Our Commitment to Learning:

We encourage excellence and perseverance in learning.
We strive for continuous improvement.

Are We Making a Difference and How do We Know?

Mr Rodney Knight
Head of Learning & Teaching

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.”

A few years ago I asked an academic from Deakin University in Melbourne to conduct a professional learning session for staff on the current research around the issue of what constitutes effective learning and teaching.

Her presentation commenced by arguing that the international research available now on this issue, heralds a new era of certainty for education, an era unlike any before it, an era where we [and our students] are the beneficiaries of evidence based, effective practice.
The evidence from international research undertaken by academics, not the least of whom is John Hattie, tells us unambiguously what high leverage learning strategies are, and classroom researchers such as Dylan Wiliam have identified concrete, and very “do-able” practices [tools if you like] aligned with the academic studies on effect sizes, to drive enhanced student learning and school improvement.

The school improvement movement is a world wide phenomenon and a really good, local example of this is captured in the recent ABC series on “Revolution School.” Here we saw a very determined leadership team take an underperforming school, Kambrya College, and armed with the research data and the strong belief that all students and staff can learn and improve, turned the culture of the school around substantially. This process began in 2008 and continues today - it is a work in progress.

This is a really exciting and empowering time for schools, staff, students and parents. In a sense this is the Dweck “growth” mind set at work, writ large, reinventing schools, empowering students and staff in very tangible and “do-able” ways.

This is the improvement journey we have commenced.

While Kambrya College is 8 years into their journey and it has clear indicators of its success, we are just 18 months into ours, but nonetheless it is worth asking what are our success indicators to date? Clearly, it is too early to be looking at improved VCE or NAPLAN results, but is there other “data” that we can cobble together to track our progress? Perhaps the following indicators may be useful in terms of signalling an emerging “improvement” culture:

- Student feedback on whether there is a greater emphasis on a learning culture and whether classrooms actually reflect this.
- A stronger and consistent focus on building a positive learning culture and student accountability for their learning, through the use of the Student Learning Action Statement, The Classroom Expectations document for staff, the RTP and the TA system.
- Staff use of formative feedback, learning intentions, success criteria and strategies to engage students and identify their understandings [the 5 strands of our Formative Engagement model] and modify their teaching accordingly.
- Classrooms that reflect a move away from the “sage on the stage” model of learning towards a model of empowering students to take charge of their own learning.
- The development to date of a shared language of learning - staff and students.
- Increased receptiveness by teachers to sharing and observing one another’s teaching, as a means of growth and development.
- Staff openly sharing classroom experiences through Formative Engagement Groups (FEGs), Professional Learning (PL) Briefings, Staff Day presentations and the Professional Learning (PL) newsletter.
- The adoption of a “growth” mind set and receptiveness to an improvement culture.
- Other.

If responses to the above issues are generally positive, indicating that we are moving forward, then that is very encouraging.

If responses to the above are not generally positive, then we need to bring a “growth” or solution focused mindset to the issues, and the question is “How do we move forward?”
Education for Sustainability
by Erica McConachy
English Faculty

In the final semester of my Masters degree last year I enrolled in a depth unit called Environmental Education, Design, and Learning for Sustainability. I grew up in an environmentally conscious household and culture and have a strong appreciation for our natural world. I was interested in discovering how education for sustainability (EfS) could become explicitly effective. I began to think about how a better harmony with nature could be achieved and how to educate generations to respect our natural world and seek balance moving forward - educating for sustainability, with sustainable development communicated as the explicit goal, as our (humanity and the natural world) outcomes are inextricably interconnected.

I realised that indigenous cultures around the world have (and continue to) lived and developed sustainably for thousands of years, providing models we can relate back to and emulate today, where younger generations are taught a way of life by older generations from within their natural setting and home. These strong links to the natural world are ingrained in those cultures and in the way learning is formed. A holistic approach proved far more effective in creating and fostering a mindset in students that respects the natural world and seeks to live sustainably - instinctually - and as a priority.

My research on holistic approaches led me to investigate eco-religions, and another model which answers our modern needs for sustainable development, as well as educating for an instinctual response that recognises and respects a balance between the continuation and development of humanity and our natural world. That model is the Catholic tradition.

