



Aoraki

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Editorial

“The eclipse of a sense of God challenges us to evangelise in new ways.” In this statement Pope Francis has pinpointed for us the biggest challenge facing the world, the Catholic Church, and Catholic schools.

Forty years ago, on Thursday 9th October 1975, the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 was passed into law. It arose as a response to a Catholic education system that was in dire financial straits, and, simultaneously, faced an ever accelerating loss of members of Religious Orders in our schools who carried both Religious Education and the Catholic Character of the schools in their heads and hearts. A great amount of debate and often enough disagreement in the Catholic community as to the likely efficacy or risk of this step meant that the Church leadership and the whole Catholic community were very aware of the momentous decision they were making when the Bishops supported the work of the integration committee, and then integrated their Catholic schools. The years after the passing of the Act took huge work as the new system was gradually embedded. This was the challenge to evangelise in new ways that we faced at the time, and the pressure to seek new paths led to enormous and ongoing change.

Now Pope Francis and our Bishops call us to a new evangelisation. We must preach the Gospel in our schools in a way that enables our students, their families and our parishes to understand what we are being called to in the 21st century. It is a vastly significant series of actions that we are called on to devise and put into effect if we are to evangelise in the face of the eclipse of a sense of God.

Pope Francis, however, has hopeful words for us: “God is not afraid of the new; that is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts, and guiding us in unexpected ways.” Perhaps his most succinct evangelisation message to us came when he said, “We are called to wear God’s smile.”

Our writers in this edition will delight and inform you, and their words are likely to linger with you well after you first read them – that is, at least, my wish for you. And my thanks, on behalf of all our community, go to them for their continuing generosity in sharing their ideas with us all and bringing us God’s smile. As we pick up the challenge of evangelisation we can remember that for all of us it starts with the daily opening of our hearts in response to God, guiding us to realise the actions we can do each day as part of this huge adventure of evangelisation.

Susan Apáthy

Facilitating an encounter with the living God... and why it matters

Fr Gerard Aynsley, Vicar for Education, Diocese of Dunedin

In their recently published document, *The Catholic Education of School Age-Children*, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops express with great clarity their hope for our Catholic schools. The bishops insist that the Catholic school is to be a place of encounter with the Living God. Quoting Pope Benedict XVI the bishops propose that: "First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth". How does a school become such a place, and why is this so important?

The word 'encounter' is such a vital one. It may, however, come across as a rather elusive or 'churchy' word. This was brought home to me a number of years ago, not long before I was ordained. Prior to being ordained a priest in 1994, I spent 6 months gaining experience in the Winton parish in Southland. From time to time I would be given the opportunity to preach. When that was the case, I would prepare a homily, write it down and then before delivering it would read it out to the parish priest, Father David Johnson. On one occasion I was making some comment about our encountering God when David interrupted and commented, "The people of Winton don't use the word, 'encounter'". He wasn't being disparaging toward the people, but he helped me understand that some words aren't necessarily part of the everyday language of most people.

Nevertheless, the idea that human beings are capable of encountering God seems to me to be of great importance. As such, I know that I have sought to express this reality in other ways. I will speak of how we can experience God in the midst of our lives, even though that, too, can seem rather obscure. I will refer to the moments of grace and the occasions of being overwhelmed by a sense of wonder or joy or beauty or goodness. I reflect on how in the midst of our human relationships there are often hints of a love that is bigger than us; beyond our own making. I am conscious, too, that an experience of God is not necessarily something we notice at the time, but when we reflect and look back on our day-to-day experiences it is possible to attribute important moments to the stirrings of God's life and love with us. I am convinced that it is the core business of the Church – of which our schools are a part – to discover in the midst of this life this breath and voice of God; a God who in Jesus seeks us out and calls us to follow as his disciples.

It is important to note that the God we believe in as Christians is a God who draws near to us – in the person of Jesus –and so it is essentially God who facilitates the encounter. It is God who makes the first move. Our prayer and the Sacraments are significant moments that highlight this truth and draw us into that encounter. Our ordinary faith-filled lives are also occasions where God is experienced, blessing us, encouraging us and drawing us onward to a more abundant and generous life. Secondly, there is something about our human nature that leads us to seek beyond ourselves and our own confined world. To explore what it is for a Catholic school to be a place where

the living God is encountered we first need to develop and affirm a proper theology and anthropology.

Christian theology: faith in a living God

So often God is spoken of in terms that deaden God, presenting God as some 'thing' or 'being' in some mysterious 'place' in the beyond – an abstract and remote God. We construct clever concepts about God, but fail to appreciate that the one we call 'God' is vital and alive and capable of being loved. As Pope Benedict stated, it is the living God discovered in the person of Jesus Christ that we proclaim and can encounter. To say that our schools become places where the living God is encountered is to insist that Jesus Christ be placed at the centre. As theologian José Pagola insists; Jesus is the best we have as a Church to offer and "the time has come to put our hearts into the challenge of learning, through Jesus, about God: who God is, how he cares for us, how he seeks us out, what he wants for us as human beings."

Ensuring that all who are involved in Catholic education are involved in what theologian Elizabeth Johnson describes as a quest for the living God – in their academic pursuits and personal faith-searching – is essential if we are to actually communicate Christ, and help awaken in young people (and their families) a sense of the living God. The God we believe in is the God of Jesus Christ, a God who has entered into human history in the incarnation and continues to enter into our human history. Therefore, discernment of the living God involves a reflection on the meaning of our own unique human lives also. The Catholic school aims to place Christ at the centre, and this centre is shared with the child who in her or his uniqueness is enfolded in God's blessing.

Christian anthropology: constitutionally oriented towards 'being more'.

Pope Benedict in his social justice encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, states that "humanity is constitutionally oriented towards 'being more'" -§14. It is an important claim in the realm of social justice; it is also an important claim in the realm of education.

Recognising that the person (the child) is oriented towards 'being more' is necessary if an encounter with God is to occur.

In my recent experience as a parish priest I have discovered that this 'something more' is exactly what many of our parents are seeking for their children. Only a few years ago parents would often explain their desire for a Catholic education by speaking of the values that were taught – the Catholic school was seen as a place that could help form nice people, children who would be polite and respectful, children formed to be decent citizens. A faith-based school is surely not necessary for such an education! Now I often hear parents bemoan how little they received in terms of faith and how they want their children to have the opportunity to discover faith – and they often speak of wanting their child to discover there is more to life. Often I see in the Catholic schools where I am based as the parish priest an awakening of faith in many children and, oftentimes, in the lives of their parents also. How to respond to this blossoming faith requires some finesse and I am far from certain what the next step needs to be in each instance. A humble and delicate approach is required. This awakening of faith, however, does confirm that as human beings we are open to something beyond ourselves

and that the God of Jesus Christ will draw near and can be encountered. The challenge put before schools is to consciously be the sort of place where such encounters occur.

