanted to help me achieve my life-long goal of doing so. He stumbled across the CASE Space School All-Girl Program and immediately signed me up, knowing I would learn so much and it would take me one step closer to the stars. Which it did. I never knew I could train to be an astronaut at such a young age until I went on this camp."

## NEXT STOP: NASA?

Now back in Australia, Mary is still as passionate as ever about space and hopes to pursue a career path in astronomical science and engineering.

"Space to me is a mesmerising pool of mystery that we have yet to find out its true secrets. I want to explore space and try to understand it for myself and broaden the horizon of our knowledge on Earth."

"And, hopefully one day, be an astronaut. That would be my dream."

At just 14 years old, the Year 9 student is already well on her way to achieving this dream. For those who share her passion for space, she suggests to keep dreaming.

"The more you dream, the more it becomes a reality. Space Camp was an extraordinary experience for me and I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity for my future. I really hope to see more students join me on my next expedition."





# Making Friends

JACINTA ROBERTS

**Some children are naturally social and have no trouble making friends wherever they go – at the local park, through sports and activities and at school. Other children may find it harder to make friends and may need to practise how to make friends, starting from approaching someone and introducing themselves. Friendships, after all, can take practice.**

## MAKING FRIENDS IN SCHOOL

20

Most schools will have a range of opportunities for students to build confidence and skills, through whole school and focused group activities. One of the most successful platforms for friendship is the simple yet effective Buddy Bench. Students sit on the buddy bench and others will come up and invite the student to play, or help that child to find a friend if it's an older student.

The Friendology Program at Holy Cross School is another example. It helps students to build their self-confidence, to be a better friend themselves and to manage conflict when it arises. Students learn the difference between healthy and unhealthy friendships, and that trust and respect are essential qualities in a friendship.

## HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR KIDS BUILD POSITIVE FRIENDSHIPS

**1.** Practise communication and being a good friend: In order to help deal with friendship issues, parents can encourage their children to voice

their feelings. Some children need adults to remind them of the language they can use, the approaches they can take so that they can build their skills and their confidence. We need to empower our children to be able to manage social situations, rather than doing it for them.

**2.** Provide opportunities to meet new people or to practise friendship skills: This could be through opportunities for playing outside of school. Even role playing how to introduce yourself to others at home can be helpful for children who are reserved or anxious around new people.

**3.** Practise taking turns, sharing, winning and losing: Losing is often hard for children and a big source of friendship conflict. Provide opportunities to play games and take turns, win and lose and participate in their own and others' games. Some need to be supported in building the resilience to lose well, to not always be the one







who gets to choose the game and even to be 'it' when tagged. These skills might seem simple and obvious to some, but to other children, they need practice.

4. Remind them to be themselves: Children need to recognise that they are unique and of great value. Friendships are great, but not if it means not being true to yourself.

### NEGATIVE FRIENDSHIPS AND BULLYING

When it comes to children experiencing bullying behaviours, here are a few things parents can do:

1. Listen to your child's concerns and recognise the signs that something may be off (anxiety towards school, acting out, withdrawing, a change in behaviour).
2. Ensure they have the skills to stand up and speak out.

3. Recognise the difference between normal age-appropriate behaviours and conflict, one-off mean behaviours, and bullying.

4. Be aware of the online dangers. Ensure children know how to block people online, how to report unwanted behaviour and how to speak to others online. If we would not say it to someone's face, we should not post it online.

5. Communicate with the child's school. Communication between home and school is very important in ascertaining the needs of the child, communicating supports that are available and to build a network of trust and support for that child. The great news for parents is that there are many ways that schools help children to negotiate friendships and challenges in relationships.

*Jacinta is the Assistant Principal Religious Education at Holy Cross School, Trinity Park*

# How to Encourage Aspiring Writers

**Parents can play a vital role in encouraging young, aspiring writers. Whether it's reading, revising or cheering your child on, we discover never to underestimate the power of encouragement - no matter how big or small.**

STEPHANIE MEEKINGS

I was once a young, aspiring writer with a dream to work in magazine publishing. While my peers were deciding on potential professions and our teachers were asking which career path we would take, I would confidently announce 'I'm going to be the editor of Cleo', a monthly gloss magazine which has since closed its doors.

My love of words began long before this though, when my mother would climb into my bunk bed and recite Roald Dahl and Paul Jennings books each night. We'd often take trips to the local library to stock up on the latest fiction novels and as I entered the ageing building I would be greeted by the familiar, comforting smell of old books, a scent that would soon become entwined with my childhood memories. I would save up my pocket money to buy the latest magazines and Mum would give me opportunities to tuck myself away in the spare room and scribble out my own stories of witches and fairies and mythical beasts. I didn't know it at the

time, but Mum was quietly encouraging me to follow my passion from a very early age.

Fast forward a few years and I was applying for every work experience opportunity or magazine internship to get as much experience as I could and that figurative 'foot in the door'. Again, Mum was there: silently supporting, affirming and encouraging me. And when I landed my first full-time job in publishing, it was Mum who I first called to celebrate. As a mother myself, I can see the gift in my mother's actions and hope to encourage my own children in the same gentle, supportive way. So how do we best encourage our kids without pushing them?

## RAISE A READER

Most parents and carers are aware of the benefits of reading to little ones in the younger years. Writing skills begin with reading, so make the time to read to your



child or encourage them to read to you, themselves or even the family pet. If you're finding it hard to find the time to read regularly, listen to kids' audio books in the car while you're commuting; make up stories together when you're tucking them into bed or cooking dinner; or prompt them with questions to create their own stories. If your child is older, share books with them or encourage them to start a book club with their friends and pursue their love of reading.

### SPACE TO CREATE

If your child is interested in telling tales and scribing stories, encourage them by creating a space for them to be creative, journal and write. Be engaged in their efforts, read their stories and encourage them. You could help draw or illustrate the characters in the story to create a book complete with their name on the cover, giving them a sense of accomplishment and purpose. Put these on display in their special space along with articles, illustrations or books that inspire them and allow them the space and time to be creative.

### JOIN A WRITERS' GROUP

Your local library or school may have a writers' group or short courses specific to your child's age and ability. If your child is showing interest in writing, encourage them to give it a go. Alternatively, they could start their own group, newsletter or magazine to expand on their skills and connect with likeminded peers. Older kids can also apply for work experience or intern opportunities for an invaluable hands-on experience.

### EDITING AND OFFERING FEEDBACK

It's a good idea to be aware of your child's temperament and the best way to deliver feedback on their work. You want your child to grow from your constructive critique, rather than feel discouraged. You could tick off the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' checklist together and encourage your child to include more information if one of these areas is missing. Alternatively, tell them all the things you loved about the piece before moving on to what needs work. For narrative writing, use the checklist in the breakout box to help improve your child's writing skills.

*Stephanie is a Cairns Catholic Education Digital Media Officer*

## REVISION AND EDITING CHECKLIST FOR A NARRATIVE

*By Edna Galvin, Principal, St Monica's College, Cairns*

All parents and students should know that having an interest and love of writing plus pushing that interest to a slightly higher level, can make their study in ALL their subjects much more successful.

These techniques can assist any parent to support their student to improve their writing skills.

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUR STUDENT:

After you have completed one or more drafts of your narrative essay, use the following checklist as a revision and editing guide to prepare the final version of your composition.

- In your introduction, have you clearly identified the experience you are about to relate?
- In the opening sentences of your essay, have you provided the kinds of details that will evoke your readers' interest in the topic?
- Have you clearly explained who was involved and when and where the incident occurred?
- Have you focused your essay by eliminating unnecessary or repetitious information?
- Have you used precise descriptive details to make your narrative interesting and convincing?
- Have you used dialogue to report important conversations?
- Have you used clear transitions (in particular, time signals) to tie your points together and guide your readers from one point to the next?
- In your conclusion, have you clearly explained the particular significance of the experience you have related in the essay?
- Are the sentences throughout your essay clear and direct as well as varied in length and structure? Could any sentences be improved by combining or restructuring them?
- Are the words in your essay consistently clear and precise? Does the essay maintain a consistent tone?
- Have you read the essay aloud, proofreading carefully?



# The Essence of Spirituality

LUKE REED

**It was one of the best holidays of my childhood: two weeks in early springtime on the Gold Coast staying across the road from the beach. Perhaps 10, I was old enough to be allowed to the beach by myself, playing in the sand and exploring the nearby North Burleigh headland.**

Of an afternoon I would follow the well-worn foot track to the top of the headland and venture out to its edge as far as I dare. With my knees pulled up to my chin, staring out to the eastern horizon, all I could see was sky and water; blue on blue. I was infused by a sense of peace; being part of a reality immensely bigger than myself. It was my favourite place that holiday. I returned as often as I could to that spot. Just me, the ocean, and the sky.

Though I would not have described it at the time, being in that place was a spiritual experience, being connected in some mysterious way to a reality much bigger than my own; and of being at peace. It is a precious experience that has stayed with me through the decades.

That type of experience is far from unique. Many people have a special place where they feel safe, connected, and at peace: the bush, the mountain, the creek, the desert, the sea, the backyard. For many individuals and families, retreats to places like these offer an opportunity to reconnect, to bond, to seek healing and growth towards wholeness. These are all spiritual experiences. The capacity to be aware of and open to the spiritual is part of the human make-up.

Experiences of the spiritual are the raw material from which religious traditions of all kinds take shape. Religious narratives help followers to shape, explore and describe their own spirituality. Often it is the experiences and stories of founders and other key characters which guide and direct religious communities' spiritual under-

standing and wisdom. Think of the ancient people of the Dreamtime; Abraham and Moses; Jesus of Nazareth and St Paul of Tarsus; Mohammed the Prophet; the Buddha; these among many. Connection with these founding experiences offer adherents of every era an understanding of their origins and their destiny, of how to live in an authentic manner, and of what makes living meaningful.

It is surprising, or perhaps it's not, how much commonality exists across core values of spiritual traditions. "Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself" is a standard that is supported almost universally by people of goodwill everywhere, including those of religious traditions. It is known as 'The Golden Rule'. And flowing from this rule is a whole set of moral and ethical values we would want our children to absorb: respect, dignity, community, justice, compassion, inclusion, fairness, forgiveness, hopefulness and love.

Spiritual experiences, either expressed in religious tradition or independent from them, sustain human beings' capacities to embody these values in daily relationships. Religious traditions offer their members ritual expressions for spirituality and guided support in living these values in an authentic manner.

Here in Australia we have a beautiful experience of the spiritual 'intersection' between the secular and the sacred. Every December in parks across our land, the community gathers for Carols by Candlelight. In the wistfulness of carols sung by soft candlelight, the Christmas story prompts hearts to seek a sense of family and belonging, of purity and simplicity, of peace-fulness and generosity.

It is often said that Christmas is for children. While this clearly is not exclusively the case, it is true that the joyous naivety, spontaneity, and sense of wonder so often exhibited by children can lead us



into the experience of all that is at the heart of this magnificent season.

I recall fondly a special encounter I shared with our eldest daughter when she was about three. We were going through the night-time ritual of teeth, stories, and bed. Tucked into bed we were saying our 'God bless Nana and Grandad, friends at kindy' and so on. In the midst of this our three-year-old asked a question which should not be unexpected from a child that age.