The following is a piece I wrote for a webpage created by a fellow student and I on EfS in Catholic schools:

Care for our Common Home

The CEOM (Catholic Education Office Melbourne) demonstrates strong support for EFs (Education for Sustainability). The organisation is a part of Ceres: The Sustainability Hub, where online resources, school programs, workshops, and information are shared, enabling strong practices in EFs to filter through the community of Catholic schools and into the education network beyond. Respect is a core Catholic value and one central to sustainable living and development. The CEOM understands the importance of educating for sustainability as an integral part of education in the Catholic tradition.

Harmony with the natural world is central to many belief systems and cultures. Sterling (2010) reminds us of one of the Commoner’s Laws of Ecology - that “everything is connected to everything else” (p. 214). Many cultures and religions throughout history and across global regions have understood this connection and have existed harmoniously with nature. For example, the Buddhist view is based on connected systems of nature, recognising that humans are a part of nature and should thus “develop themselves as part of the natural system of coexistence” (Chansomsak & Vale, 2008, p. 46). Buddhism can be seen as an eco-religion, one which highlights human development as the most important principle in solving social and ecological problems caused by the detrimental action of humans towards their environment (Chansomsak & Vale, 2008). Through Catholicism, the development of the person is also regarded as the way forward to sustainable living and development.
From the education for sustainability perspective, there is a strong case for the integration of religious beliefs into education and into the central core of learning for sustainability, as the Catholic values, ethics, and attitudes are shared with those at the core of environmental consciousness, as are a respect for nature and our global population.

His Holiness, Pope Francis, writes in ‘On Care for Our Common Home’ (Encyclica Laudato si’), that:

“We have come to see ourselves as her [Earth’s] lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (Francis, 2015, para. 2).

As such, EfS in schools must lead to return us to a grateful and graceful state where all people respect Earth, our interconnected outcomes, and the vulnerability of much of our human population, as well as all living things. “Nothing in this world is indifferent to us” (Francis, 2015).

“The most extraordinary scientific advances, the most amazing technical abilities, the most astonishing economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic social and moral progress, will definitively turn against man” (Francis, 2015, para. 4).

EfS involves more than environmental consciousness or innovative advances; it must address all four pillars of sustainability, being environmental, social/cultural, economic, and political (Fien, 2002). The authentic social and moral progress that His Holiness speaks about is integral to gaining success in sustainable development and altering the course of destruction that has been set in motion by our collective actions and inactions.

“The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies. Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is” (Francis, 2015, para. 5).
A return to God and to grace will lead to a renewed approach to living and actions which support Earth and God's gifts. Educating a generation to change the way we think and live into the future is why EfS matters. Sustainable development reflects Catholic values towards all humans and creatures and our natural world.

"Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature... creation is harmed where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves" (Francis, 2015, para. 6).

As a collective humanity, we must re-learn to reject self-centred life and return to selfless action for the good of all. We achieve this by looking at...

"the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems... we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms... replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing... It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion" (Francis, 2015, para. 9).

Saint Francis of Assisi (Patron Saint of all those who study and work in the area of ecology) - an example to emulate:

“He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace...

If we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously..." (Francis, 2015, para. 10-11).

References


Navigating Teenage Depression

Jo Amott
Head of Wellbeing

With the absence of a Psychologist or Counsellor at Marian College in Semester One, it was a somewhat steep learning curve for me to learn more about youth mental health, and the range of issues I was encountering. Whilst being a Health and Wellbeing teacher helps me to understand youth mental health to some degree, as does personally being an advocate for living a healthy lifestyle (which includes mental health), I certainly do not hold a degree in this area! The situation provided me with the opportunity to up-skill myself in this area, and in doing so, I learnt a lot more about what is going on in the minds of young people today.

Recently I attended a youth mental health conference where I had the privilege of listening to an address from Professor Gordon Parker – a renowned researcher with over 30 years experience with mood disorders. He is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of NSW and an Executive Director at the Black Dog Institute (a world leader in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder). Over the holiday break I read a book he co-authored called 'Navigating Teenage Depression: A guide for parents and professionals'. It is an excellent book with useful information and practical advice, so I thought it would be good to share some of this knowledge.

The following information and excerpts are from the book:

Mental health stressors and statistics

NB: such statistics underline the fact that mental health problems are not imaginary!