The first words spoken by Jesus that are recorded in the Gospel of John are addressed to the two disciples of John the Baptist who begin following him. "What do you want?" Jesus asks. Jesus wants to start with them, with what they are searching for. This incident highlights that the encounter people have with Jesus in the Gospels is never simply a one-sided affair, with him passing on important information (teachings) to those who happen to be listening. Rather, the encounter includes the searching and seeking of the one who comes to Jesus. In the same way, our starting point is the child in his or her uniqueness.

Facilitating an encounter

The fact that an encounter with God is 'un-bought', arising in spite of our own imperfections and inadequacies, without our coaxing or meticulous persuasion, makes the proposal that such an encounter can be facilitated tricky. Keeping in mind that such an encounter cannot be manipulated or controlled, we can nevertheless consider the context – the place – that is amenable to such an experience being possible.

First, how do we see the child? Is the child regarded in the practices and ethos of the school to be a child of God and made in God's image and taught to see him/herself in the same way? Education can seem at times to be ideologically driven, and it certainly seems like that in New Zealand's present environment. We hear much about 'pathways' and a rather limiting notion of 'well-being' and there is a great deal of emphasis on targets and measurability. It is as though the child is being thought of principally in some future tense, in what they will become and whether they will be productive citizens, rather than seeing them for who they are – as a person – in the present. Fr Vincent Hunt, one of the New Zealand Church's finest thinkers, often criticised this tendency. He challenged, for example, the tendency to focus narrowly on educational success whereby the child is seen almost exclusively as a student (rather than a child) being prepared for "roles in a society dominated by economic success". Education must, he asserts, be concerned with the child, with the human person. When human formation is paramount this will go hand-in-hand with a spiritual/faith formation. Formation of this type would have in the past been described as character education and would have coincided with formation in virtue. The bishops devote a large section to this topic, but, for now, what is important is to note that virtue essentially arises in the context of relationships – a relationship with God and others.

In the Gospels Jesus asserts that love of God and love of neighbour go together. He teaches us that our encountering God – our love for God – is interwoven with our encounters with other people and our learning to love them. This is where a school environment can be so formative. What we first experience when we go to school is an encounter with other people – some whom we quickly form friendships with; some who are different to us; some who are difficult to like. But the encounter with others does something very important – there is an opening up of our lives (and hearts and minds); an opening up to something larger than ourselves. Our schools can help draw attention

to these connections and draw out what is occurring in our human encounters so that they properly open up toward that larger encounter with the living God. There are the important human relationships that develop in the school environment and important relationships to nurture beyond the school gate. Two come to mind: relationships with parishioners and relationships with the poor and marginalised.

I have seen many examples where schools and parishes are at loggerheads and I have been involved in numerous discussions on both school and parish committees that bemoan this disconnect. But forging a relationship between two supposedly distinct groups is not the point. It is the relationships that can occur between individual people that hold the most promise. What opportunities exist for children to actually come to know the elderly parishioner who sits in the third row at the weekday Mass? And what opportunities exist for the parishioner in the third row to even learn the name of the child and to have some insight into what is important in their life. It is too easy for us to simply presume we know the other, when in reality we gather as strangers. The child merely sees an old person –without any sense of their history – and all the parishioner sees is a student; one no different to the other. When genuine encounters are made possible there will be a growing sense that there is something more to the other person that was previously not acknowledged. Being able to see ‘something more’ is exactly the interior movement required for an opening up of one’s life to God.

The second relationship to be considered beyond the school environment is with the poor, the sick and the marginalised – and not a paternalistic relationship, but a growing to see the other as a sister or brother. Pope Francis has been a wonderful example to the world in this regard as he urges every human being to look out for one another. There is a great opportunity here to develop the natural aptitude that so many young people have for social justice and then to assist the young person to recognise the connection between good works and faith; to discover the true source of this thirst for justice and compassion. Pope Francis highlights this connection between outreach and faith (or its lack): “Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others... God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt” (Evangelii Gaudium §2). Only when a child has discovered the importance of having ‘room for others’ is it possible to speak of prayer.

The bishops insist that the Catholic school has an important role in providing good experiences of prayer and liturgy. We need to do all we can to ensure prayer in class is a genuine moment of dialogue with the living God and that our liturgies are celebrations that draw the person in their concrete uniqueness into that live-giving encounter. The starting point is to genuinely believe that these can be occasions where God is experienced. What an amazing privilege we have in our Catholic schools to be able to have times of prayer!

Prayer ideally engenders attentiveness. There is a pithy line from Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber: “God happens”, he states. Indeed, God happens in the midst of our lives and can be encountered and experienced. It is also true that we are unlikely to notice at the time that God ‘is happening’. A good school will teach a child to reflect on their behaviour and how they are with others and to reflect on their learning. A Catholic

school can also teach a child to reflect on their experiences in order to notice that God has been at work. At the Catholic Education Convention in Wellington a teacher spoke to me of how he had recently invited the children of his school to reflect on what they experienced when they received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Our schools have since adopted that practice and the reflections are quite extraordinary.

I often see faith awakening in children and their families as a direct result of their presence at a Catholic school. An encounter with the living God has taken place although many of our children and families will not have the language to express it in this way. The encounter is a starting point and that it occurs is of utmost importance.

Why it matters

The bishops' document describes three components of faith - encounter, knowledge and discipleship. Encounter ideally leads to a desire for knowledge about Jesus, and a proper appreciation of who Jesus is can lead the child to want to be his disciple. When Jesus 'takes a hold of us' then there is a desire to live our lives differently, to live his life. Our faith and encounter with the living God gifts us with hope and as the bishops state, "those who have hope live differently". Those with hope (and faith) live differently because they recognise that God is at work in the world and that the world can't be given up on.

Pope John Paul II speaking with great feeling at the World Youth Day in Rome in 2000 put this challenge to those who were present: "the Church needs men and women whose lives have been transformed by meeting with Jesus, men and women who are capable of communicating this experience to others. The Church needs saints. All are called to holiness, and holy people alone can renew humanity." Faith is never an entirely private matter. The encounter with God that our schools can help facilitate is never just for the child's benefit. Disciples of Jesus will be drawn into his mission of bringing God's reign to our world. That matters!

Faith Formation and Religious Education

Andrew Murray, DP, Sacred Heart Girl's College New Plymouth

"How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring good news" (Rom 10:15-17).

