



Catholic Education Office
DIOCESE OF BATHURST

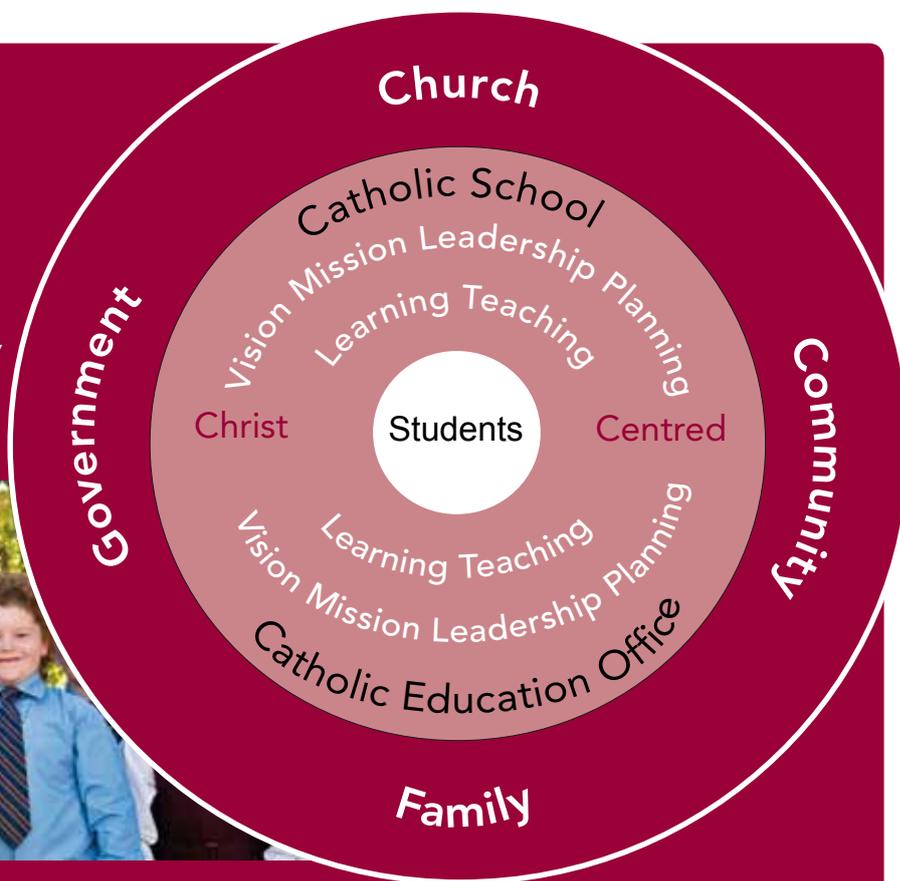


DESIGNING A CHRIST-CENTRED AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

"I am the way, the truth and the life."
John 14:6

Introduction

Our preparations for the introduction of the Australian curriculum in NSW must involve directing our attention to our conceptual framework which gives expression to our diocesan vision: *With Jesus Christ as our inspiration and guide, we are called to provide high quality Catholic education.*



Our framework reminds us that underpinning our vocation as educators is trust in Jesus Christ who is at once the inspiration, the content and the goal of Christian education. Catholic schools have the task of being the living and provocative memory of Christ. One way of achieving this task is in the way in which we design and deliver our teaching programs.

Why do we need a renewed focus at this time?

"Great things have already been achieved in our Catholic schools and are being achieved daily; greater things are still possible and indeed required, as together we forge the way ahead."

Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 2007

In addition to the impetus and opportunity provided by the introduction of the new curriculum documents, it is apparent to all involved in the ministry of education that there is a cultural crisis in values within our Australian society.

In his latest social analysis *The Good Life, What Makes a Life Worth Living?* (2013) Hugh Mackay links the increase in mental and obesity-related health issues being experienced by adults and children alike, to the shift in Western culture towards greater materialism and individualism.

Compounding this phenomenon is *"the emergence of a sense of personal spirituality that is dissociated from religious community"* (Richard Rymarz, *The New Evangelisation, Issues and Challenges for Catholic Schools*, 2012).