- 14 per cent of children and adolescents in Australia are dealing with mental health problems that are intrusive enough to sap their vitality and cause immeasurable distress
- it is estimated that 1 in 4 children aged four to seventeen have significant mental health concerns
- young adults aged 18 to 24 years have the highest prevalence of mental disorders of any age group, and in this age group, youth suicide is the third most common cause of death

The range of depression

While depression refers to a cluster of feelings and behaviours that we are generally familiar with, depression can affect an individual as:

- a normal mood state
- a disorder, or
- a physical illness
'Normal' versus 'clinical' depression

All of us experience 'normal' depression from time to time. These normal states of depression usually have a context, the depressive reaction is in proportion to the event that distressed us (the stressor), and the down mood can expect to lift and lighten if the stressor is neutralized or ends.

But if one (a teenager in this case) has clinical depression, differences exist. The symptoms will persist and they can't seem to bounce back to their usual temperament setting. With clinical depression, the teenager's own usual ways of coping are either not working, or are not strong enough to stave off their downward mood spiral; or they don't kick in at all.

What causes it?

Teenage depression can be a tangle of many threads – genetic, psychological, physical and situational. Whilst we can say the experience of adolescence is similar regardless of the generation or era, teenagers today are impacted by factors that weren’t prevalent a few decades ago – the internet, mass electronic media, mobile phones, global warming, premature sexualisation, higher rates of divorce, blended families, 'designer' drugs...and the list goes on.

Recognising the patterns

Depression is a mood state where there is a drop in self-esteem and sense of self-worth. An individual feels 'down' and pessimistic and wants to give up, feeling others have given up on them too.

Some signs and symptoms of depression are:

• becoming asocial – avoiding school and friends
• poorer school performance (in class and in sports)
• heightened irritability, anger and hostile outbursts
• indecisiveness
• lack of energy and motivation
• loss of pleasure and interest in activities
• a helpless inability to change the way they feel
• persistent sadness and bouts of crying
• deliberate self-harm
• changes in eating and sleeping patterns (too much or too little)

Further symptoms of clinical depression that impact on a teenager's ability to carry on with life include:

• a severely depressed mood
• lowered self-esteem
• feelings of worthlessness and a sense that life is not worth living
• inability to enjoy or look forward to fun things
• weight change – either 'up' as they binge on comfort foods, or 'down' as appetite is lost
• feeling hopeless or helpless, or numb or distant – with these feelings, damaging relationships and limiting the ability to function
How do we best provide help and support to those who do need it?

- There is a minimum time (two weeks) before a mood disorder such as depression is considered clinical and therefore likely to need assessment.

- But, the severity of depression and its impact on the teenager are the most important considerations when you are weighing up whether to become more involved.

- Your gut feeling, instinct and common sense come into play.

- A mother of a teenager with severe depression developed the following informal questions to help her decide when to intervene:
  - Ask yourself on a scale of 1-10 how you would rate your teenager:
    - How bad (in all sorts of ways) are they?
    - Are they 'themselves' or not?
    - What impact is their mood state/behaviour having on their life?
    - Are you worried about them not coping?

The severity of a teenager's depression and its impact upon them are the most important factors to consider. Ask yourself 'would this teenager benefit from an assessment?'. A good guise to follow is 'if in doubt, talk it out' – seek help or arrange an assessment by an appropriate or competent professional.

Effective wellbeing strategies

- Read about mood disorders – learn as much as you/they can.

- Encourage them to talk with someone they trust – they may find it hard to put feelings into words, but at least they can talk about how their feelings have affected their behaviour.

- Get them to write it down – this can 'track' moods, anchor the individual, confirm that previous low moods have passed, and recall the better times during a stage when they are feeling low.

- Help them to cultivate friendship – friendship is a great solace, provided it is with someone they can trust.

- Help them sort through thoughts from feelings – try to reinforce the difference between facts and feelings. Feelings aren't facts, so they shouldn't be acted on.

- Help them find something they’re good at – this interest may grow and help them access new energy and direction.

- Teach them to remember: 'It will pass' – console them with the knowledge that this episode – this mood swing – will pass.