We teach in a time where, at senior secondary school level, our Religious Education (RE) is rigorously assessed through the use of NZQA's Religious Studies Achievement Standards. Teachers of the subject are working on textbooks, resources and developing pedagogical ideas just as in any other curriculum area. Still at times teachers are asked, and themselves debate, what is the purpose of Religious Education in schools exactly? Is it education in knowledge about religion or is it faith formation? This article will argue that its purpose is both. While it focusses largely on secondary schooling I hope it will also be of interest to those in Catholic primary schools.

In *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* our Bishops stress that the Catholic school must enable "a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ, without which Religious Education will have little effect on the heart, the mind and the will (para 13). Every teacher of Religious Education is vital to enabling this encounter, and faith formation and growth in knowledge about religion go hand in hand, but the encounter with Christ is seen by the Bishops as the task of the whole school.

At a secondary level in New Zealand the perception of this subject is highly topical and at times contested. The Bishops have defined the amount of time to be spent on teaching Religious Education at all levels of the school, and they are clear that the subject is compulsory in Catholic schools. Yet, at times, there is still a need to clarify and "sell" why we spend this valuable teaching time on Religious Education in the classroom. Parents themselves, while appreciating Catholic education in general, do not always understand why their children need to continue the subject at senior level where other subjects are a matter of choice - and yet it is at the very core of why we exist. Being a teacher of Religious Education does not make you immune to criticism from parents who want a good Catholic education in the broader sense, but are perhaps not so keen on the time spent on Religious Education. Parental pressure on school leadership can be considerable when high academic stakes (NCEA and Scholarship results) are involved.

Our curriculum, *Understanding Faith*, provides a convergence of the study of religion and the development of faith which will hopefully produce young men and women who are able to think critically, are religiously literate and will be mindful contributors to our Church and society going forward. We educate the whole child and it is vital that students leave our schools with the qualifications, attitudes, values and skills that will set them up for a fulfilled life.

It is concerning that some students become disengaged in Religious Education and disconnect from their faith. If we cannot teach faith beyond what's perceived to be relevant and engaging, we have a real problem. On the other hand, if we cannot make our faith interesting and relevant, at a time when it has never been so important, what hope is there for the future of our Church?

Religious Education is an endeavour in sharing faith and it is an intentional activity to develop students who are religiously literate and conversant with their faith. There seems to be a close connection between classroom Religious Education and catechesis. Catechesis is specifically addressed below. As a classroom teacher I believe that the Religious Education programme has the potential to develop faith in students and it is most effective in this respect when it is grounded in a sharing of faith between teacher and student.

There are, of course, limits to the ways in which Religious Education can develop the faith of students. For instance, the RE curriculum's capacity to communicate and develop faith in students is much less if teachers do not relate what they teach to the other parts of a student's life experience. Understanding Faith sets out to witness and teach the Catholic message and to develop religious values, attitudes, knowledge and skills. The programme does not depend on the faith of the student but it may and should contribute to faith formation.

It is important to acknowledge that in the Religious Education classroom the aim is to develop understanding and appreciation of the theology, wisdom and tradition of the Catholic Church. Complementing this, and of equal importance is the experience of liturgy, prayer, retreat and other forms of spirituality and evangelisation, which are mainly provided outside the RE classroom. The Understanding Faith RE curriculum document recognises that one cannot become personally attuned to a religion without first learning something about it. Learning and journey must be part of the student's experience. Our curriculum links the classroom with the faith community. It respects each individual's faith journey, and the realities of the classroom. As an educator I believe the Catholic school should provide a comprehensive education in faith which will help young people become well informed about Catholic Christian faith and the Church's position on current issues. Religious Studies is the study of a religion from the outside, which is why it can be taught in universities and in non-Church schools. Catholic schools in New Zealand do not take a Religious Studies approach so much as a Religious Education one. We educate about faith from within it. The Religious Studies Achievement Standards used for assessment purposes in Years 11-13 add value to the exercise by providing state recognition of our students' learning but in reality, a more rounded education goes on in the RE classroom.

Catechesis is an important term for this article. Sharing the Gospel Today: the Catechetical Directory for Aotearoa New Zealand (NCRS 2012, NZCBC) says:

The General Directory for Catechesis defines catechesis as, "a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith. [I t] belongs within the Church's mission of evangelisation.

Sharing the Gospel Today specifically describes the role of Religious Education:

Religious education in schools is distinct from, but complementary to, catechesis.

Together with other members of the school staff, religious education teachers are called to be a vital part of a school community that promotes in all its activities the

beliefs, attitudes and values belonging to the Catholic character of the school. In this way they live out the mission of their Baptism and Confirmation by witnessing to a living faith in word and deed. This demands similar qualities and commitment as are required of catechists.

In the religious education class, teachers are called to an educational role that complements the catechetical and pastoral activities of the home, school and parish. This calling is part of the ministry of the Word and is carried out on behalf of the faith community. Their main task is to teach the approved religious education curriculum in such a way as to develop the students' knowledge and understanding of the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Along with this teaching they will encourage the students to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and values.

The teachers will ensure that religious education lessons are at the same level of learning as other parts of the school curriculum. They will provide the students with religious knowledge in an holistic manner that helps them to integrate their other learning within a faith perspective. They are entitled to the support of all school staff.

Catechesis links religious knowledge with faith, which is a personal relationship with God. We are called by God into a covenant relationship. God dwells among his people and his people live in his presence. Catechesis cannot instil faith but only awaken, nourish and develop what is already there. Faith is a gift of grace and a personal response to God's call and, as such, it cannot be taught. Faith is concerned with developing a relationship with God. As teachers we walk beside students in their faith journey both challenging and nurturing them. Religious Educators do not transmit faith so much as foster particular interpretations or understandings of faith. As teachers we cannot force faith on our students: all we can do is to invite them to build their faith through instruction, through example and through experience. We cannot give faith to students but we can give them the chance to examine, question and reflect, and claim their own personal belief within and as part of the Catholic Christian community.

The Catholic school is concerned with the integration of faith and life. However, faith formation in the Catholic school (often referred to as the 'Catholic Curriculum' of the school) is not just classroom-based. There needs to be evangelisation taking place throughout the school, through a wide range of programmes and activities. Further, the school is not primarily responsible for faith formation in children and young people: that responsibility lies first and foremost in the home, supported by the parish and the school. It should be evident then that you cannot teach faith any more than you can teach love for a spouse. It has to be a lived experience creating an atmosphere in which children and young people can develop their own faith, each in their individual way.