**"Where's God?" she asked.**

**"Hmmm... God's everywhere," I speculated.**

**"How can God be everywhere?" was the curious response.**

**"Well... God's in everyone's heart."**

**"How can God be in your heart?"**

**"Um... you know when Mum and Dad say to you that we love you?" "Yes..."**

**"And you tell us back that you love us too?" "Yes"**

**"And you know that feeling you get inside?"**

**"Oh, yes! The warm of God!"**

**"The warm of God'... out of the mouth of babes!"**

That's it of course; the knowledge and experience of being loved and being wanted no matter what, and of belonging somewhere and with someone is humanity's core spiritual experience.

When it sinks home - year after year; again, and again - it has the power to change our lives. We can come to the realisation that we are not alone, that life is not a trap, that we are loved and are worthwhile and are valued for who we are.

While from one angle it looks like a truth for individuals (i.e. 'it's true for me'), spirituality is always at the same time corporate; we are called to live with and for one another. What we believe about ourselves – our personal lovability and worthwhileness – we are called to enact communally. This spirituality reminds us to engage in deliberate acts of other-centeredness.

For me, the essence of spirituality is love, actually. Just like love, spirituality is a gift; a gift that makes all the difference. Borrowing from the great French storyteller, Victor Hugo: "When we love another person, we see the face of God". And in the Divine's own face, we see reflected a vision of the selves we are called to become.

The kid on the headland absorbed by the immensity of sea and sky; Aussie communities in candlelit hope for enduring goodwill towards all; the child tucked into bed warmed by the embrace of love – truly, spirituality is all around.

*Luke is the Principal of MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter*







# Get to Know:

## Luke Reed

**Principal, MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter**

**A father of four teenagers, an avid reader and a Brisbane Broncos fan (still!), Luke Reed is a busy man indeed. He is also the foundation principal of MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter and has helped the college grow from less than 100 students to more than 500 in just a few short years.**

### HOW DID YOUR OWN EDUCATION HELP SHAPE YOU INTO THE PERSON YOU ARE TODAY?

I grew up in Brisbane and went to a Catholic primary school (Yrs 1-3) run by Sisters of the Holy Family in Stafford. I then went to a Catholic all boys school (Yrs 4-12), run by the Franciscan Friars at Kedron. I really enjoyed every part of my schooling.

I felt very much that I belonged in those communities and I had a place. There was a real sense that they wanted the best for me and all the other students. Our education was broad and encouraging.

### WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE A CAREER IN EDUCATION?

After formal schooling, I worked for a couple of years in a bank, then in the pastoral sector for a decade. In that situation I was always around schools and I really enjoyed working in that environment.

My wife, Leanne, is an excellent teacher with experience across Prep to Year 12, and I've learned a lot from her I must admit.

### WHAT HAS BEEN A HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

I think the highlight really is the young people that you work with, especially over time.

Seeing young people as they acknowledge their own growth, maturity and learning and take up the challenges that life has for them in a hopeful, positive and generous way. That's the highlight for any educator, I think.

### HOW ARE SCHOOLS EVOLVING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE 21ST CENTURY LEARNER?

In recent times, we've all been exposed to new challenges. We've never been in this territory before. We are now moving towards online learning and finding new ways to connect. With kids, routine is imperative and the routine we've put out involves lots of movement and activity breaks, but also

concentrates on core literacy and numeracy.

What's most problematic about this new way of learning and teaching is the physical effect and social disconnection. This is our main priority during remote learning - to support our parents and kids to stay connected and normalise life as much as possible in this really abnormal situation.

There is also more focus on the 'human attributes' that 21st century learners need for active and connected citizenship: empathy, critical thinking, reasoned judgement, creative communication, and collaborative engagement. These 21st century dispositions are essential, right throughout life.

We also talk about meta-cognition - helping kids to understand what they are learning and what skills and strategies to employ if in difficulty. These include resilience, the ability to determine what's next and to be unafraid to stretch their learning and embrace challenges.

### WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR ROLE AS PRINCIPAL?

I want every young person to be best prepared to make their own life and the life they share with others something rich and valuable.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO 'INSPIRE THE HEARTS, MINDS AND SPIRITS' OF OUR CHILDREN?

Parents and educators are both working towards an end goal with our children - to prepare our kids not only for a life of work, but most importantly a life of worth. This comes from inspiring their minds, but also nurturing their hearts and spirits as well.

### WHEN NOT AT SCHOOL, WHERE WOULD WE FIND YOU?

At home, in the garden and around the pool. Or out with the kids. With four teenagers in the house we are all very busy. As parents know, every sport they play, you play, every job they have, you've got to get them to their shifts.

## Life Off The Farm: Embracing Adventure

Liam Atkinson has a fascinating hobby. The Mt Garnet teen, a first-year boarder at Cairns' St Augustine's College, uses termite mounds to make unique pieces of art.

"At home, we have to eradicate the termites on the farm. I help do this and then use the empty termite nests to build sculptures," he said. "They make really interesting sculptures and then I seal them in melted metal and sell them online."

Liam wasn't sure what to expect when he traded termite mounds and horses for the halls of St Augustine's.

But the Year 7 student found the experience refreshing, especially as he met new friends and started playing footy.

"Having my friends around me is really motivating as they push you to achieve better results," he said.

"(I like) learning something new every day that is different from home, especially learning from my friends who are all from different places."

The COVID-19 shutdown resulted in Liam returning home for a while, which meant he got to do the things he loves most, albeit with a few distractions. "There were so many noises from the horses, birds and my sister," he said. "But I enjoyed riding the horses again and helping out around the farm after learning during the day."

Liam has been riding since he was little and does drafting competitions a few times a year, landing him in fourth place for his age group. Liam's mum bred his horse, Maverick, and broke him in. "He's one of the



friendliest and quietest horses on the farm," Liam said. "I like our cattle dogs and being out with them and trying to get them to work. They mainly listen to Dad, but when I am older, I will get a puppy to train up."

Liam likes helping his dad muster and spending time at the sale yards. His passion for farming is clearly not a phase.

"I would like to stay on a farm and save up to buy my own cattle station one day," Liam said. "Being on a farm in Mt Garnet, you have limited available services, so have to learn to fix a lot of your own machinery and come up with lots of solutions to problems. "I want to study to be an engineer and then I can combine this with being on the farm and helping find solutions that help, not just my farm and family, but others."

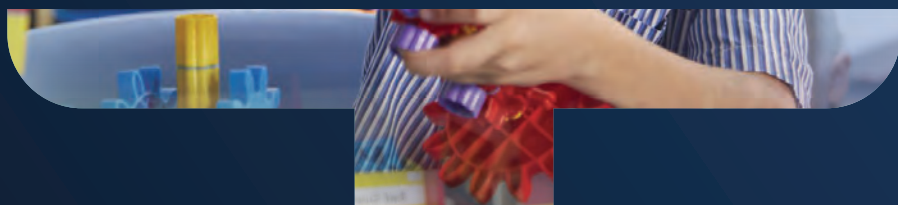
For now though, he is keen to continue learning and having fun at St Augustine's.

"I like that I have tutors to help me with my homework after school in study time," he said.

"Plus, I get to see my friends and classmates every day."



# Spirited Schools



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**Catholic  
Education**  
Diocese of Cairns  
*Learning with Faith and Vision*





# Cairns Catholic Schools Focus on Families' Future

Catholic schools changed in many ways as the COVID-19 crisis took hold.

Staff moved deftly to enable quality remote learning for all students, while teachers harnessed the latest technology to adapt lessons for home-based learning.

But one thing that has never wavered is a commitment to quality education, and accessibility to it, for all children – now and in the future.

Cairns Catholic Education has always had in place a raft of measures to ensure families wanting to access quality education for their children are not excluded because they do not have the means to pay fees. These initiatives were enhanced as soon as national COVID-19 recovery strategies were introduced.

Tuition fee concessions of 70 per cent have increased to 100 per cent for holders of means-tested concession cards, including those on Jobseeker, to ensure no child's education is interrupted because of financial difficulty.

New families will be eligible for the same concessions, so there is no reason for financial concerns to prevent families joining the Cairns Catholic Education community. An extension of the increased fee concession to 100% has been confirmed for Terms 1 and 2 in 2021.

Those who are financially distressed, but do not hold a concession card, may also seek special consideration. All families who seek fee relief can be assured their enquiries will be treated with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality.

The expectation that families who have not experienced financial hardship continue to pay their fees supports Cairns Catholic Education's commitment to provide ongoing high-quality education for all students and assistance to families

in genuine need.

Sibling and country area discounts continue and there will be no increase in tuition fees in 2021; a decision made in response to the expectation that many families will continue to experience financial hardship as the regional economy continues its recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

It is this combination of wide-ranging financial relief and advanced technological capabilities that saw Catholic schools excel during COVID-19 restrictions, and in the months to follow.

Cairns Catholic Education's Executive Director Bill Dixon has received many favourable comments about the system's ability to adapt during the crisis.

This was testament, he said, to the agility of school staff, and validation of the huge investment in quality systems and technology that Cairns Catholic Education has made in recent years.

"Staff responded with professionalism to keep the welfare and learning of students at the centre of their actions," Bill said.

"No doubt there is still much more we can learn from our recent experiences and that has the capacity to greatly enhance how we think about schools of the future."



Bill Dixon, Executive Director  
Cairns Catholic Education



***"You would never in your wildest dreams imagine a school thriving amidst such a challenge."***

## Technology and Transitioning

Staff, students and families made huge leaps forward in their ability to use digital platforms for learning and communication, adapting very quickly to the online environment as they moved to a remote learning model.

The learning curve has been exponential and digital environments have enabled the continuity of learning, communication and engagement.

Schools that were already incorporating digital technologies into their lessons found the transition to home-based learning easier.

"By the time the coronavirus shutdown occurred, the Science Department already had Microsoft Teams in place as the system to interact digitally with students," said St Augustine's College, Parramatta Park Head of Science, Jesse Zell.

"You would never in your wildest dreams imagine a school thriving amidst such a challenge."

But that's exactly what the college and other Catholic schools around the Cairns Diocese did, including St Andrew's Catholic College, Redlynch, which used their Digital Learning Environment as a digital hub for students to access all the learning tools they need, according to the college's IT Manager, Damon Thompson.

"Our teachers have been excited by the improved video conferencing and multimedia options now offered and plan to keep using their new skills with students going forward," he said.

## Setting Up for the Future

Families in the Cairns Catholic Education community can be assured their children's education will always continue to a high standard, regardless of hurdles.

Catholic schools recognise and value parents as the first educators of their child, Bill Dixon said.

"The learning from home experience reinforced the importance of this relationship and ensured families felt supported by their school communities," he said.

Catholic schools are incorporating their learnings from COVID-19 to better position themselves for future disruptions and will ensure successes experienced during online learning are embedded into regular classroom practice to enhance educational opportunities for all students.

"One of the benefits of learning from home was that students had to develop digital literacy skills which will assist them immeasurably in the future," explained Amanda Speziali, Year 6 teacher at Good Counsel Primary School, Innisfail.

One parent at St Augustine's College, Parramatta Park, said: "We are so grateful to Saints for how they fairly and proactively managed all aspects of the COVID-19 shutdown for our son and our family. The learning from home experience was well delivered and organised, and we welcomed the removal of boarding fees during this difficult time."

Parents have the responsibility to choose the right school for their child, including one that can be responsive to their needs for the future. Catholic schools have proven they are up to the task.





# Newman Catholic College – Opening 2022

Applications are open for Cairns' newest secondary school, an innovative project expected to generate wide-ranging benefits for local families.

Funding for Newman Catholic College was approved in August and the school will open for its first students in 2022.

The college, co-located with James Cook University at Smithfield, is the first Catholic school in Australia to be located within a university precinct.