Re-aligning our approach with Jesus the teacher whose overarching theme was the *reign of God*, enables us to reset our compass at this critical time. Such an approach, such witness through the design and delivery of the curriculum in our schools, is needed in a society where people have forgotten about the Gospel.

Through their engagement with a Christ-centred curriculum, our students will come to understand that they are called to be more than creatures of their culture, for they will be educated to be its creators and re-creators as well. Our students are to be empowered in their great potential and prepared to be makers of history towards God's reign. Education for social transformation is a critical dimension of curriculum in our Catholic schools.

In the absence of such an approach, our students may simply drift through a vacuous collection of subjects without any unifying, holistic and overarching Christian vision of life.



How are we to be guided in this task?

To assist us in designing and delivering a Christ-centred curriculum, we can be guided by several components and their descriptors within our QCE framework, such as the following:

1.1 Permeation of Catholic Values

Jesus Christ and His teachings are central and clearly articulated in the school's vision and mission statement and permeate all aspects of policy, planning and action in the school.

The vision and mission of the school are applied through well-planned Christian service programs through which students are actively engaged to make a difference.



1.3 Teaching in this Catholic School

There is evidence of explicit critical reflection on the contribution of a Catholic understanding in all areas of the curriculum.

2.2 Curriculum Provision

The school's mission and charism are consistently evident in all areas of the curriculum.

Christ-centred teachings and Catholic values are explicitly and consistently reflected in all curricular and co-curricular activities.



3.1 Organisational Culture

Holistic education – The school consistently focuses on the formation of the whole person and is engaged in maximising broad learning outcomes and life opportunities for all students.

4.4 Stewardship

The school community is knowledgeable about the importance of stewardship within the context of Church teachings. The staff have a sound understanding of Catholic social teaching which is effectively integrated into classroom practice.





NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum Cross-Curriculum Priorities

The Australian Curriculum incorporates three cross-curriculum priorities as a lens for teaching: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*, *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia*, and *Sustainability (Stewardship)*. Inter-diocesan discussions are presently taking place around the idea of Catholic educators focusing on an additional cross-curriculum priority, **Catholic Perspectives**.*

As may currently be the practice, staff are encouraged to continue to embed a Catholic perspective into their teaching programs in ways which will enable students to gain meaningful access to the Christian story and vision. The vision is the reign of God, the realisation of God's intentions of peace, justice, love and freedom, holiness and wholeness and fullness of life for all.

Adapted from Kevin Treston's work in *What Matters Most (2010)* the following reflective questions may assist with this practice of embedding a Catholic perspective:

1. How does the curriculum provide students with appropriate knowledge and a values-based understanding of the social, political and economic structures which exist in society and possible alternatives to these structures? How are students encouraged to develop critical thinking to evaluate these structures in light of the gospel?
2. How does the curriculum offer opportunities to become more knowledgeable about issues affecting our relationships with stewardship of the world and relationships with others? Such issues include themes such as earth care, poverty and distribution of wealth, global warming, land rights and reconciliation.
3. How does the curriculum provide diverse opportunities for students to develop intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically through an evolving commitment to the teachings and mission of Jesus in promoting 'life in abundance' (John 10:10)?
4. How does the curriculum lead students to take their place effectively in the workforce through competencies and attitudes related to flexibility, resilience and positive citizenship in the 21st century?
5. How does the curriculum provide for the continuous development of skills such as thinking logically, research methods and making life-enhancing decisions?
6. How does the curriculum provide students with foundational beliefs about the dignity of people, celebrating differences in a globalised world and empower them to effectively promote the common good and justice?
7. How does the curriculum reflect key principles in the social teachings of the church?

Finally, in focusing our efforts on designing and delivering a Christ-centred curriculum, we will be striving to 'see with the eyes of Jesus, nurture the Catholic life of our schools and promote just and right relationships with God, self, others and the environment.' **Diocesan Leadership Framework**

*It is proposed that a joint project be established, enabling collaboration across the dioceses to enable teachers to seamlessly embed this fourth cross-curriculum priority into their programming as they work towards designing an authentically Christ-centred curriculum. The work undertaken in this project during 2013/14 will be a key resource for our schools.

"The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God. If the revelation of God through creation already brings life to all living beings on the earth, how much more will the manifestation of the Father by the Word bring life to those who see God."

Feast of St Irenaeus, June 28 2013