During adolescence a young person's main struggle is to achieve a personal identity (a positive sense of self) and this is connected to the development of faith. Complications with faith tend to be part of a broader search for meaning in their lives and the search for positive self-worth. Faith is a dynamic, fluid process. The development of faith at a personal level requires a mature sense of self and this occurs at different stages for

each person. Watershed moments in this journey may take place outside of the four walls of a classroom.

Faith dictates a certain lifestyle, one which is filled with both emotional and intellectual content. Some school special character events such as social justice events, retreats and liturgies seek to develop and provide for students an opportunity to develop and express personal faith. The classroom RE curriculum is more concerned with delivering information although, as we have seen, this also fosters faith development. Religious literacy, personal autonomy with communal commitment and the ability to be able to critique are all skills and attitudes required in order for an individual to develop a mature adult faith.

As educators we have a key role to play in forming in students faith that is living, conscious and active. The whole faith process is much larger than what we do or what we teach: it is wrapped in the ministry of God's love and in the free and personal response that people make to that love. We need to create an atmosphere of warmth and relational trust, an environment suitable for listening to God's call. We are there to allow our students the freedom to search, to question and to express their own point of view. Students grow by being part of a faith community and its range of activities.

Our Religious Education curriculum aims to religiously educate students so that they may grow and understand faith. Its effectiveness can only be judged by whether the students can demonstrate religious literacy and an understanding of what religion, and particularly, Catholic Christian faith, contributes to the human endeavour. By applying critical thinking to religious issues in the school environment students are more likely to develop a mature faith and greater potential to effect change for the better in our world. I believe that if we have faith and are faithful we will have the chance to enliven faith in the children we teach. If we strive to keep our sense of community and keep our identity as a Catholic community then our children will stay with us and grow with us in faith and love. It is the job of us all and cannot be left to our RE teachers in the classroom – our whole Catholic educational community and our whole parish community must spread the Good News to the young people we serve.

God Gave Them a Heart to Think With..." (Ecc 17:6)

Three Functions of the Heart that can Empower and Transform Leadership in Catholic School Communities

Monica Brown, Emmaus Publications

(This article was published originally in Topics Magazine for Australian Catholic Teachers. Monica suggested we might like to place it in this publication. She will visit New Zealand in March 2016.)

If we turn to Ecclesiastics 17 we see something of God's blueprint for humanity. We may be surprised by the peculiarities and unique features of God's grand human design, as highlighted below.

"God fashioned human kind from the earth...
And clothed them with God's own strength...
Creating them in the image of God's own self...
Shaping for them a mouth and a tongue, eyes and ears,
And gave them a heart to think with.
God filled them with knowledge and understanding ...
And revealed to them good and evil
Putting God's own light in their hearts...
(Ecc 17: 1- 8)

Clearly, it was God's intention to create our being in the image and likeness of God's own being. It seems we have it all within us!

When we draw from the depths within us, we draw from the depths of God's own Spirit within us and are empowered by grace. (Ep 3:16-21) And leadership today, in any capacity, but especially within our Catholic school communities needs an abundance of grace. The pressures and stresses, the expectations and demands are soaring out of control.

I am aware of some [Australian] Dioceses where it is so difficult to find suitable Principals that they are clustering schools under Executive Officers. The main difficulty is not about qualifications and skills, but seems to be in finding a leader who has the "heart" for leadership in a faith community!

When we hear reference to the "heart" some default to the notion that the heart is the seed bed of emotionalism and that our feelings, as so many of us have been taught, lead us astray, landing us in all kinds of difficulties and driving us to foolish decisions!

As a result of our clumsy attempts to follow our hearts, some of us may have learnt not to listen to our hearts and may work very consciously at pushing down the heart's agenda and keeping it all under control! While others, who have faithfully heeded the beckoning of their heart, have been guided and gifted with blessings and transformation.

The heart has an invaluable contribution to make to our personal and spiritual maturity. While there are many gifts the heart has to offer us, in the context of this reflection, I would like to muse on three particular functions of the heart that I believe not only enrich our personal and spiritual growth, but can, in a special way, empower and transform leadership in our faith communities.

These three functions are related to the heart's unique capacity to listen and hear, to see and perceive, to think and to reason. This article is about listening and hearing.

I often hear leaders talking these days about situations and decisions in their leadership where they pain and struggle, as they say, "against their grain".

To go against the grain when sanding wood is to actually roughen the wood rather than smooth it. It destroys the natural grain.

In the context of the heart, the grain of the heart is what keeps us alive. It is the way the blood flows through our veins. When we go against the grain too often we become sick, we lose energy and enthusiasm. We become disempowered and "dis"-heartened. When we go against the grain of our hearts, our commitment wanes because our heart is no longer in it.

Our hearts have a way of knowing beyond reason and logic, beyond what is explicable to what is inexplicable. Our hearts have a way of seeing and perceiving reality and what is beyond all reality. And our hearts can hear even the softest whisper and beyond it into the depths of silence.

Listening With the Ear of The Heart – Mindfulness and Presence in Leadership

For many reasons, the journey from the head to the heart is the journey of a life time, as the two on the road to Emmaus experienced. (Lk 24:13-32) By the time they arrived at the village of Emmaus all they knew was that their hearts were burning; they wanted more of Jesus. In honouring their heart's desire, by asking Jesus to stay with them, they were blessed with the recognition of Jesus.

The Emmaus story reminds us that when we listen to our hearts we not only become present to what is happening in us, but we are more able to recognise the Sacred with us. This beautiful story reminds us that when we listen to our hearts we are more open to mystery and more able to journey with it and engage in it rather than grapple with it. Mystery, Pope Francis believes, actually "enters our being through the heart."

It is amazing to realise that we can experience these extraordinary, and yet ordinary moments of grace, simply by listening to what is happening within us.

St Benedict, in the Prologue of his 'Rule' for the monastic way of life, speaks about listening with the ear of the heart. He appreciated the vital role of the heart in coming to personal and spiritual wholeness. But more than that, Benedict knew that the ear of the heart is the receptacle of the Spirit's stirrings, groanings and promptings.

(Rm 8:26-27) Listening, then attending to what the ear of the heart hears is fundamental to true discernment and spiritual enlightenment.

When we become familiar with this hearty listening, the heart becomes for us the holy ground of growth and transformation, the sanctuary of mystery and longing, and the tabernacle of Presence and grace.

What does this mean, theoretically and practically?

When we live from a listening stance to the ear of our hearts, we are more in touch with the deeper realities of self, of life and of others; we live more grounded in the centre of our being. From this depth we are more in tune and more open to the flow of grace within us, because God is the depth dimension and mystery of our humanity.