"As new schools go this one is particularly exciting because it brings into play a range of additional benefits arising from its location and its relationship with JCU," said Cairns Catholic Education Services Executive Director Bill Dixon.

"We've been looking at ways we can extend the benefits of this partnership to all our students in all our colleges and this has implications for our recruitment of graduate teachers, staff professional development, education research, extension and mentoring opportunities for our students, and transition programs.

"Even at this early stage it is apparent that there are some very significant advantages that will flow from this partnership."

Mr Dixon said the college had been accredited with the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, a long-term lease for the land had been signed with the university and the design for the first stage was finalised.

Funding was secured after an application to the Queensland Government was progressed through the Queensland Catholic Education Commission process.

Stage 1 will go to tender and a builder appointed by the end of the year. Newman Catholic College will be shovel-ready to commence construction in late 2020.

The foundation Principal for Newman Catholic College is now being sought nation-wide to lead the unique opportunity presented by this college, Mr Dixon said.

"Although we did not plan it this way it will be a timely vote of confidence in the local economy in its response to the pandemic impacts," he said.



CES Director of School Effectiveness (Secondary) Andrea O'Brien said local consultation in the northern beaches community and further afield had demonstrated enormous interest and support for the college.

"In the last few years we have had waiting lists for our Cairns-located secondary colleges," she said.

"With Newman on the northside and the commencement this year of secondary education at MacKillop Catholic College on the southside at Mount Peter, we are greatly expanding the available secondary places."

Dr O'Brien said the school would open for the Year 7 cohort in 2022 and then add a new year level every following year to be a full Year 7-12 secondary college in 2027.


"Current expressions of interest for Year 7 places suggest we will easily achieve total enrolments of about 750 students when the school is complete," she said.

She said that in addition to the advantages of co-location with the university, families were noting the convenience of the location at Smithfield, its pedestrian and bikeway accessibility, and its proximity to the university's public transport hub with its connections to suburbs across Cairns.

"Our approach has been to bring the community with us on this journey through our consultative process and the work of the college's community consultative committee and through our engagement with the university community," Dr O'Brien said.







# Major Infrastructure Investment Boosts Cairns' Catholic Schools

In response to the growth of Catholic school enrolments across the Cairns Diocese, and to make sure Cairns Catholic Education is providing contemporary facilities, Catholic Education Services (CES) has been busy with \$40 million worth of investment in 2019/20.

CES' Manager, Building and Planning Mark Stallman said: "The role of Building and Planning at CES is to facilitate the growth and improvement of our capital facilities in our schools. Our investment is to improve school facilities, particularly in the older schools where those facilities require upgrading."

The Building and Planning department does a lot of research and travel to look at other schools around the state, country and internationally to bring back best practice around contemporary learning spaces.

Included in the \$40 million worth of construction projects undertaken in the last 12 months are:

- ✓ **St Mary's Catholic College, Woree** – refurbishment of the resource centre
- ✓ **Good Counsel Primary School, Innisfail** – new senior classes learning block
- ✓ **St Therese's School, Bentley Park** – outdoor learning facility and playground
- ✓ **Holy Cross School, Trinity Park** – sensory garden and outdoor learning area
- ✓ **MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter** – Stage 3 of Prep to Y12 development
- ✓ **Mother of Good Counsel School, Cairns North** – new administration refurbishment
- ✓ **Mount St Bernard College, Herberton** – refurbishment works (art space and music centre)
- ✓ **Our Lady Help of Christians School, Earlville** – new classroom block
- ✓ **St Monica's College, Cairns** – new teaching block

- ✓ **St Stephen's Catholic College, Mareeba** – multipurpose hall and lecture theatre

Funding for the capital projects comes from two main sources:

- ✓ *Self-funded by schools*
- ✓ *State and Federal Government grants*

Mark said: "Currently, CES has \$5 million worth of capital projects underway, including St Joseph's School in Atherton, St Clare's School in Tully and St Andrew's Catholic College in Redlynch."

In mid-2020, CES has substantial projects at the planning or further advanced stage. There is approximately \$50 million worth of capital projects on the planning board, including:

- ✓ **Newman Catholic College at James Cook University, Smithfield**
- ✓ **Stage 4 of MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter**
- ✓ **Performing arts centre upgrade at St Mary's Catholic College, Woree**
- ✓ **Proposed southern campus (Edmonton) for Holy Spirit youth assistance college**

Mark said: "Our role in Building and Planning is to work in conjunction with the educators at CES to provide the best contemporary facilities that we can for our schools and colleges across the Diocese. We want to ensure we maintain sufficient spaces for the students who want to attend our schools and colleges, and that we are doing that in an affordable way, so that anyone who wants to attend our schools and colleges is able to do so."

He said, "We're very excited to be able to offer these contemporary facilities across the Diocese. We put a lot of time into researching what is contemporary, what's cutting edge, and what will provide the best learning opportunities for our students and our families in the Far North Queensland region."



To view the video showcasing the 2019/20 school capital works projects undertaken by CES in collaboration with schools, go to <https://bit.ly/2ZTOz2V>

# Convenient, Consistent, Concise Communication



*It has never been easier for parents to access important information about their child's life at school. Software system EdSmart operates at all schools in the Cairns Catholic Education community, ensuring communication with parents is always fast and accurate.*

Many school parents in the past relied on their children to pass on important information about their education. Understandably, this did not always go to plan.

Permission slips, newsletters and notices were commonly unearthed out of a child's backpack crumpled and late, leading to extra stress and the odd missed opportunity.

EdSmart, a cutting-edge tool used in every Cairns Catholic Education school, means today's parents can avoid the horror of fishing through backpack detritus.

The system has transformed the way schools operate, creating consistent and instantaneous communication with parents across the Diocese's diverse group of schools, from Thursday Island to Tully.

Schools in the Cairns Diocese began using EdSmart in 2017 and the system is now used to manage a broad range of parental communications, from instrumental music programs to excursions and more.

EdSmart has simplified the most complex organisational tasks, including things like international tours, though these kind of trips are on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We encourage our schools, who are organising events, especially those involving travel and many pieces of important information, to use EdSmart from the beginning of the process," said Alison Forster, School Information Systems Manager at Cairns Catholic Education Services.

"EdSmart allows the school and the coordinating staff to easily collate and follow up on all of the details required for a secure and safe experience for students".

EdSmart enables fast and easy contact with all parents, including those with students in boarding schools and remote locations. It has streamlined digital processes to encourage consistency and accuracy across the board.

"Since deploying EdSmart, we've seen a substantial increase in parent engagement, bettering the way that our schools communicate with parent communities," Alison said.

"I have parents telling me how much they love [EdSmart] and how easy it is to use with everything in one place."

Paul Rayner, Principal at St Augustine's School, Mossman, agreed EdSmart had enabled more consistent communication with families.

"The EdSmart platform has increased the percentage of parents who engage with school communication," he explained.

"Permission slips are easy to collect and parent surveys can be created quickly to harvest feedback from parents on a regular basis."

EdSmart has also been welcomed by school staff, especially those who were struggling to manage cumbersome paper-based systems.

Boarding schools, St Augustine's and St Monica's colleges, use EdSmart to gather comprehensive data, including information about parents' preferences for their student's care.

And the waitlist function of EdSmart means schools can organise parent events in the COVID-19 era, while meeting requirements for numbers of people in a particular space.

Yvette Bacic, Principal's Secretary and Administration, Services & Support at St Joseph's School, Parramatta Park, said EdSmart's efficiency "saves a lot of double handling".

"EdSmart has revolutionised getting those dreaded paper parent permission notes to and from school," she said.

"Parents were jumping for joy when we introduced electronic slips. It has enabled parents to give instant approval for their children to participate in events."





# Roadmap to Reconciliation

*Cairns Catholic Education Service's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan is paving the way toward unity and equity.*

A challenging 2020 failed to dampen reconciliation efforts across the Cairns Catholic Education community. National Reconciliation Week – fittingly themed ‘In This Together’ – coincided with the launch of Cairns Catholic Education Service's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The series of measures detailed in the plan are a call to action, providing a roadmap for future initiatives and showing a commitment to reconciliation. The plan, launched via a virtual livestream of students, staff, families and community members amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, focuses on empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, building respectful relationships, raising awareness and embracing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, languages and spiritualities.

Consultant Formation First Nations, Antoinette Cole, Chair of the RAP Working Group, said organisers of National Reconciliation Week celebrations had to think creatively in light of COVID-19 limitations. “COVID-19 certainly challenged us to consider different ways of connecting within our Catholic Education Community,” she said. “It was important for our work to respectfully consider ways to reflect our Catholic context, how we connect with our community, and embrace the opportunity to innovate alternative ways to signify the week.”

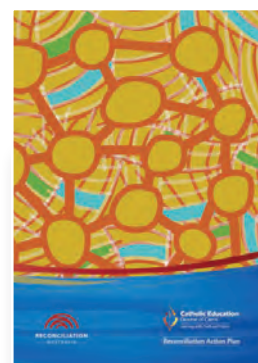
Cairns Catholic Education Services staff took part in a series of activities throughout the week to acknowledge, remember and reflect on the past. Many wore the five-petal Native Cotton, Desert Rose, or Native Hibiscus to symbolise the scattering of the Stolen Generations and their resilience, and watched a screening of *In My Blood It Runs*, the story of 10-year-old Djujan, a child healer, hunter and speaker of three languages. On Mabo Day, the final day of National Reconciliation Week, staff reflected on the 1992 Mabo decision, the passing of the Native Title Act 1993 and what it

means decades down the track.

Antoinette said reconciliation was a journey for all Australians.

“As our reconciliation journey continues throughout our community, we look forward to hearing the voices of our students, staff and families in and across our Catholic Education Community,” she said. The Strategic Leadership Team at Cairns Catholic Education Services will receive regular reports tracking the progress of the RAP, which was developed by a working group of experts with strong links to key stakeholders in the wider community. The plan lists 14 key actions and a series of measures, including a review of anti-discrimination strategies, promoting better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols among staff and identifying future employment and development opportunities.

Other areas of focus involve raising awareness around the meaning of NAIDOC Week, investigating a professional mentoring network within Cairns Catholic Education and collaboration with other like-minded organisations. It is hoped that all schools across our Catholic Education community capture their reconciliation journey in a formalised way, in line with Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali: Reconciliation Education Program.



Reconciliation Action Plan



To take a look at the RAP, visit: [cns.catholic.edu.au/about/reconciliation](https://cns.catholic.edu.au/about/reconciliation)



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# Supporting Youth, Winning Gold: Meet: Leah Kawane

**Like some of the youth in our community, Leah Reuben Kawane struggled with mainstream school. She was disengaged from education from the age of 14, finding that the conventional system wasn't right for her. However, one year later she discovered Holy Spirit College, Cairns and realised that, with the right school and support system, she could achieve success in school and in her chosen sport - boxing.**

Recently crowned the State and National Boxing Bantamweight Champion, Leah now devotes her time to training and helping others as a Youth Support Worker at the very school that helped her change her life path – Holy Spirit College. Leah's inspiring transformation from a troubled teen to a Youth Support Worker and boxing champ reminds us all that, with self-belief and the right support in your corner, anything is possible.

## **TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY INTO THE HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE COMMUNITY**

I found it hard in mainstream school but I attended Holy Spirit at the age of 15 years old where I found the support and trust I needed. It was a long process to learn to love learning; slowly but surely, I call it. But enrolling in Holy Spirit was the best decision I have ever made.

