

Special Edition Learning and Teaching @ Mercy June 2017

From the Principal

Welcome to the first dedicated Mercy Regional College Learning and Teaching Newsletter. As a school, we have taken the decision that once per term, our fortnightly newsletter will be replaced by one focused on our core business - improving the learning outcomes of your child or children.

Education must always be a partnership with students, parents and the school equally responsible for growth and, for this to happen, parents and families need to be fully informed of current initiatives and challenges across learning and teaching. The learning and teaching newsletter will include contemporary research, new programs, articles on specific teaching domains as well as pieces on learning support and enrichment at Mercy.

The newsletter is a result of the excellent work of our key committee on learning and teaching at Mercy Regional College - the Heads of Teaching and Learning. Under the leadership of our Director of Professional Practice, Mrs. Tania Bruckner, their meetings are energising, sometimes challenging and always looking for opportunities to be innovative in this crucial area.

In future editions, I hope to introduce the voices of students and their attitudes to learning and teaching, with a view to nourishing this important partnership.

The challenge of education has been with us since ancient times, as St Paul said to the fledgling Christian community of Philippi:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:8-9)

Yours in Mercy,

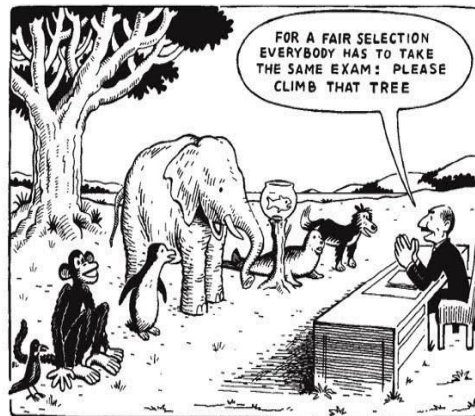


Dr Darren Egberts
Principal

From the Director of Professional Practice

Assessment Update

One of the most interesting, exciting and challenging aspects of education in the Twenty-first Century is that we don't work to a 'one size fits all' model - this cartoon explains it beautifully. Increasingly, a classroom is about improving learning outcomes for every student and recognising that learners use different paths to get to where they need to be. But how to best achieve this? We have been doing a lot of thinking about how to improve outcomes for all Mercy students.



Assessment at Mercy

Over the last 18 months a committee of staff has explored the effectiveness of our assessment regime at Mercy, including exams for core subjects at Years 7 – 10. In recent years, students completed end of semester exams in each core subject (English, Mathematics, Science and Humanities) from the end of Year 7 onwards, and for all subjects at VCE. There have been increasing concern about the effectiveness of exams, particularly in the early years:

- Preparation and running of an exam program takes at least 4 weeks out of the teaching program.
- Exams focus predominantly on content and memory, with little or no growth for students, especially for juniors.
- Exams at the end of a semester are not that useful when students are ready to move on from that topic or year level.
- There is a sense that students have become blasé about the significance of exams after 4-5 years of completing them; their effectiveness as preparation for Year 11 & 12 has subsequently declined.
- The most useful assessment generates a range of data and feedback about what students know and are able to do, rather than a snapshot at a point in time.

The committee has proposed some changes in assessment priorities, with a focus on formative assessment. It recommended to remove exams for Years 7 & 8, include end of year exams for Years 9 & 10 (core subjects) and retain the existing semester exam structure for all VCE subjects. Increasingly, the focus in teaching programs will be smaller, formative assessments. This does not take away from the role exams play in preparing students when moving towards VCE, where external exams are still the preferred model. In fact, removing some exams will provide more opportunity for practice of exam-type skills with smaller topic tests. It is proposed these changes be phased in over the next two years.

What do the experts say?

Work by world renowned Australian educational researcher, John Hattie, has identified meaningful feedback between teachers and students as one of the most effective ways of improving student learning outcomes. The evidence is overwhelming that for students to make ongoing improvement in their learning outcomes (regardless of their individual academic capacity), assessment needs to be formative as well as summative (before a unit starts as well as at the end of a unit).

What does quality assessment look like?

- The best assessment uses a range of formative and summative tasks.
- It collects evidence of learning to track progress, target teaching and improve learning outcomes.
- It allows for opportunities to attain mastery or move forward, and the chance to identify potential learning obstacles and strengths.
- It provides regular feedback to students.
- It provides for students to engage in self and peer assessment, reflect on progress and shape goals.

We are confident these changes will enable students to make greater progress in their learning – to stretch the more advanced student, and support those who need it. This is much more about learning progress than grades. A more personalised approach to student learning also improves engagement improves outcomes for students.

Types of Assessment:

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- **Assessment FOR learning:**
- Provides feedback to the learner & improves outcomes
- Checks for understanding
- Allows for mistakes and improves confidence
- Encourages self and peer monitoring
- Helps the teacher refine lessons & improve instruction
- Is ongoing, throughout the course of the unit
- **Examples:** journal entry, quick quiz, self or peer review, mind map, workbook tasks, discussions, feedback grid, practical task, observations, checklist

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- **Assessment OF learning:**
- Measures student competency - what they know or don't know.
- Occurs to gauge progress towards goals and standards.
- Done at the end of the unit - finished product, essay, project, test or exam.