Helpful activities from teens suffering depression

- regular exercise
- setting clear and achievable goals
- reading self-help and inspirational books
- using a mood diary to chart moods
- talking to friends
- listening to music (but not heavy and dark varieties)
- writing in a personal journal
- scheduling regular and enjoyable and rewarding activities
- reciting positive or inspirational self-affirmations
- rewarding themselves for daily achievements
- scheduling additional therapy sessions
- using meditation strategies to relax
- researching the internet for information
- humour – watching videos, looking at cartoons and reading books that make them laugh
“How to Become Great at Just About Anything” - A Freakonomics Podcast

John Coghlan
Maths & Science Faculties

Reference: A Freakonomics Podcast- 28/4/16

Over the past 6 months, I have become a fan of Freakonomics (Podcast: 2016). It is the Maths side in me coming out. I firstly read the book, Freakonomics by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubler and now I follow their podcasts which is where I came across one called “How to Become Great at Just About Anything”(Podcast:2016).

Freakonomics claim to look a bit deeper and explain the associations between events. Their book discusses the relationship between abortion and crime, education levels and naming of children, drug dealing as a career option, amongst other things. It is becoming evident that there is a lot more data available to discuss cause and effect than ever before.

Freakonomics podcast on “How to Become Great at Just About Anything” (Podcast:2016) discusses the learning process itself. It gives a language to talk to students about their learning and discusses a range of assumptions including the concept of talent and the big question “Can anyone learn anything?”.

Can anyone learn anything? Do you need talent?

Levitt: “The part that really resonated with me is the idea that without hard work, no one is really great at anything — because it’s an interesting insight. We’d like to think that Wayne Gretzky or Michael Jordan or Taylor Swift just emerge as savants, but they don’t. If you start with someone with talent, and another person who has no talent, if the person with talent works just as hard as the person without talent, almost for certain they’re going to have a better outcome.

So, if our measure is true virtuosity, true expertise, it seems unlikely to me that this populist version of “Oh, you don’t have to be good; you just have to try hard,” I think that’s probably a fallacy. But I firmly believe the other direction, which is that: if you don’t try hard, no matter how much talent you have, there’s always going to be someone else who has a similar amount of talent who outworks you, and therefore out performs you.”

Extract from conversation on the podcast

The podcast continues a discussion with a research psychologist Anders Ericsson who wrote a book: Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise.

ERICSSON: “Exactly. We actually find that with the right kind of training, any individual will be able to acquire abilities that were previously viewed as only attainable if you had the right kind of genetic talent.

DUBNER: “Would it be fair to say that the kind of overarching thesis of your work is that this thing that we tend to call talent, is in fact more of an accumulation of ability that is caused by what you’ve labeled “deliberate practice”?”

ERICSSON: “I think that, that is a nice summary here of what we’re finding.”

Extract from conversation on the podcast
Deliberate Practice (21 minutes)

Gladwell’s Outlier’s introduced the idea of 10,000 hours but he assumed that two things. One that the person had talent and that intuitively the person would spend those 10,000 hours with some deliberate learning from feedback.

Ericsson believes that talent is not necessarily a requirement but belief and quality deliberate practice anyone can become good at anything. Ericsson believes that we have learnt how to learn (18 minute mark) so therefore our achievements have become greater. He references sports and music where the elite of 100 years ago would not even make the team today.

Deliberate practice involves getting outside your comfort zone. It is only by getting outside your comfort zone and making mistakes, can one fix those mistakes and become better. (22 minutes). Deliberate practice means that a person can break a skill down into its components, using with a mentor who has already achieved the skill, then they work at each component until they successfully achieve it.

Experience v Deliberate Practice

Experience (28 minutes) is usually considered a key to improvement, but experience will only lead to improvement if the person is getting feedback and hence is developing their skills. The example used in the podcast is a surgeon who gets clear feedback during operations and often needs to fix their mistakes immediately hence can consider themselves getting better. A GP does not necessarily get feedback on their diagnosis so has no reason to believe they are getting better at their job. In fact, experienced GP’s need to do courses in hearing heart sounds because they are often not as up to date a graduate.

The podcast actually discusses the idea that deliberate practice shapes the human brain (26 minute). Learning new material and testing out your development actually make a person think differently to someone who is doing the same thing day after day.

So, can anyone become good at anything…..