## **WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO RETURN TO HOLY SPIRIT AND BECOME A YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER?**

I wanted to give back to the community. I love children/young adults and want nothing but the best for them. Knowing and understanding their battles, I try to use my experience to help them to be the best they can be. I love helping them, putting smiles on their faces, seeing change, helping to change and watching them improve.



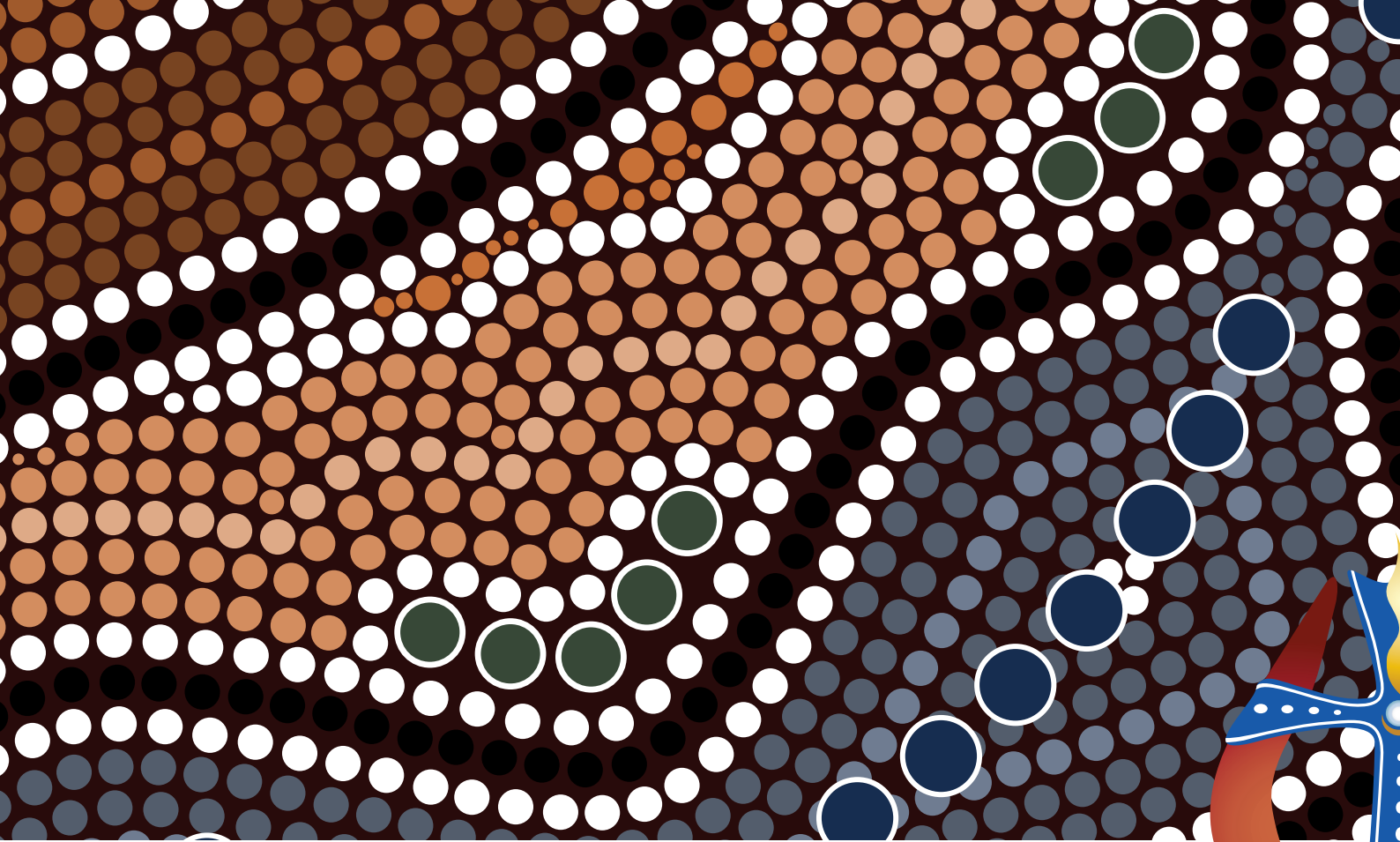
I just want to get the best out of every human being that I meet.

## **FOUR YEARS AGO, YOU STARTED BOXING. AND NOW, YOU ARE A NATIONAL CHAMPION. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO TAKE THE LEAP INTO THIS SPORT?**

I have a family of boxers and it has always been around growing up. However, it took a while to commit and dedicate myself. I've recently become the State and National Bantamweight (54kg) Champion and want to compete in the next Commonwealth Games. Eventually, I'd love to take home a gold medal at the Olympics and become professional.

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR STUDENTS WHO MAY BE HAVING TROUBLE ENGAGING IN SCHOOL?**

Just to stick the hard part out. The challenge, the failure, the fall is where our growth takes place, where the strength comes from. Life's hard and is always chucking unwanted and unliked obstacles and challenges in our face but just know that everything happens for a reason. Just keep going, striving to be the best you can be and you will eventually reach your chosen destination.



# Blending Beliefs: The Best of Both Worlds

38

LILLIAN MILLER

**The sharing of traditional beliefs can open the door to important conversations and enhance learning opportunities. Lillian Miller explains how First Nations spirituality can enrich Christian perspectives in special and meaningful ways.**

## **HOW DOES FIRST NATIONS SPIRITUALITY CONTRAST WITH CHRISTIANITY IN TODAY'S MODERN WORLD?**

The essence of the Christian message is that Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and when we repent and believe, we are saved and receive eternal life. Traditional First Nations spirituality

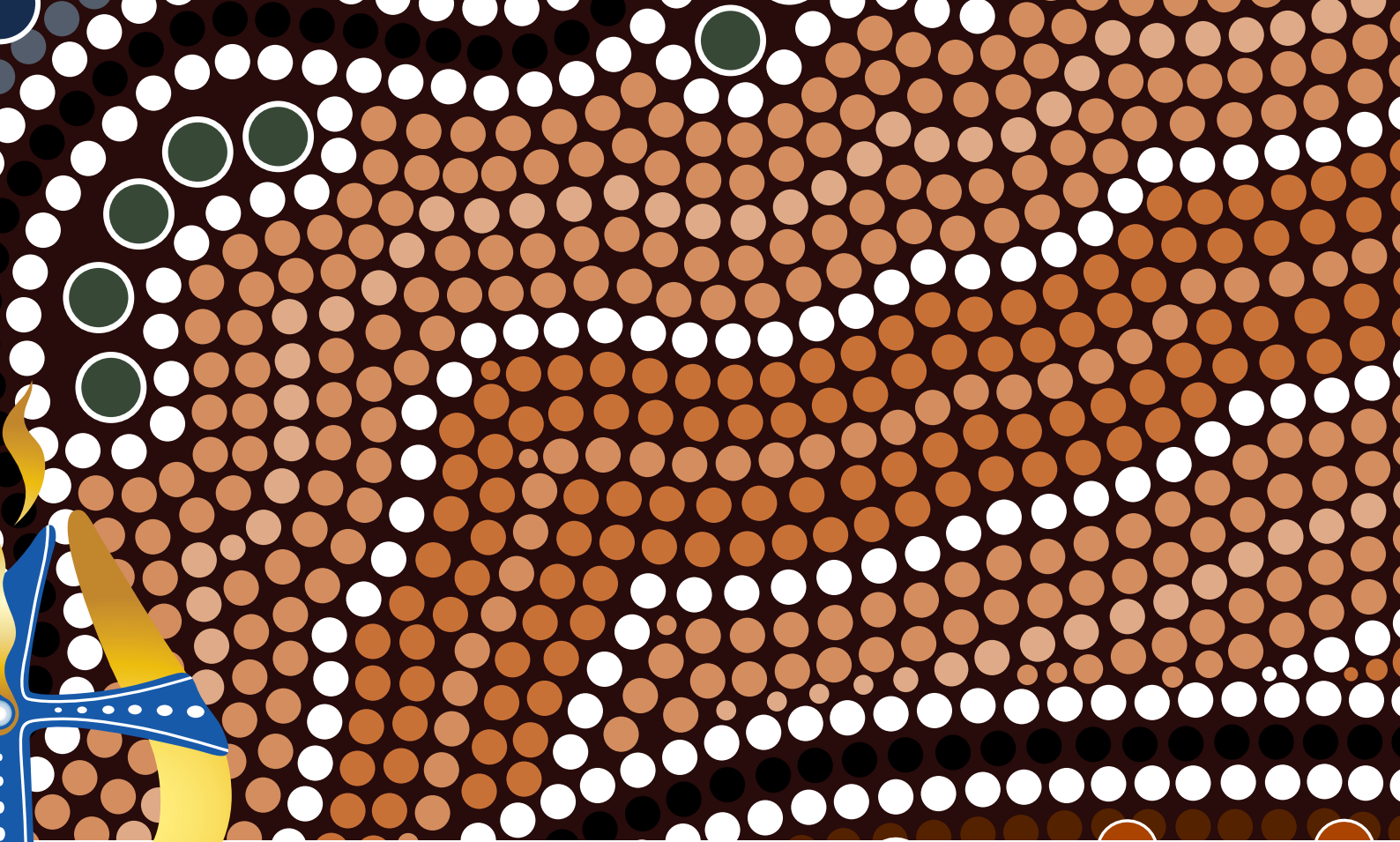
does not have a concept of needing to be saved, though it does have a knowledge of good and evil and people needing punishment for breaking the lore.

God created the heavens and the earth. First Nations people are loving, caring and sharing and do believe in one God, but it is Baime or the rainbow serpent that is an Aboriginal 'all-father deity'. Some First Nations people with a traditional spiritual view believe that the rainbow serpent is the creator and that there are lesser creative beings who created the lands, seas, sky, and waterways. However, First Nations Christians will not generally believe in the rainbow serpent as creator.

There is a need to combat the idea that God and Jesus are white. God is without colour. God is incorporeal - without body or physical form - he doesn't have the identifying characteristics of a human being. The Bible clearly states that God is a spirit. Therefore, he has no skin colour from a man's perspective.

We value the contribution of First Nations spirituality to Christianity. Parts of First Nations peoples' and non-Indigenous cultures can glorify and enrich the faith for us all. Pope Francis said: "Let us sit around the common table, a place of conversation and of shared hopes. In this way our differences, which could seem like a banner or a wall, can become a bridge...our own





cultural identity is strengthened and enriched because of dialogue with those unlike ourselves.”

### HOW CAN SHARED SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING INSPIRE FUTURE GENERATIONS?

If we are to change the current gap in health and life outcomes for First Nations people then acknowledging, accepting, and integrating First Nations’ ways of knowing, being and doing into our perspectives is essential.

A life-long resilient faith is both inspired by tradition and open to the world of today.

Some similarities between Christianity and First Nations spirituality include enjoying stories, singing, dancing and art. Both can

have visions and dreams. Even in heaven, people will be worshipping God in their own languages.

Some practical ways of relating faith to children, in a way that is culturally appropriate, could be:

1. Telling a story from the Bible and doing an activity that brings the stories to life. For example, Jesus on the beach having fish with his disciples and doing this at the beach.
2. Talking about the feasts Jesus celebrated and celebrating NAIDOC, Coming of the Light and Reconciliation Week.
3. Using a campfire to talk around and have damper, bush fruits etc.
4. Trying art concepts with First Nation languages and Christian themes
5. A concert with Indigenous and Christian themes

6. A boomerang relay with teams named after First Nations people
7. Learning about First Nation languages

Embedding First Nations worldviews in culturally responsive ways not only facilitates the reconciliation process, but also enhance our way of dialogue.