When we live attentive to the ear of our hearts we become more mindful, present, aware and focused. We become less a stranger to ourselves and to others; we become less fragmented and more whole and genuine; we respond to life and to others rather than react.

When we attend to the ear of the heart, we become more beautiful, Spirit-filled, graced human beings. This must surely be the best gift we can bring to leadership, the quality of our being.

Note here, we are not talking about being perfect, but being authentic in our humanity, a humanity that will always be less than perfect but ever more open to what God can make possible in earthen vessels. (2 Cor 4: 7-10)

We know that so many of the struggles and wounding in our communities happen because of human frailty and brokenness. Think of your staff room and consider the root cause of tensions, conflicts, misunderstandings, judgements and heartache.

It is so easy to look at our colleagues and cite their dysfunction. But how many of us are in touch with and willing to attend to our own fragility and brokenness? The heart that listens is more able to recognise the "plank in one's own eye" (Mt 7:4) and hence more open and willing to address its issues of growth and healing.

What makes it difficult for us to listen with the ear of the heart?

Perhaps the greatest obstacle is when we live on the edge of ourselves and are entrenched there, despite the feeling of void and emptiness, because the fear of being alone with oneself drives us away from ourselves. We live on the surface because we fear what is at the "heart" of our being.

A more obvious obstacle to listening and attending to our heart is stress. We can be so caught up in the demands and pressure of work that we are actually driven by stress.

Stress can cause dissociation from our bodies and our awareness. We don't realise, for example, that we are hungry or thirsty; or in our relationship and dealings with others we are unaware of what we said, or the tone with which we said it, or the impact of our body language. Stress causes us to "react" rather than respond to others and to situations. Inner listening is near impossible in the grip of stress.

Here are a few practical points that can help develop a listening stance.

- create pauses and moments of just “seemingly” wasting time
- turn off the radio or CD player in your car
- walk or jog without your iPod
- gaze out your window instead of fingering through your mobile phone or iPad
- don't be afraid to delay or postpone tasks, deadlines, meetings etc if it can create a sense of space for you to breathe and literally “gather” yourself
- compromise, be flexible with your own expectations and timelines, even if it means cancelations or delegation, to allow yourself to attend to what might be more important, more beneficial for your own peace of mind and ease of stress
- observe what you are physically doing and feeling and how you are behaving, e.g. how fast you are walking, how irritable you are, how tight your gut is, or how tense your shoulders are etc
- register what is happening in you; make connections as to why and how and note patterns and insights - jot them down
- be aware of what disturbs you, feelings of concern or irritation, or what excites and enlivens you - jot it down or speak it out to yourself
- make a nurturing intervention, e.g. a 10 minute walk, or an appointment for a massage, or have a glass of your favourite wine and/or listen to your favourite music
- talk to yourself; speak out to yourself what you are feeling, sensing, aware of, and jot it down; ideally take time to journal
- find an Anam Cara (soul friend); someone different to your supervisor or consultant; a soul friend with whom you can be utterly yourself; seek their insight and guidance
- talk to God, as Jesus did, long before dawn if needs be; try to find a few minutes each day to meditate.

Below is a link to the mantra Listen, which we are happy to make available to you with our compliments - <http://www.emmausproductions.com/listen-mantra.html>

When asked for coupon details, simply put TOPICS. We also have the Emmaus Online Video Meditations which you may find helpful at www.liturgyritualprayer.com.

What I've Been Reading Recently

Susan Apáthy

At <http://americamagazine.org/issue/unplugged-connected> Mike Thomas said:

The USA's "current educational vision...looks something like this: Give students better access to more information at higher speeds, and they will be sharper, wiser and better equipped for life in our modern society.... Catholic schools... in their approach to using technology have not distinguished themselves from this narrative. Instead, they've tried to keep pace, attempting to look as much like the public schools in matters of technology as their budgets will allow.

"What should a Catholic classroom look like in a world where access to information is unlimited? The identity of a classroom hinges on the relationship between student and teachers. So perhaps a better question is: Who should a Catholic teacher be?

"As in all things, Christ serves as our model.... [Christ] wrote nothing at all. Instead, he was present with people, spoke with them, laughed and wept with them, guided them, healed them.... Those who followed him were drawn by his whole person, words and actions.... If it can be said that Christ the teacher had a pedagogy, it was one of "presence".... If only Jesus had had twitter!

"For Christ the most important thing was not relaying information but turning others toward him first by being present with them.... A proper Catholic response to the problem of technological overload, then, must start by prioritising personal encounter over technology.

"What is the goal of Catholic education in the midst of the flurry of screens and devices that bring the modern world to our fingertips? It is to keep the human person at the centre of our enterprise."

Pope Francis, in his message for the Vatican's annual World Communications Day, 2015, offered an antidote to the technocratic narrative:

By growing daily in our awareness of the vital importance of encountering others...we will employ technology wisely, rather than letting ourselves be dominated by it.... The great challenge facing us today is to learn once again how to talk to one another, not simply how to generate and consume information.

On the other hand, taking a different angle, in the National Catholic Reporter, Feb 27 2014, communications guru Jesuit Fr Antonio Spadaro said:

The internet has brought on a "radical change in perception of the religious question itself. The traditional Catholic vision of spirituality does not stand up today." Where humans would once ask, "God where are you?" we now think of the spiritual almost in terms of a cellular network - waiting for answers to arrive on our multitudes of devices. "Answers are everywhere," Spadaro said. "It is not the answers, but the questions which are important."

In the same article Jesuit Msgr Paul Tighe said that we need to allow the deeper questions to emerge in the digital arena. "God will find people," he said. "New technologies can help satisfy the desire for meaning, truth, unity."

Moving away from the argument about digital technology, in *Will Catholic Schools be Catholic in 2030* (Aengus Kavanagh, Leone Pallisier, 2014, Province of the Patrician Brothers, Australia), Emeritua Professor Anne Benjamin asked:

"How many more of the poorest children and families will find a place in Catholic schools in 2030?... Alternatively, will Catholic schools be places where the clientele becomes less divergent and more exclusive?" Although this question is posed within the Australian context, statistics reveal that Catholic schools in New Zealand are doing somewhat less well than previously at taking on the poorest children and families. The pressure of competition for places in some parts of the country can easily lead to the exclusion of those who are poorer (which often means Māori or Pacific Islands families) for whom even the cost of uniforms, let alone suggested donations, and the costs for digital devices, sports teams and trips, exclude many families. There is a rebate system for attendance dues, but what can be done in other cost areas to enable our schools to better serve the anawim?