The podcast concludes with the example of a Danish Psychologist Susanne Bargmann, who wanted to investigate the idea of talent (42 minutes) and also wanted to be a singer her whole life.

The podcast had recording of her voice and the Christina Aguillera song she wanted to perform.

BARGMANN: I decided that if I wanted to be serious about the project, I would need the best coach available. So I went online and then I started searching for the person I thought would be the best coach in Denmark.

It turns out that with the right coaching and support that Susanne Bargman could become a great singer and produce her own record. She needed someone to give her a plan and constructive feedback, so she could use deliberate practice and improve what she needed to succeed.

Susanne’s mentor sounds very similar to what we do as teachers. It also reinforces a concept we trialled in VCAL in 2015. We wanted to teach students how to learn. There is a Ted Talk by Josh Kaufman, “20 hour to learn something new” (TedTalk Youtube: 2015), talks about his keenness to learn but his lack of time due to his work and newborn baby. He realises that 10,000 hours is to master the new skill not to learn enough to enjoy it.

Josh Kaufman came up with 4 step program to learn a new skill:

1. Deconstruct the skill
2. Learn enough to self-correct
3. Remove barriers to practice
4. Practice for at least 20 hours

Because anyone can learn.

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Podcast: How to Become Great at Just About Anything April 27, 2016 @ 11:00pm by Stephen J. Dubner, also commentary available at http://freakonomics.com/podcast/peak/
Self Directed Learning (SDL)

The classroom’s of today needs to be student centred. We can no longer assume that the teacher is the dispenser of all knowledge and that learning can only take place when the teacher is ‘teaching’. No longer can we assume that students patiently wait to be ‘filled’ with our knowledge. Nor should we assume that when a timetable indicates that at 10.35 the student will be ready to learn; English or Maths or Science or PE that they are actually ready to learn that subject.

The structure needs to change to meet the needs of the students. It has to be flexible enough to allow for Individual Pathways for each child to reach their own potential.

The curriculum has to be relevant, current and designed to engage all students at their own level and allow for improvement beyond what the teacher’s expectations are.

Decision making has to be handed over to the students in regards to the basics of what they learn and when they learn it. This must be done within the context of legislative requirements and must be continually monitored so that each student progresses. The Teacher Advisor (TA) is critical to this.

There needs to be an understanding and incorporation of prior learning and of the wealth of knowledge that is available to the students through technology that is at their fingertips.

This development towards SDL must be staged so that all stakeholders; teachers, students and families are not thrust into the unknown.
Stage 1.

Would see the creation of subject and year level based curriculum that allows students to move between classrooms to work on their task.

The change required for stage one would not need to be huge. The curriculum is still taught in rooms but is available to the students at three levels, supportive, standard and extended and the students are allowed to move between the rooms for specific topic work that engages them at the level at which they are at. So for example, if the topic was Pythagoras students work in the areas where they feel they are most suited, however when the topic changes, so too can the student move if their level of understanding requires it.

The teachers work together to provide the curriculum that not only engages the students, but meets their needs and develops and progresses their skill. It is delivered in a manner that allows student ownership of the work and the ultimate ability to teach one another.

Stage 2.

Takes the development to the next step, where the subject offered in the separate rooms do not need to match. The students determine what subject they need to attend based around where they are situated with their work schedule. This again requires flexibility and the curriculum to be developed and available for when the student is ready.

As with stage 1, stage 2 requires the TA to continually monitor and review the student’s progress to make certain that they are not missing key aspects of their learning.

The benefits of stage 2 is the handing over of choice to the students in regards to what they want to learn and when they are ready to learn it. It is however still within the constraints of the timetable.

Stage 3.

Sees the walls, literally and metaphorically being opened up to allow students to work in large numbers from varying year levels of a subject that they choose throughout the day. Staff are trained and skilled to help students when required. So too, students help other students. Lectures and tutorials run, to guide and assist students to meet the demands of the curriculum. Year levels cease to exist.

The students direct their own learning.

Instantaneously you see the disappearance of a large percentage of discipline issues because the students are where they want to be, working on what they want to, when they are ready. Again continually reported on and monitored by the TA teacher, to make certain that they are meeting all their learning outcomes.

The technology needs to be ready and available to allow students to complete their work when and where they are.