In this way, we can promote the authentic interplay between our Christian tradition in the Far North Queensland context and the deep wisdom of the First Nations people who have lived and loved on these lands, sea, waters and sky for time immemorial and in doing so we can live and celebrate our identity.

*Lillian is a Consultant First Nations for Cairns Catholic Education Services*

“Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn.”

| BENJAMIN FRANKLIN





## THE IMPORTANCE OF READING PRIOR TO STARTING SCHOOL

GLORIA WEST

Children's learning begins in the home environment, and parents play an important role in shaping children's early learning opportunities.

Australian author Mem Fox says children need to hear a thousand books before starting school. She argues that our children need continual exposure to books from infancy.

Reading aloud to your child helps you and your child to form connections. If you read to your child regularly, you will be helping to develop a lifelong appreciation and love of reading.

Reading to young children promotes concepts of print, vocabulary acquisition, literacy development and reading comprehension. It helps to ignite your child's imagination and curiosity and increases memory and attention span. Most importantly it helps children understand that reading makes meaning.

Read pattern books with repetitive and predictable rhymes, phrases, and story lines. Rhyme is essential in developing children's awareness of the sound structures of language. It is a precursor for reading and writing. Literacy learning can occur in any environment at any time. During play, add books to read about related topics e.g. Block play – picture books about houses, bridges, construction, demolition.

Young children whose parents read them five books a day enter kindergarten having heard about 1.4 million more words than children who were never read to, a new study found. This 'million word gap' could be one key in explaining differences in vocabulary and reading development.

*Gloria is the Cairns Catholic Education Consultant - Literacy and Numeracy*



## THE LIFELONG IMPACT OF MUSIC

MAUREEN CAMERON

Deciding to be a music teacher was the best decision I have ever made. Little did I know that I was about to embark on a life of continuous learning and joy. Little did I know the profound impact music would have on my life.

As a child, music was having a positive impact on my concentration skills, it was helping me with maths and language, it was helping me memorise facts and improve my ability to problem solve, make new friends and socialise. Music was helping me regulate my emotions, it was honing my fine motor skills using small and large muscle groups all at the same time. I was utterly immersed in the joy of making music.

Now, as a music teacher, I get to witness the joy and pleasure that music brings as children unleash their creativity, they relax and unwind and anxiety melts to calm and self-value. A simple task like singing a song together develops a child's sense of empathy and encourages deeper bonds.

We can all listen to the music at a school concert and appreciate the sounds, we know it is good (mostly). What we cannot measure is the comradeship, commitment, sense of achievement, pride, self-discipline and how in-tune the orchestra is to each other's feelings. It is a magical and transformative activity like no other.

Recent research concludes that the part of the brain linked to musical memory is relatively undamaged by Alzheimer's. Allowing our children the opportunity to learn a musical instrument is one of the most powerful and positive gifts that we can give as parents and educators. It is a skill that requires patience, determination and commitment, teamwork and sacrifice. It sets us up for a lifetime of success and builds resilience. It ultimately prepares us for the very end of our lives when we realise what is truly important.

*Maureen is the St Andrew's Catholic College, Redlynch Head of Department - Music*

# GENERATION ALPHA

## To change the face of schools

**We've all heard of Baby Boomers, Generation Z, and Millennials but the newest generation is nipping at their heels and they're set to change the way education in schools is delivered. We're talking about Generation Alpha.**

ANDREA GREGORY

They are in our schools now. And there are more coming—lots more. While much of Generation Alpha is still in nappies, we need to understand them now to be better prepared to meet their future educational wants, needs and goals.

### MEET GENERATION ALPHA

In 2005, Australian futurist and social researcher Mark McCrindle coined the term “Generation Alpha” to identify the group born after Generation Z. He defines the generation as those born from 2010 to 2024, while Gen Z spans 1995 to 2009 and Gen Y spans 1980 to 1994 (though many push the millennial birth years back a bit later). Within four years they will outnumber the Baby Boomers, and many of them will live to see the 22nd century.

“In keeping with the scientific nomenclature of using the Greek alphabet in lieu of the Latin, having got to Generation Z, I settled on the next cohort being Generation Alpha. They are, after all, the first generation wholly born in the 21st century, and so they are the start of something new, not a return to the old,” said McCrindle.

### WHO IS GENERATION ALPHA?

There are more than 2.5 million Gen Alphas born globally every week. By 2025, they will number almost two billion. Currently aged 0-10, they are mostly the children of Gen Y, and there are 1.6 million of them in Australia.

The year 2010 was when the iPad was launched, Instagram was created, and ‘app’ was the word of the year - so from their earliest years, they have been “screenagers”. Not only can some multi-screen and multi-task, glass has become the new medium for content dissemination and unlike the medium of paper, it is kinaesthetic, visual, interactive, connective and

still portable. Glass was something that Gen Ys were told to look through and keep their fingers off – for Gen Alpha, glass (or screens) are a medium through which they can touch, talk, and look at. And whilst Baby Boomers remember the introduction of the colour TV in the 1960s and '70s, Gen Alphas are being shaped in a world where they can view a YouTube video from a smartphone onto the home TV.

They are logged on and linked up – digital natives. They are the most materially endowed and technologically literate generation to ever grace the planet!

Generation Alpha will surpass even the praised and sophisticated Zeds in terms of education, with 90 per cent predicted to complete Year 12, compared to 79.9 per cent today, and with the majority going on to tertiary education in some form, according to McCrindle.

A shift in educational engagement is also occurring for Gen Alpha, changing from structural and auditory to engaging, visual, multimodal and hands-on methods of educating this emerging generation.

Alphas are the most technologically savvy generation ever, using mobile devices earlier in life, and they're adept at connecting with friends and family members via online platforms such as FaceTime, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Zoom. Their use of artificial intelligence is commonplace and natural, understanding how to use Siri and Alexa, among others, from the age when they learn to speak. As McCrindle described, this newest generation are part of an unintentional global experiment where screens are placed in front of them from the youngest age as pacifiers, entertainers and educational aids. Some of the concerns with early exposure to devices include possible delays to speech development and impeded social development. On the flipside,





other studies say that screen media help kids learn, and that screen time can help children over two develop coordination and hone quick reaction skills.

With so many variables and split opinions, it's a challenge for educators to forecast how these characteristics will impact what this next generation of student will need to learn. And how they learn. Baby Boomers were sitting in quiet rows of desks, and the learning was very formal and structured, whereas Gen-Xers did more group work with a more relaxed and interactive learning process. Millennials were taught using multisensory and multimodal methodologies, and Generation Z have had the opportunity to access learner-centered approaches with kinaesthetic opportunities and interactive spaces.

But all of this is about to change. What do you do with learners who have lived their entire lives connected to everything and everyone at all times, who already thrive with online learning opportunities, who are perfectly comfortable with virtual connections but may not necessarily do well with physical human interactions?

The way it's always been done isn't going to work anymore. New technologies are being developed at a rapid pace, and where you live does not necessarily define what you have access to anymore. It's fair to say the focus will need to be on skills, not just content. Content and resources are always available and the device a student might use to access content and resources will not matter.

Learning should offer flexibility and a greater purpose. Generation Alpha is expected to be interested in authenticity, not isolated content. They will

want to create products of value that allow them to integrate their learning to show what they know in a non-traditional way.

This generation expects to think, solve, create, and document. A renewed emphasis on critical thinking and creative problem solving, particularly through collaborative efforts, will continue. Education consultants Allison Zmuda, Marie Alcock and Michael Fisher penned an analysis of Generation Alpha for the Solution Tree blog. They suggest teachers will increasingly provide opportunities for digital interactions, virtual connections, making, prototyping, gaming, video production, virtual destinations, and much more. Generation Alpha students will succeed in their learning by accessing a variety of opportunities to show the processes that they went through to do something unique or solve an authentic problem.

And students in Generation Alpha are going to prosper through classroom experiences using soft skills such as dealing with their own behaviour and the behaviour of others, physical interactions with others, self-regulation, and goal setting, according to the consultants' analysis. Teachers will engage students in opportunities for building human capital, social capital, and decisional capital, as well as a variety of habits of mind, they said.

By the time Gen Alpha is ready to go out into the world, the world will look very different from the way it looks right now. Both parents and schools will shoulder the responsibility to get this right for them.

*Andrea is the Cairns Catholic Education Communications Officer*

“The world is changed  
by your example,  
not by your opinion.”

| PAULO COELHO





## LEARNING THROUGH NATURE

IVAN THERON

**At St Gerard Majella School, staff have had the opportunity to engage in professional learning through Nature Play Queensland after our beautiful Raintree Playspace was built.**

This opened my eyes to the incorporation of outdoor learning spaces into my teaching and learning program and that nature can be viewed as a flexible learning area where students spend more time collaborating and interacting positively with their peers.

Research provides us with many benefits to students learning in nature and I have observed that children build resilience, increase their social skills of negotiation and cooperation with peers as well as providing them with the “feel good” benefits of fresh air and green spaces.

Outdoor learning areas used in the flexible learning model have shown remarkable benefits regarding classroom behaviour in that students have a voice in decisions around seating, and group and peer feedback on learning tasks in a relaxed and safe environment.

Mathematics lessons in nature can include measurement and geometry, chance and data and simply being used as a workspace for collaborative sharing during math investigations.

Outdoor learning areas are a natural space for the science curriculum. It can be used for “messy” experiments and fits perfectly into enquiry units such as animal adaptation, space and push/pull.

English achievement standards can benefit from group work sharing, presenting oral skits, or just finding a quiet space for silent reading. Parents can foster a love of nature at home by allowing children to ask questions about what they observe in nature and utilising outdoor spaces for homework or other learning opportunities. Children are natural scientists and are inquisitive about their surroundings. Parents can encourage this investigation in a positive way through exploring the natural environment which surrounds us.

*Ivan is a teacher at St Gerard Majella School, Woree*

## HOW LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE CAN BENEFIT YOUR CHILD

SHIXIANG CHEN

**Research tells us that learning a second language has many benefits and can significantly improve cognitive function. Young adults with two languages perform better in reading comprehension tests and have better concentration.**

Learning a second language from a young age has further advantages. According to research from University of Washington, early childhood is the optimum time for kids to begin their second language learning if they are not raised in a bilingual family already.

This is because, by learning a second language at a young age, a learner’s brain development is stimulated, their English literacy skills are significantly enhanced, their memory, concentration and numeracy skills are improved, as is their overall performance at school. Additionally, children prior to the age of approximately 12 years old are said to still be able to ‘naturally acquire’ language through exposure. This ability diminishes significantly with age.

Most schools offer formal language programs. Compared to language learning in the past, students of all ages are now able to access their schoolwork and language learning resources from home. Parents of younger students are now also able to be part of their child’s language education, even without having the target language themselves. There are also other opportunities for students to get further involved in language learning within the school and wider community. School-based learning opportunities may typically include pen pal programs, overseas excursions, or student exchanges. JCU encourages language learning with their Young Language Ambassadors programs and school holiday short courses.

*Shixiang is the Head of Languages at St Andrew’s Catholic College, Redlynch*

# 10 TIPS TO BE “PREPPED FOR PREP”

JULIE DORE

## 1. Read to Your Child Every Day.

It greatly improves their literacy, vocabulary, concentration and imagination. Children who are regularly read aloud to become better readers and achieve better results.



## 2. Follow a Basic Routine.

Children thrive in environments that are consistent. Having predictable morning and night routines, with a good night's sleep and healthy meals, improves behaviour and concentration.