In the same book, Emeritus Bishop Geoff Robinson said: "The school must seek to impart the conviction that life is good and worth living. There are certain fundamental questions about life that all people are constantly asking themselves: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is the purpose and meaning of my existence?... The effect of a loss of a sense of meaning for young people is devastating, leading to such substitutes for life as drugs or even suicide." Robinson says, "There is only one source of meaning in the world: love.... If it does not produce a profound sense of meaning in life through an abundance of love, education has failed.... For Christian people the story of Jesus Christ is the supreme story of God's love for us.... The Catholic school must ensure that all its teaching of religion fosters rather than obscures this central truth of the personal relationship between each student and Jesus Christ." Maybe schools could work with their parish/es to open up the truth of the personal relationship between each parent and Jesus Christ, thus strengthening the commitment of the whole family..

And finally, *Momentum*, the Official Journal of the National Catholic Education Association, November/December 2014, refers to a process in the Catholic community of Algona, Iowa, which involves a number of schools and parishes:

Realising that parent involvement is an essential predictor of successful faith transmission to the next generation, the community has developed a process called 'Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth' (SCF), in which parents are asked to live, model and talk the faith they wish to pass on, make faith a top priority, actively protect time for family and faith, support each other in interfamily networks of faith and life support, and

finally, to let the Church be their partner through this process. A local partnership team of the total faith community – parish, parish religious education teams, school, and parents – designs a process to meet the identified needs of families in their area, to support the transmission of faith. Active participation by parents will be central.

Maybe some of this could occur in our schools and parishes?

Research/Professional Learning Project - Online Religious Education (RE) Assessment

Mike Nolan and Cushla O'Connor, Catholic Education Office, Christchurch

*Well, we know where we're goin'
But we don't know where we've been
And we know what we're knowin'
But we can't say what we've seen*

*We're on a ride to nowhere
Come on inside
Takin' that ride to nowhere
We'll take that ride*

from *Road To Nowhere* (*Talking Heads* - David Byrne)

(1) The genesis of our research/learning project

In August 2013 Mike Nolan (Manager, Catholic Education Office, Christchurch) attended a workshop presented by Patrick Nisbet (Creative Ministry Resources) at the 2013 Australian Catholic University Conference.

This set Mike to thinking about the possible application of online assessment for our national Primary RE curriculum.

(2) First tentative steps

Mike talked through the idea with Cushla O'Connor (Primary RE Adviser, Christchurch). Cushla could see merit in exploring the idea and we decided to meet and talk through the concept with 5 primary school principals, representing a range of schools (low, mid and high decile; rural and city, small and large).

Each principal could see enough value in the proposal to take it to the full principals' group.

The response from principals was positive and there was a consensus to take the next step in exploring this concept.

In March 2014, twenty five school-nominated primary teachers (principals, DRSs and teachers) gathered for a launch day.

(3) Launch outline

(a) Our project is a commitment to innovation

This research project is about improving, evolving, innovation, learning and feedback ... for us and, ultimately, for the benefit of our students.

(b) What is important?

- Our NZCBC-mandated RE curriculum is the driving force.
- Our initial task, should we proceed, is to write a bank of student assessment questions that reflect all key aspects of the RE curriculum we are tasked with teaching.
- All students, whatever their level of faith development, need some understanding of the theological content of their faith, not just an understanding of the cultural elements of Catholicism.¹
- Religious education takes the form of a school subject, presenting the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and depth with which other learning areas present their knowledge.²
- It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines.³

(c) Confirming our target year level

We decided that Year 4 would be the target year-group for our project.

(d) Question Writing

Professor Anne Tuohy (Director, TCI) provided the context for using multiple choice questions in assessing RE.

The following points became evident:

- We need to first establish what our learning outcome is.
- Questions can range from simple to complex; providing the teacher with more than just knowledge recall.

Writing multiple choice questions made participants dig deeper into the content of the strand:

- What is it that we are being asked to teach?
- From the body of knowledge presented which learning outcomes do we believe are key and must be assessed?

(4) Beginning to crawl

Cushla invited teachers to register their interest for 3 two-day question-writing workshops, Christchurch (September 2014), South Canterbury (October 2014) and Christchurch (February 2015).

¹ *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children* (2014) NZCBC (p.14)

² *Catechetical Directory for ANZ* #3.1.3 (2011)

³ *General Directory for Catechesis* #73 (1997)

We were pleasantly surprised as many of the questions we generated "passed the initial muster"!

That said, we provide three examples where Patrick's knowledge and wisdom provided the following critiques:

Question

The Eucharist is a sacred meal because at it:

- a) people are blessed
- b) people gather together
- c) people ~~are fed by~~ receive Jesus' body and blood
- d) people listen to the Word of God

"meal" and "fed" are too closely linked

Question

After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus:

- a) became a disciple of Jesus
- b) ~~took no notice of Jesus~~ became a Rabbi
- c) kept on cheating people
- d) ~~did not do what Jesus told him~~ went to the temple and prayed

options b), c) and d) are all negative and are easily excluded

Question

In the Gospel of John, what ~~What~~ was Jesus' first miracle?

- a) ~~helping~~ healing a leper
- b) feeding a crowd of people
- c) raising a man from the dead
- d) ~~preaching in the temple~~ walking on water

helping is not a miracle

preaching is not a miracle

(5) Benefits for the participants in the question-writing workshops

In our initial discussions with principals it was hoped that (arguably) the best professional development would be for those engaged in the question-writing workshops.

These quotations provide an insight as to how the workshop participants experienced the process:

"The benefits to myself and my school are that I have a much more in-depth knowledge of each year level and what needs to be taught. I also got the benefit of the experience of the other DRS's and what had worked well in their schools. Having to sort out the most important teaching points to then focus on the questions means that I have a very good understanding of what my teachers need to be focusing on. Also made you realise just how much we manage to teach our students within a relatively short time-frame."

"I thoroughly enjoyed being part of the process. I had initially not put my name forward as I felt that being young in 'DRS years' there were a lot of other DRS' out there with more knowledge. I came to the two days slightly apprehensive as to how valuable my contributions would be ... I have come away feeling very confident in my own knowledge of the programmes from Years 1-4 and feel that I will be of more benefit to the staff at my school who teach those year levels."

(6) Where did we go next?

We conducted a practice/sample test (just a few questions) on Tuesday 8 September 2015 and completed our initial online RE assessment on Tuesday 15 September 2015.