Partnership with parents

Parent support is critical if we are to improve outcomes for students. It is a team effort. Our aim is to report to parents and students an accurate, consistent picture of student progress and capabilities. Whilst the system is not perfect, there are several ways you can access and act upon this information – the PAM system, parent/student/teacher interviews, open days and information sessions.

I welcome your feedback, and look forward to sharing more information with you in future editions of our Learning & Teaching newsletter.

Mrs. Tania Bruckner

Director of Professional Practice

Wellbeing

Alcohol is a depressant that slows down messages to the brain. In the clip below it explains the impact alcohol has on a young teenage brain.

Interestingly this clip points out that alcohol takes about 2 weeks to fully clear the brain. If we look at what young people are involved in within a 2-week span of their young life (think about your son/daughter)- think about the impact alcohol would be having on them over the 2 weeks e.g. School, sport, sleep, nutrition, socialising, attitude, mood, decision making, choices, learning, focus.

At Mercy, we work hard to educate our students on the impacts of alcohol and hope that this clip will offer you as parents more insight into the damage it does to a young brain and some tips on managing a teenager and alcohol.

Alcohol and the teenage brain

<https://vimeo.com/148331985>

Mrs. Emily Stephens

Wellbeing Co-coordinator

Spirit of ANZAC Prize State Luncheon

Lauren Huth - Year 11

Earlier this year I had the great honor of attending a State Luncheon commemorating the Anniversary of ANZAC day as part of the Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize in Melbourne. It was attended by the Minister for Veterans, the Governor, around 200 veterans, ex-servicemen and women, current service men and women, state MPs, and other important figures. It was a pleasure to be accompanied by my Father.

One of the highlights was the guest speaker Corporal Daniel Keighran, a Victoria Cross recipient. His story is one of pure bravery and a bit of luck, in his second Afghanistan deployment in 2010. He was a member of a partnered fighting patrol with soldiers from the Afghan National Army, visiting a small province to talk to the elders about what action needed to be taken against the enemy, when his patrol was targeted. Himself and his patrol members moved to an exposed ridgeline directly into the firing line. While risking his own safety he went to the top of the ridge to direct the fire at him to help expose the enemy's positions, so they could be suppressed. While this was happening his best mate and patrol member was shot in the shoulder. He had to act. Without a second thought, he left the cover of safety to deliberately draw the fire away from the team treating his mate, running the length of the ridge continuously until he knew the rescue helicopter had collected his mate. During this he said he saw and felt bullets flying between his legs, beside him and in front of him; he should have been dead. At this stage, he knew his mate was dead but he kept going. This exposed the gunmen and helped to neutralize them. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for completely disregarding his safety and doing something he claimed to be out of his mind to even think to do.

Sitting at our table were five army veterans and a Member of Parliament from the surrounding Geelong area. One of the veterans was a man named Jack who is 99 years old, and lead the Anzac Day march in Melbourne this year, walking on his own two feet. He told us how during the war, the French loved the Australians the most, as they were charismatic and had great jokes to lighten the mood. He gave me a badge with the French and Australian flags side by side, the last one he hadn't given away. The veterans were very overwhelmed to hear we were willing to share their stories and more importantly the story of the ANZAC's alive.

This day was one of the most inspiring and influential days I've had, learning so many valuable lessons in life.

Lauren Huth

Spirit of ANZAC Prize recipient



Lauren (front row, left) and other Canberra study tour students had the opportunity to attend the Governor's 2017 ANZAC Day Luncheon. Here they are with Minister for Veterans, the Hon John Eren MP and Her Excellency the Hon Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria.

What does learning and teaching at Mercy look like?

Every single day we see terrific things going on in our school. Whilst curriculum, learning, assessment and feedback are key, there are many aspects to a child's education. Here is a snapshot:



From the Deputy Principal

New Victorian Curriculum Reporting

From Term 1 2017, Victorian government and Catholic schools will use the new Victorian Curriculum F-10.

Student reports are designed to provide students, teachers and parents with a clear and concise picture of a student's levels of attainment against the achievement standards, progress along the learning continuum and achievement of individual learning goals and targets at a point in time.

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 achievement standards are provided in 11 levels for English and Mathematics and in five or six bands for all the other learning areas and capabilities.

You will notice on the End of Semester One Reports, that the levels of student achievement are represented in a slightly different, and more informative graph (as seen below). The new graphical representation includes the Historical Judgement, Previous Judgement (P), and the Current Judgement (C). No Progression since Previous Judgement is represented with a (N). The current achievement level is also listed on the right hand side of the graph for each standard.

If you would like any further assistance in interpreting the graphical scale, please contact the College reception.