## 3. Encourage Independence.

Give your child age-appropriate jobs, doing things for themselves (e.g. tidy room, get dressed), for the family (e.g. refill toilet rolls, set table), and to prepare them for school (e.g. holding a pencil, colouring, using scissors).



## 5. Talk About Everything.

This is how children come to understand and make sense of the world. By simply talking to your child, you are teaching them general knowledge, vocabulary, and correct pronunciation.

## 4. Listen to Each Other.

Listen when your child is telling you things, so they know they can always come to you. And encourage your child to listen, children cannot be taught anything until they can listen.



## 6. Check Out Developmental Milestones.

Use them as a general guide to see what the average child should be doing physically, intellectually and socially. All children develop at different rates, but it is better to have concerns checked, than 'wait and see'.



## 7. Practise Appropriate Social Skills.

It is important that your child has time to play with others, as through play they learn many important skills; skills such as sharing, turn taking, manners and problem solving.

## 8. How to Deal with Emotions.

It's okay to have negative feelings (e.g. sad, angry, worried), but we need to teach children appropriate ways to calm down, such as deep breaths or walking away.



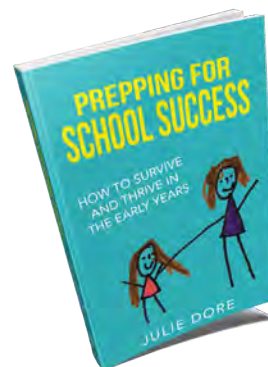
## 9. Have Rules and Consequences.

Make sure everyone knows the rules, why we have them, and what happens when they are ignored. Follow through with consequences, it's more about the certainty, rather than the severity.



## 10. Be a Positive Role Model.

Be careful what you do and say in front of your child unless you mean it and/or want it repeated. You are their first and most important teacher, so teach them well.



Julie is a teacher at St Gerard Majella School, Woree, speaker and author of *Prepping for School Success*  
[www.preppingforschoolsuccess.com](http://www.preppingforschoolsuccess.com)



“All kids need is a little help,  
a little hope and someone  
who believes in them.”

| MAGIC JOHNSON





## THE CHANGING TECH LANDSCAPE

CAMPBELL SMYTHE

When COVID-19 forced us to learn and work in different ways, we had to take advantage of what digital technologies offered us.

We all use various digital tools daily, and all of us were forced to level up, learn new skills, new language and develop some patience. The learning curve everyone was on equipped us but also revealed to us what we needed to learn.

Thanks to the State Library Queensland, free access to hundreds of software and digital skill courses from Lynda.com are available. Queensland residents can sign up for a free SLQ account, then take any number of courses which can be submitted directly to your LinkedIn resume.

Alison.com also provides access to free courses from Microsoft, Google and universities such as Stanford. Covering skills in Zoom, Excel, PowerPoint, iOS app development, 3D Printing and Drones – many courses include free certificates for resumes.

Then there is YouTube. A great “go-to” for answers to those “how do I” questions. It’s amazing how many people have contributed specific skills and guides for the benefit of others. Use the advanced search to get the most recent contributions.

It can be so hard to keep up with changes in digital technologies, but finding a few sites which can equip us and our kids with what we need to know when we need it, can be a great start.

*Campbell is the Cairns Catholic Education Management Officer Collaboration Systems*

## ANXIETY DOESN'T DEFINE ME

TAYAH GLUTZ

Anxiety is something I first experienced when I was in Year 3. I’m not sure how it started or why it started, it just did. I remember the end of Year 2 and often complaining of feeling sick, but what I, my teachers nor my parents realised is that it was the start of my anxiety. When it came time to go back to school for Year 3, that’s when things became really confusing for me (and everyone around me).

My year in Year 3 was very different. I often refused to even leave the house which meant no one could get me to school. I didn’t really know what was happening in my mind or my body, all I knew was that I wasn’t feeling like ‘me’. But I had a lot of people around me helping. My teachers, school counsellor and family all worked together with me so that together we could better understand what was happening and why. They even helped me keep learning; even though I didn’t come to school. Eventually, with everyone’s help and my mum coming with me, I made it back to school. At first, I only came to school for part of the day with my mum. Then we would go home and finish the rest of our work there. Gradually this increased to us being at school for a full day. Eventually I was able to come to school on my own.

This is just a little bit of time in my life. It doesn’t define me. I have overcome a huge obstacle in my life – anxiety. At the end of Year 5 I stood up in front of a group of students and showed myself that I can do anything by persisting and believing in myself. I spoke to them about my qualities, anxiety included, and why I would make a great House Captain. I demonstrated resilience and encouragement and strength. I own my anxiety; it doesn’t own me.

*Tayah is a Year 6 student at St Gerard Majella School, Woree*

# Active Kids Are Happy Kids

SHAWN BRACK

**A 2015 survey by The Royal Children's Hospital on what Australian adults consider to be the 'biggest health problems in children and adolescents' identified excessive screen time, obesity and not enough physical activity as the top three concerns. Although there is limited quantitative data on the health effects of a sedentary lifestyle on children, it is evident to this PE teacher (and parent) that children's fitness is on the decline.**

An increasing number of kids have access to screens such as mobile phones, laptops, iPads or tablets which means there are more opportunities to find alternatives to physical activity.

50

The effect of ever-growing use of digital technologies on young people has our nation divided. In our current world, where technology is such an integral part of daily life, it can be difficult to 'disconnect' in order to 'reconnect' with our physical health. Even though digital literacy continues to gain momentum in educational settings and some aspects of interactive, digital programs can enable greater learning (particularly in children with learning difficulties), kids are spending more time in the virtual world and less time playing out in the yard and communicating face-to-face. There has been a correlation between excessive screen time and reduced levels of enjoyment in other activities, such as outdoor exercise and imaginative play. This has a negative impact on both physical and social-emotional wellbeing.

Conversely, the benefits of physical activity for children are numerous:

- Healthy growth and development
- Better self-esteem
- Stronger bones, muscles and joints
- Better posture and balance

- A stronger heart
- A healthier weight range
- Greater social interaction with friends
- Learning new skills while having fun
- Better focus and concentration during school
- Can help cope with stress

There are three main types of activities that promote healthy growth and development in children (and adults too).

## ENDURANCE

– continuous movement that increases the heart rate and makes you work up a sweat.

- Scootering, skating, skateboarding
- Dancing, martial arts
- Swimming, jogging, skipping, cycling
- Hockey, football, soccer, basketball, tennis
- Rock or wall climbing, hiking
- Dodgeball, playing tag

## FLEXIBILITY

– encouraging children (big and small) to bend and stretch, allowing them to participate in daily activities without pain or restriction from their muscles or joints. Flexibility promotes good posture, reduces muscle stiffness, increases relaxation and minimises the risk of injury.

- Active play on playground
- Digging in the garden or on the beach
- Raking leaves
- Gymnastics, dancing, rock or wall climbing
- Yoga, skipping, stretching routines







## STRENGTH

– working against a resistance to build stronger muscles. Adequate muscular strength allows people to deal with the demands of daily life without excessive stress on their muscles and joints.

- Lifting and carrying things like groceries, garbage and garden waste
- Raking leaves, climbing stairs
- Sit-ups and push-ups
- Gymnastics
- Adventure playground activities such as monkey bars, climbing ladders and scaling poles
- Calisthenics using own body weight as resistance or supervised exercises using tubing, bands and hand weights

Of course, these lists are not exhaustive and any physical activity which is similar will have the same result.

## HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE YOUR KIDS TO BE ACTIVE?

First and foremost, parents should set a good example for their children. If you are seen to be physically active, your kids are more likely to want to get involved. The old adage, ‘Monkey see, monkey do’ certainly applies to physical activity. See what fun exercise websites there

are that the whole family can be involved in. Sometimes if something is online, kids will be more willing to give it a go. There are some amazing websites that have been designed by fitness professionals for all age levels.

- [www.gonoodle.com](http://www.gonoodle.com)
- [www.cosmickids.com](http://www.cosmickids.com)
- [www.thebodycoach.com](http://www.thebodycoach.com)

Be sneaky! There are heaps of physical activities that, because they are so much fun, you forget that you’re exercising which distracts from the fact that they are helping you get fit. Get the kids into a team sport or an activity, like dance or gymnastics, that involves interacting with other kids, so that children see that other kids are involved. They’re more likely to think it’s ‘cool’ and want to participate plus it’s an excellent way to get kids socially interactive.

In a world with an ever-changing landscape, we are forced to find inventive ways to get our kids (and ourselves) off the couch and involved in physical activity for physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Most importantly, have fun with your kids and enjoy the benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle.

*Shawn is a HPE Teacher and Sports Coordinator at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Parramatta Park*

“Children live in the  
present moment  
and when we join  
them there it makes  
their hearts sing.”

| M A G G I E   D E N T





## HOW TO FOSTER GOOD HABITS IN OUR KIDS

STEPHANIE MEEKINGS

### LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Kids of all ages learn by example and the behaviour of those around them. You may catch your toddler or young child muttering one of your commonly-used phrases or your teen questioning 'but you did it, why can't I?' It can be hard to enforce expectations on our kids if we don't have the same expectations of our own behaviour. If you want your kids to eat healthy meals, model that behaviour for them. If you don't want your child on their device at mealtimes, for example, don't bring your phone to the dinner table.

### CHIPPING IN

Some kids may have a sense of entitlement, but this behaviour can be learnt from bad habits. Encourage kids of all ages to contribute to the household and work as a team. If a child knows once dinner is finished, everyone takes their plates to the kitchen and puts them in the dishwasher, it becomes an unspoken routine. Another example is to encourage everyone in the family to put their dirty clothes in the laundry at the end of each day to help chip in.

### DAILY ROUTINES

Not all families follow strict routines, but finding a flow that works for your family can be beneficial for setting up good habits. Research has suggested that children whose families follow a routine may be healthier, better behaved and can even perform better at school. Plus, everyone knows what is expected of them and these routines can become ingrained as lifelong habits.

*Stephanie is a Cairns Catholic Education Digital Media Officer*

## BRAIN FOOD

NYREE BANKS

Food and nutrition play a huge role in the brain's capacity to absorb and retain information. There are a few easy steps that we, as parents, can do to support our children with learning, concentration and having plenty of energy.

It is essential that we keep their blood sugar under control. This will ensure they have a stabilised source of energy from their food so it is not spiking and dropping throughout the day. The best way to do this is to encourage them to eat regularly and not skip breakfast or lunch. Adding adequate protein in their meals and snacks will also help regulate blood sugar. Protein also lasts longer in the body than other nutrients like carbohydrates. Meat, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, dairy and legumes are great sources of protein.

Getting plenty of variety with food will give them a variety of nutrients so this is always important to take into consideration.

Essential fatty acids are called essential as our bodies don't make these nutrients so we have to get them in our diet or from a quality supplement. Essential fatty acids work beautifully on the brain and may support cognitive function, mood and are very specific for children on the spectrum. They can be found in oily fish such as tuna, salmon, sardines, seeds and walnuts. If your child is not eating these foods, see if you can find a way to incorporate these foods in their diet or seek out a quality supplement. They are very important.

It is always nice to be reflective and spend time on how you can better improve your child or children's nutrition. Google recipes, get in the kitchen and even try to include your child in making their own lunches.