The purpose of our initial 2015 assessment trial was two-fold:

1. To discover all the technical problems that might arise during the simultaneous online assessment for Year 4 students throughout the Diocese.
1. To provide us with an opportunity to begin to test the **reliability** (*the degree to which these multi-choice questions produce consistent results*) and **validity** (*how accurate each of these multi-choice questions is at measuring what it is trying to measure*) of the initial set of questions we developed.

(7) Are we asking the right questions?

Professor John Hattie's (June 2015) research papers ...

- What Doesn't Work in Education: THE POLITICS OF DISTRACTION⁴, and
- What Works Best in Education: THE POLITICS OF COLLABORATIVE EXPERTISE⁵

... and the recently released Education Review Office's (ERO) trial document, *School Evaluation Indicators 2015: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success*⁶ were on Mike's mind.

We might be asking the right questions but the particular track we have chosen to follow might end up being the wrong track! Still, it's always better to be asking the right questions rather than asking the wrong questions!

Mike came to the conclusion that, in his view, we are at least asking the right questions; questions that the research would suggest are key questions for student achievement. Here is a small selection of quotations from the literature that provide a sense of how Mike reached his conclusion:

⁴ <http://visible-learning.org/2015/06/download-john-hattie-politics-distraction/>

⁵ <https://www.pearson.com/hattie/solutions.html>

⁶ <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial>

The major purpose of assessment in schools, however, should be to provide interpretative information to teachers and school leaders about their impact so that they have the best information possible about where to go next in the teaching process.⁷

We need to understand teacher and student expectations, to ensure they are appropriately high – and then to provide teachers with decent assessment and evaluation tools to help them set and evaluate these expectations.⁸

The professional community gathers analyses and uses evidence of student learning and outcomes to improve individual and collective professional practice.⁹

The New Zealand Curriculum emphasise teaching as a process of inquiry, and the importance of professional leaders and teachers having the expertise to inquire into practice, evaluate its impact on student outcomes and build organisational and system knowledge about what works.¹⁰

Relational trust at all levels of the learning community supports collaboration and risk taking, and openness to change and improvement.¹¹

Perhaps others may have a different view? If so, that is understandable as evidence for policy-making and educational interventions is “not always clear-cut and is often the subject of vigorous debate – which is healthy, but it doesn’t make it easier to reach conclusions.”¹²

(8) Where are we at?

In our first ever online RE assessment 537 Year 4 students successfully logged on and completed the 40-question assessment 😊

(9) Feedback

Here’s a summary of the initial feedback:

My role is:



⁷ <http://visible-learning.org/2015/06/download-john-hattie-politics-distraction/> (p.16)

⁸ <http://visible-learning.org/2015/06/download-john-hattie-politics-distraction/> (p.13)

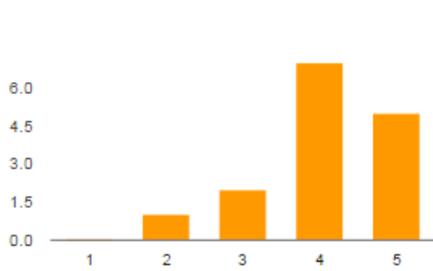
⁹ <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial> (p.38)

¹⁰ [Ibid](#) (p.40)

¹¹ [Ibid](#) (p.41)

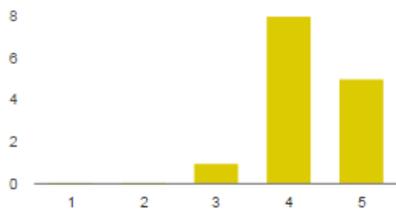
¹² Barber, M. <http://visible-learning.org/2015/06/download-john-hattie-politics-distraction/> (Foreword)

Did your Year 4 students find the online multiple choice question process easy to participate in?



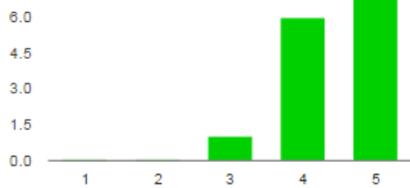
Too difficult:	1	0	0%
	2	1	6.7%
	3	2	13.3%
	4	7	46.7%
Easy (i.e. no difficulty at all):	5	5	33.3%

Did you as a Year 4 teacher find the Teachers' User Guide helpful as pre-reading?



Not at all helpful:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	7.1%
	4	8	57.1%
Very helpful:	5	5	35.7%

Did you as a Year 4 teacher find the lead up emails from Mike explaining the system and process helpful?



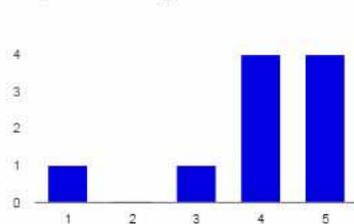
Not at all helpful:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	7.1%
	4	6	42.9%
Very helpful:	5	7	50%

Did you show the preview email demonstrating how to use the system to your Year 4 students?



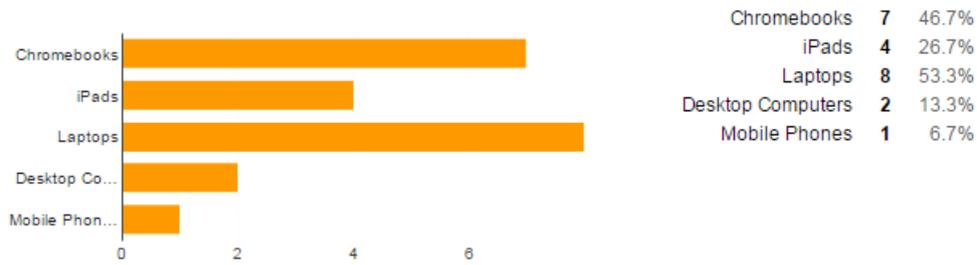
Yes	9	60%
No	6	40%

If you did you show the preview email demonstrating how to use the system to your Year 4 students, did they find it helpful?



Not at all helpful:	1	1	10%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	10%
	4	4	40%
Very helpful:	5	4	40%

Which devices did your Year 4 students primarily use to access and complete the online RE assessment



The following responses summarise the trends in the **Tell us anything else you would like us to know** feedback question:

- We were very well organised and this helped a lot. Having the practice day was invaluable. I found I needed to use some of the other Year 4 students who had finished to read the questions to 3 of my students - this still worked well and the students didn't feel bad! When we get the data this will really help our teaching. Thanks for all your hard work in setting it up.
- Really good to have had a practice run. Made it so easy on the day. Children confidently logged in using passwords the second time and it was so quick. Due to the number of devices, the class was split in half with half leaving the room with another teacher. This worked well. Thanks for all your hard work on this. Am sure it's going to be great.
- Extremely user friendly system. The whole thing ran very smoothly.
- It was a learning curve for the students. The questions were rather challenging for our students especially our ESOL students (majority of the class) - involving a lot of thinking (not black and white answers) as to what answer was the best fit. Overall the students responded well to the test.
- Some of the words were very difficult, for children who are not reading at the level of their peers to read. e.g. Synagogue. Even some of the better readers had to have some words read for them. As this was a test of knowledge and not reading ability some of our Senior children read the questions for lower level readers. Several questions were ambiguous. (Can't remember which ones, sorry. I should have written them down.) With a very high total of children not attending church and not receiving the back up at home, many children do not retain the knowledge they have been taught in previous years. It becomes very difficult for the classroom teacher to ensure that they are receiving all the knowledge and understanding they need.

(10) Emerging Learnings

We will have our first glimpse at the statistical analysis that will highlight the validity and reliability of our questions in November 2015. We will need at least one full run

through of the process in 2016 (and probably 2017) before we will be in a position to have a bank of 150+ valid and reliable questions from which we will be able to begin to engage and have meaningful discussion.

We will also get our first glimpse of our class and school feedback data in November; but we won't be able to put too much emphasis on it because we will not know how many valid and reliable questions each Year 4 student received in our first run through the online RE assessment process.

That said, the initial feedback on the process has already given us great food for thought and professional contemplation. For example:

- (a) The question of reading is an interesting one and it seems to us that the strategy employed by some teachers of getting older students who were trained in the dos and don'ts of being an assessment reader to be readers (or one case fast finishing Year 4 students) and read the questions to ESOL students and students who struggle with reading is a great idea.
- (b) Some of the words were difficult; yet these words are part of the Years 1-4 RE curriculum for NZ Catholic schools. This poses a challenge as students are unlikely to encounter such religious language outside of the RE classroom and Mass on Sunday, should they be fortunate enough to be part of a family that attends Mass regularly.

Perhaps an important emerging learning is for DRSs to work with Cushla next year to reconstruct a religious education word list for each year level and then provide teachers with activities (e.g. Quizlet or a good old fashioned hands-on "match the meaning to the word" game) that match the word to its meaning. There may be scope here to also provide an RE spelling list and appropriate attendant spelling activities for each of the year levels.

These might provide all-important maintenance activities for students.

- (c) It is acknowledged that some "questions were ambiguous" and some questions were very difficult, "involving a lot of thinking (not black and white answers) as to what answer was the best fit".

Any ambiguous questions are likely to be deemed invalid by the statistical analysis that Patrick will undertake on our behalf ... and this is to be expected. The writing party members will testify to the challenge of constructing such questions!

We will reconvene the writing parties in 2016 to re-write questions that are deemed to be invalid and/or unreliable.

It is also acknowledged that some questions were “very difficult” and this was by design. The writing parties tried to come up with easy, medium and hard questions for each concept. This is so our best students can be stretched in their thinking.

As the process matures over the coming years, we hope to get to a point where each student will get an equal number of (randomly assigned) easy, medium and hard questions (for want of better terms) in their assessment.

- (d) One person provided this feedback, “I question the overall value of this sort of assessment. I think that it is going backwards from what modern teaching practice is trying to achieve.”

The view of Professor John Hattie and the view of ERO is clear ... Leaders and teachers are:

asked to account for their ‘overall teacher judgements’ in the major domains – if they rely solely on tests, they fail; if they use no tests they fail – they must defend their day-to-day judgements about the interpretation of the meaning and consequences of evidence from multiple sources.¹³

data literate: posing focused questions; using relevant data; clarifying purpose(s); recognising sound and unsound evidence; developing knowledge about statistical and measurement concepts; making interpretation paramount; and having evidence-informed conversations¹⁴

Our research/professional learning project sits alongside current individual RE teacher practice in formative and summative testing, and day-to-day teacher judgements, where teachers interpret meaning and consequence from multiple sources of evidence.

Our project seeks to provide an additional, objective, statistically valid and reliable, data set that will add to individual and collective teacher conversations about the effectiveness of RE teaching within schools and across clusters of schools.

Our project does not aim replace a teacher’s self-review of the effectiveness of their teaching practice; it simply aims to provide an external data source for such individual teacher and syndicate and school professional reflection.

¹³ <https://www.pearson.com/hattie/solutions.htm> (p.8)

¹⁴ <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial> (p.41)

We are seeking to add to the evidence base from which teachers and schools might reflect upon the impact their teaching practice has had on their students' learning over a four-year period.

Should our research/professional learning project ultimately be seen to be a helpful process, this data source will also enable schools to reflect upon their teaching practice on cohorts of students over time.

Our research/professional learning project affords the possibility of providing an additional data set that will support quality modern teaching practice.

(11) Conclusion

We are indebted to the following professionals who willingly did the "hard yards" and shared their wealth of RE knowledge and curriculum expertise and leadership in our question-writing workshop days:

Cushla O'Connor
Kath Clark (DRS, Sacred Heart School, Addington)
Leigh Cunningham (DRS, St Joseph's School, Rangiora)
Elizabeth McDowell (DRS, Our Lady of the Assumption School, Hoon Hay)
Maria McDonald (DRS, St Mary's School, Christchurch)
Jacque Culling (DRS, Christ the King School, Burnside)
Catherine Quinn (DRS, St Albans Catholic School)
Catherine Rush (DRS, St Joseph's School, Ashburton)
Angela Marshall (Principal, St Joseph's School, Fairlie)
Bernadette Ewer (DRS, St Joseph's School, Pleasant Point)
Suzy Duffield (DRS, St Joseph's School, Temuka)
Debbie Plant (DRS, Sacred Heart School, Timaru)
Trish McCambridge (DRS, St Joseph's School, Timaru)
Carmel Brosnahan-Pye (Principal, St Joseph's School, Timaru)

We are seeking to create a culture of trust, to use the power and wisdom of teacher expertise in the question writing process, supported by the power and capacity of cloud-based computer technology, to enable us to better answer the questions about what students know and what the appropriate next steps might be for our individual and collective teaching practice.

As Professor John Hattie says:

Teaching is to **DIE** for ...
Diagnose what they do/don't know; **I**ntervene; **E**valuate your impact ... repeat.

We have moved from basecamp and have begun to ascend our research/learning mountain; a journey that Dr Seuss probably best describes:

*" You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know.
You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go.
So be sure when you step.
Step with care and great tact
and remember that life's
a great balancing act.
Just never forget to be dexterous and deft.
And never mix your right foot with your left".*

We will let you know the places we end up as we continue our ascent.

For more details see <http://www.chchceo.org.nz/?sid=289>