*Nyree is a Naturopath and owner of Health Naturally*





# HOW ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ARE ADVANCING

URSULA ELMS

**Advancements in technology have meant parents are able to receive progressive feedback on their child's learning well before the end of semester report card is sent home.**

Assessment and reporting do not happen only once a semester or once a unit. Schools undertake a range of student assessment and reporting activities to inform and support student learning throughout the year.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process of gathering and interpreting information about student progress for a variety of purposes including:

- to direct future planning and teaching
- to inform teachers, students and parents about current understandings or misconceptions
- to identify strengths and weaknesses
- to create a 'point in time' snapshot of a student's performance
- to create a record of a student's learning
- to enable teachers to report

Assessment occurs on a continuing basis during the year and will involve both formative and summative assessment. These words are often confusing, but the key is in the beginning of each word. Formative assessment is used to form or inform the learning and summative assessment is used to collect the sum of the learning.

Formative assessment is used to provide teachers and students answers to questions such as:

1. What do students already know?
2. What do they need to learn?
3. How are they progressing with their learning?
4. What will they need to learn next?

Summative assessment is used to provide teachers with evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards.

Summative assessment provides information on student achievement in relation to the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum for students in Years P-10 and the reporting standards of the new Queensland Certificate of Education Senior Subjects for students in Years 11-12.

## REPORTING

Student achievement is recognised, celebrated and reported in many ways throughout the school year: at informal meetings, through awards at school assembly, parent/student/teacher interviews, through class work that is sent home and through written reports.

Written student reports are provided twice a year and communicate student progress and achievement in the learning areas or subjects studied. The Australian Government requires schools to report in plain English and use a five-point scale to report on student



achievement. This rating is based on a variety of assessment processes and is judged against the achievement standards of the curriculum studied.

Parents are also provided at least two opportunities each year to meet class and subject teachers to discuss the student's progress and how they may be able to improve. These meetings provide valuable information.

## WILL THINGS STAY THE SAME?

This year more than ever has seen the adoption of new technologies, so feedback and reporting have never been easier. Catholic schools and colleges are adopting the use of learning management systems (LMS), virtual learning environments (VLE) and eFolios to show evidence of learning and growth and provide ongoing, progressive feedback to students and parents.

When students know where they are going in their learning and teachers give feedback on how to get there, they are more likely to achieve success in their learning. Progressive feedback enables teachers to work with students to:

1. Develop a strong culture of learning
2. Locate and head off gaps earlier in the learning cycle
3. Set realistic and relevant learning goals
4. Improve engagement
5. Improve parent communication and support

It is not expected that the government required reports and interviews will change in the short term, but what we will see is increasing opportunities for students to receive progressive feedback and for parents to have a greater understanding of how their child is going, well before the end of semester report arrives. This can only mean better learning and stronger partnerships for all involved.

*Ursula is the Cairns Catholic Education Director Learning and Teaching*

## QCE AND ATAR

In 2020, Queensland students completing Year 12 will receive a Senior Statement which outlines their results. Eligible students will also receive a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). To achieve a QCE, students must complete the set amount of learning, at the set standard, in the set pattern, and meet literacy and numeracy requirements. Students who haven't achieved a QCE can continue to work towards one after they leave school. Both the Senior Statement and the QCE are awarded by the Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority (QCAA).

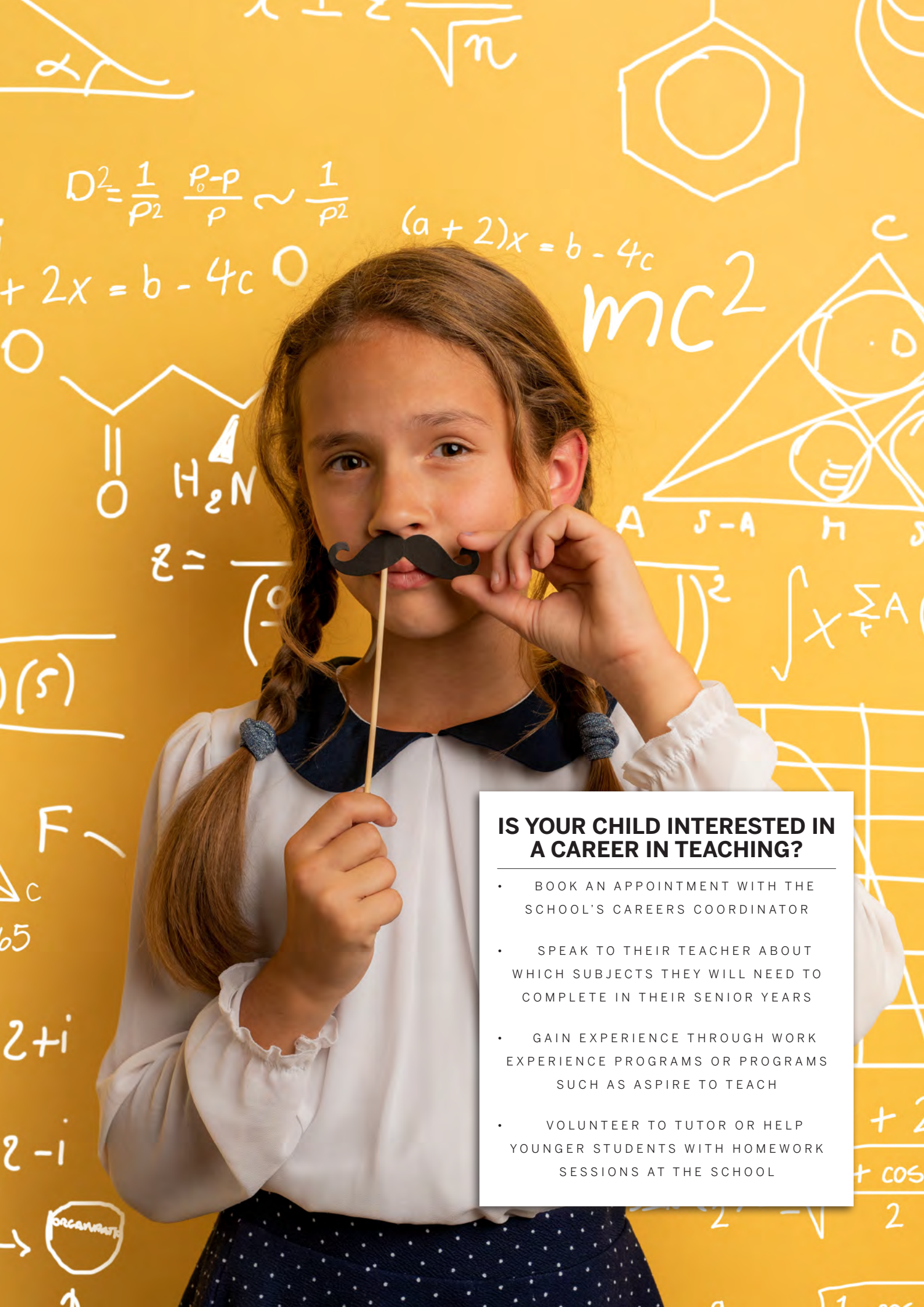
The most common means for students to access tertiary education is by an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). The ATAR replaces the previous Overall Position (OP). The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) will calculate and issue an ATAR for all eligible students.

Queensland ATARs will be based on a student's:

- best five General subject results, or
- best results in four General subjects, plus one Applied subject, or
- best results in four General subjects, plus one VET qualification at Certificate III or above.

The ATAR is a fine-grained measure expressed as a number on a 2000-point scale from 99.95 to 0.00 in steps of 0.05 that indicates a student's academic performance relative to all other students in the same cohort. The ATAR score is a percentile ranking of the student's overall achievement out of all potential Year 12 students. So, for example, if a student received an ATAR of 80.00, it basically means they have scored better than 80 per cent of their peers.

This ATAR system is consistent with the other states and territories and is used for university entry not only in Queensland, but also for students who wish to study at an interstate university.



- BOOK AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE SCHOOL'S CAREERS COORDINATOR
- SPEAK TO THEIR TEACHER ABOUT WHICH SUBJECTS THEY WILL NEED TO COMPLETE IN THEIR SENIOR YEARS
- GAIN EXPERIENCE THROUGH WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS OR PROGRAMS SUCH AS ASPIRE TO TEACH
- VOLUNTEER TO TUTOR OR HELP YOUNGER STUDENTS WITH HOMEWORK SESSIONS AT THE SCHOOL

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# ASPIRE TO TEACH

LEANNE WEBSTER

**Our country is experiencing a national teacher shortage, but an innovative new program has launched in the Far North to encourage senior students to consider a career in teaching.**

How amazing are our teachers? The COVID-19 lockdown period gave the world a deeper appreciation for our teachers. Parents have new insights and a newfound respect for the complexities of teaching after experiencing it firsthand. While students enjoyed online learning, they missed the face-to-face learning led in the classroom by their teachers. Our teachers, as essential workers, embraced new technologies and new ways of learning and teaching. They did their daily job plus more to ensure their students still had the opportunity to learn at home. Our teachers truly missed their students; I am sure we have all seen the heartfelt messages and videos posted to school Facebook pages around the country illustrating this. The joy when students returned to the classroom was felt by all: teachers, students and parents.

## CONSIDERING TEACHING AS A CAREER

Teachers perform an essential role educating students so each child can reach their full potential. The work done by teachers is highly skilled; they not only plan lessons from the Australian Curriculum, they must differentiate their lessons to meet the needs of all learners in their care. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) contain comprehensive descriptions of what teachers do every day at each career stage. It is not a short list. Teachers may apply to be accredited at highly accomplished and lead career stages. To achieve accreditation, teachers go through a rigorous national process of evidence collection and lesson observations. This folio of work must evidence how the teacher has positively changed the teaching practice of their peers

and increased student outcomes for every descriptor of the APST over the past five years. Teachers who gain this accreditation are rewarded with a substantial pay increase, keeping our high performing teachers in the classroom.

Graduate teachers have a starting salary of more than \$70,000 and those who choose teaching as their career will have job security and the opportunity for career advancement into a variety of middle and senior leadership positions. Teaching positions are regularly advertised throughout Australia including in rural and remote areas, which often attract locality and other allowances. Teaching is a globally transferable skill and for those who seek the thrill of overseas travel, this is the perfect career to explore the world, when this is once again possible.

## A NATIONAL TEACHER SHORTAGE

The demand for new teachers is strong due to increasing retirement rates and increasing student population. Nationally, this increased demand is not being met by an increase in university enrolments in education. To address this locally, Cairns Catholic Education, the Department of Education, Queensland and James Cook University, Cairns partnered to create the Aspire to Teach Program. The program includes a variety of classroom experiences including the Queensland Government's Ready Reading program which develops skills for reading with young students. Aspire to Teach is targeted at Year 10 students so they can gain a better understanding of teaching as a career and make informed decisions about their senior subjects. Feedback from students about the Aspire to Teach Program has been positive, with 87.5 per cent suggesting they would consider a career in education after completing the course.

Teaching is a challenging, inspiring, and truly rewarding profession.

*Leanne is the Cairns Catholic Education Consultant Leadership and Professional Learning*

“We cannot always  
build the future for our  
youth, but we can build our  
youth for the future”.

| FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



## SMALL TOWN SPORTS

KATHRYN DRYDEN

Living in a small town presents some challenges in attracting numbers of players, coaches and managers to run teams in our kids' age groups for their favourite sports.

My husband and I decided to commit time and effort in our already heavily-committed lives to grow, coach, and manage our kids' footy teams (that's right – plural!). We chose not to complain about the lack of local opportunities, but to make them happen instead.

What we didn't know was how rewarding it would be, and how taxing! Our efforts paid off for the kids, their families, and the clubs. We had amazing young athletes of all levels join in, and committed parents keen to keep bringing them to training and games. For us, we gained new and developing skills, engaged and happy kids, a growing circle of friends, a very tired four-year-old, later-than-usual nights, late meals (umm, toasties), and little to no time left for 'us'.

Do we want to keep it up? Yes and no. I think a 'team' of contributing parents would make the community stronger, the teams better, the kids even happier, and some sustainability and succession to keep these sports going for small-town kids into the future. I recommend getting involved, particularly if you possess good communication, record-keeping, and conflict resolution skills. If you don't have it all, identify who in your parent body are good at these things, and delegate! It also helps to have an open mind with a welcoming attitude, and essentially a well-governed club to have your back and offer support and development.

*Kathryn is a Cairns Catholic Education Digital Media Officer*



## IS IT A GOOD IDEA FOR MY CHILD TO GET A PART-TIME JOB?

REBECCA AMBROSE

There are many benefits to a young person getting a part-time job whilst at school including the opportunity to develop employability skills, learning about themselves and earning money.

Part-time work can:

- allow teens to get hands-on experience in dealing with people, learning about employment and responsibilities/commitments required in a job, developing interpersonal skills and gaining knowledge and work skills that can be used in a resume or scholarship application
- provide opportunities for young people to extend their personal network and create space from study to allow them to switch off for a short while
- enable teens to be earning and developing an appreciation for the value of money. Shopping with their hard-earned money is very different from spending mum or dad's
- allow teens to learn to balance work and social life as well as meet study requirements of school; this can help young people develop responsibility and maturity
- help develop skills for the 21st century including collaboration and teamwork; creativity and imagination; critical thinking and problem solving; and flexibility and adaptability

Before your teen gets a job, it's important to consider how much impact it will have on the family (i.e. time and energy required) and importantly the capacity of the young person to handle school and work successfully.

Your child needs to agree that school comes first and if having a job is not working out, the decision can be reconsidered.

Working part-time needs to make sense for the individual and family.

*Rebecca is the Careers Counsellor at St Mary's Catholic College, Woree*





# PATHWAY TO A CAREER WITH VET

SHARON MANN

60

**VET courses are providing our young people with practical skills, qualifications and a pathway to a career in vital industries within our communities. Here's what you need to know.**

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is becoming increasingly popular in schools nationwide. In Queensland, additional government funding is expanding the VET opportunities that are available to students undertaking senior studies in schools. VET courses offer students the opportunity to engage in practical learning in their area of interest whilst acquiring skills and qualifications towards a potential career path. Increasingly, guidance and transition staff in schools are including VET courses when tailoring senior study programs to the individual needs of students, to support them in completing their secondary schooling and pursuing further education, training, or employment post Year 12.

## **WHO SHOULD CONSIDER A VET COURSE?**

Students that require an alternative to highly academic senior studies should strongly consider including VET

studies in their senior education planning. Many of these courses are career entry pathways and can lead to school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. This involves students working one day per week in paid employment in the industry area of the qualification, gaining additional skills, and a reduction of time in completing a full apprenticeship once they have completed their schooling. Additionally, students who wish to study at university will benefit from completing qualifications such as Certificates in Fitness, Hospitality, Kitchen Operations, Retail, Business (and more) that will provide them with casual paid employment while they are completing their university studies.

## **HOW DO VET COURSES CONTRIBUTE TO A STUDENT'S QCE?**

Studies are available at Certificate I, Certificate II, Certificate III and Certificate IV level while students are still at school. Completed qualifications contribute credit points towards a student's Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Certificate I studies contribute two points; Certificate II contribute four points; and Certificate III and IV contribute eight points of the 20 points required to obtain a QCE. Additionally, Certificate



III and IV qualifications can contribute toward the student's ATAR score.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF VET QUALIFICATIONS?

Completing a VET qualification while still at school benefits students in many ways. The vocational skills that they gain are highly sought after by employers, as skills such as working in a team, problem solving and competency in practical tasks are key components of these courses. All VET course providers are required to consult with industry in the development, implementation and validation of the courses, and course delivery is required to be either in a workplace or a simulated version of the workplace. This ensures that the skills students are acquiring are consistent with what is required in the actual workplace. Many VET courses also provide direct pathways into university degrees, especially in the areas of health, nursing and ICT, therefore there are many benefits of including these studies in a student's senior education plan. VET studies that are available to students vary from school to school, as some secondary schools have more on-site learning available than others. All senior students, however, can access VET courses through TAFE and other outside providers. These providers offer a range of face-to-face and online VET courses that are also eligible for government funding through the VET in schools' program, or VETis.

### WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Parents can assist their children to make informed decisions about their senior education planning and VET options by consulting with VET and Careers Coordinators in schools, attending information nights at their child's school, and Open Days at TAFE and university campuses. Year 10 is the ideal time for this to occur and such planning should also include consultation with senior subject teachers and coordinators, and VET trainers and assessors. VET courses ensure that our young people are skilled for work, enabling skills shortages to be addressed using local talent, rather than sourcing workers through skilled immigration programs. Australia currently has shortages in trades and health services, especially in aged care and disability services. There are a range of VET courses that offer direct entry to employment and further education or training in these high demand areas, for example, health support services and community services, and many trade-based courses in engineering, construction, automotive, hospitality and aviation. Many of these are career-entry courses and should be considered in conjunction with study in general subject areas to ensure that students are provided with a wide range of employment and further study options upon completing their senior schooling.

*Sharon is the VET Coordinator at St Andrew's Catholic College, Redlynch*



“Find happiness in making  
others happy.”

| MARY MACKILLOP





## TOMORROW'S LEADERS

STEPHANIE MEEKINGS

Today's kids will be tomorrow's leaders, but how can we help build leadership skills in our kids if they don't have a natural disposition for those qualities?

### ENCOURAGE DECISION MAKING

From a young age, you can encourage your kids to consider the options and consequences and own their decisions rather than managing their lives for them. It could be smaller options such as choosing clothes or activities or larger options such as how to manage their finances or what part-time job to pursue. Part of this process may also involve some negotiation skills. Allowing kids to be a part of or take ownership of the decision-making process will strengthen this important life skill.

### BUILD A GROWTH MINDSET

A growth mindset, rather than a fixed mindset, can help kids rise to the challenge, learn from mistakes and adapt to change. You can help develop this mindset by exploring different ways your child can overcome a problem, asking them what they learnt from situations and reassuring them that they may not be able to do something right now because they just haven't learnt to do it yet.

### INVEST IN PERSONAL GROWTH

Many great leaders have learnt from mentors, coaches and tutors. Nurture your child's talents or even areas they may need assistance with and witness their confidence grow. Alternatively, your child could become a mentor, coach or tutor for younger students or siblings, building their confidence, communication, management and leadership skills.

Small efforts such as these may just help create a future leader!

*Stephanie is a Cairns Catholic Education Digital Media Officer*



## PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS: FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

SARAH COLEMAN

Teachers and parents provide a vital support system to help students achieve their personal best academically, spiritually, culturally, and pastorally.

For our young people to flourish in their 13-odd years of school education, a positive, open, and effective relationship between parents or carers and teachers is vital. It is a partnership that, when both groups communicate and work together effectively, can significantly impact the long-term success of every young person. Professor John Hattie of the University of Melbourne conducted a 15-year statistical analysis of the impact of parental influence on student achievement. The outcome was clear: greater success in school – higher grades, better attendance, positive attitudes and behaviour. But how best to find that sweet spot, that magical place where the partnership between school and home is open, dynamic, and positive? It comes down to two key pillars: communication, and collaboration.

**Communication** with teachers has never been easier. Whether it's a quick phone call, an email, or a SeeSaw message, communication between both parties plays a significant role in developing positive partnerships, and ultimately, the best outcomes for your child. As a parent, you have the ability to engage in powerful conversations about your child's learning. If you are not sure about something, or you have concerns about your child, contact the teacher. And you know what, if you're happy, let them know! Communication doesn't just have to be about the challenges. This leads nicely to the next pillar: **Collaboration**. The old adage says that it takes a village to raise a child, and educators are definitely part of that village. The most productive partnerships are those where both parties are working together collaboratively for optimal outcomes. If there are expectations at school that are not being supported at home (and vice versa) the partnership will cease to work. We all want success for our students, so working collaboratively, we can all come together to work positively and productively for the success of our young people.

*Sarah is Associate Principal Learning and Teaching Secondary at MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter*

“You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you, as you are to them.”

| DESMOND TUTU



## HOW TO KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFE ONLINE

ANN BARR

The online world is a huge part of the learning and social environment for children and young people. However, Harry Potter has shown us “there can be no light without the dark”. In the online environment, just as in the physical world, people exist who seek to develop relationships with children for the purpose of engaging in some form of sexual abuse. Below are some quick tips on cyber safety and child behaviour that adults should be mindful of:

- Basic digital citizenship: Before getting online, children should have some basic skills regarding online privacy, an awareness not to share personal information, exchange pictures and/or meet in person. Our protective behaviours framework is always asking children to talk to someone they trust when something does not feel right, as opposed to relying on an actual harmful event occurring.
- Be interested: Even if it does not interest you. Ask children about the apps and games they are using, engage in conversations with them about the technology, and get to know the language.
- Implement rules: Regarding times and places for device use that is appropriate for their age and maturity.

### BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS:

Not overreacting and responding to concerns quickly can encourage children to share what is happening in their world. The existence of any of these behaviours may not be the result of communication with an offender, but should still be discussed with your child relevant to their age and maturity:

- Online activities become secretive or being online becomes an obsession
- Gifts arrive from someone unknown to you
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Becoming angry if not able to get online
- Changing screens or turning off computer when an adult enters the room
- Pornography is downloaded or accessed

*Ann is a Senior Student Protection Officer for Catholic Education Services, Diocese of Cairns*

## HOME WORK: TECH TIPS FOR FAMILIES

BRIAN VAN VLIMMEREN

If 2020 has shown us anything, it's that students are extremely adaptable and will not let a global pandemic hinder their learning! Here are some handy tips for those considering buying a device for their child.

### WHAT SORT OF COMPUTER IS BEST FOR MY CHILD?

Younger students may find early learning success with touch-based devices, while older students may need more computer power and an environment that promotes innovation and creativity.

- Prep to Year 2: Try a tablet or 2-in-1 (a combination of tablet and laptop) with touch capabilities or a pen input to allow exploration and investigation.
- Year 3 and 4: Find a Chromebook (an affordable option) or a 2-in-1. Students will be ready for tasks and assignments involving keyboard and mouse interaction.
- Year 5 to 8: Laptops, Chromebooks, and 2-in-1s are the best devices for these students as they provide the mobility and performance to support students' growing proficiency for technology. They can collaborate with chat and video tools, research topics on their own, and create dynamic presentations.
- Year 9 to 12: Look for a 2-in-1 device or laptop that provides desktop-like performance with mobile flexibility, a full-sized keyboard, and an active stylus for easy annotating, drawing, or note taking.

Screens should be at least 25cm and the device should be able to handle the curriculum-based digital content and tools that the school is using.

Questions to ask if you are looking to buy a new computer, laptop or tablet:

- Is it suited to educational use?
- Can you tell me about security management features?
- Is it compatible with other devices?
- What kind of costs might I incur for additional software or repairs?

*Brian is Manager Information Technology for Cairns Catholic Education*



# Catholic Schools and Colleges in the Cairns Region

Go to **Page 1** for a list of schools and their contact details  
or visit: [www.cns.catholic.edu.au/our-schools](http://www.cns.catholic.edu.au/our-schools)  
Phone: **4050 9700**  
Email: [communications@cns.catholic.edu.au](mailto:communications@cns.catholic.edu.au)



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