Timelines and deadlines would need to be set so that student’s progress at the pace required to achieve their goals. Minimum standards of what is required need to be set at each stage of development so that students do not progress ahead of when they are ready or held back simply because of age.

Time Line

The timeline for this cannot be forced or rapid. Staff, students and families need to be carefully educated through the process and allowed to develop their understanding and confidence in the structure and the benefits that it provides for their child.

Conclusion.

Would it be easy? Absolutely not. Nothing worth achieving ever is.

Would it worthwhile? Absolutely. Research and date collation across the globe clearly indicates and supports this.

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Is the concept true for all of life? Yes, Yes and more.

If you’ve made it this far into your teaching career and feel that the current system works efficiently and effectively for all key stakeholders then just like my last article, I’ve wasted your time. If not, then my offer of conversation is still open.
Can we teach students how to learn?

Matthew de Jong
Religious Education Coordinator

Why focus on learning instead of teaching?

School professional development days deliver, for the most part, excellent and wonderful teaching strategies. But by focusing almost always on teaching pedagogy and ignoring (unintentionally), how can we help students figure out their role on the learning process, we are leaving out half of the equation! What we do to better ourselves as teachers is worthwhile, but even if we are the best teachers we can possibly be, as long as students come into our classrooms not prepared to learn efficiently and independently, we will not see the types of learning our students are capable of. (McGuire, 2015) Student learning should also be a priority in our professional development.

The power of teaching Bloom’s Taxonomy and the study cycle to students.

Earlier this year I came upon a book, Teach Students How to Learn, by Saundra McGuire which has some excellent advice on how we can teach our students how to learn and how to better understand how they learn. This is called metacognition. McGuire offers some excellent tips on how we can improve our student’s learning, most of which is common sense and ideas we have all heard of before. I am currently trialling them in my two Unit 1 Psychology classes.

Firstly, Bloom’s Taxonomy should be taught to our students. It can be aimed at any year level. (McGuire, 2015) advocates that we can teach it in a four step process. We can begin the process by asking students to articulate the differences between studying and learning. Most secondary students believe that studying is just ‘going over’ what they have learned in class. Our students thus believe that they have learned the information in class and just need to briefly ‘revise’ for a test, and by doing this they are assured of good results. They believe they have learned all they need to know in class! This stage can be completed as a brainstorm activity, small group - report back to whole class activity or any other way you feel inclined.

‘We can begin the process by asking students to articulate the differences between studying and learning.’

Secondly, we go on to ask the students another question for reflection and discussion. “For which of the following tasks would you work harder: to work for an ‘A’ on a test or to teach the material to this class?” Most feedback would indicate that students would prepare more diligently if they had to teach to the class. Once a discussion has taken place and their responses are in, ask the following: “Until now, have you been in make an ‘A’ mode or in teach the material mode?

Step three is teach Bloom’s Taxonomy as a hierarchy of learning levels. We need to make sure that the students understand the differences between the six different levels. Use analogies appropriate to the year level and apply it to their lives. (McGuire, 2015) has some examples appropriate to the age group.

Step four is applying Bloom’s Taxonomy to our student’s study habits. We can begin by asking: “At what level do you think you had to operate in order to make ‘A’s now in secondary school?” Most students will reply at the bottom two levels remembering and understanding.

Then we ask a follow up question: “At what level do you need to be operating at to do very well in your
‘...and if we really ‘push’ our Culture of Learning at Marian College guidelines and the importance of achieving high in school, this is possible’. 

VCE/VCAL years?” Most students will reply at either analysing, evaluating or creating, the highest three levels of learning on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Introducing Bloom’s Taxonomy and urging students to express their learning goals in terms of Bloom’s levels positively impacts their study habits and academic performance.

So how do we get our students to pursue deeper learning goals and operate in the upper levels of Bloom’s? We can work through and teach the metacognitive strategies that follow.

a) Preview before class - skim the chapter that will be the classes focus in the next lesson (This assumes a text is used. If it isn’t give students some idea of the lesson content coming, so they can do some online research) Students should also note headings and boldface words, review summaries and chapter objectives and come up with questions to have answered in the upcoming class.

b) Attend class - Go to class! Answer and ask questions and take meaningful notes.

c) Review after class - as soon after class as possible, read your notes, fill in gaps and note any questions.

d) Study - repetition is the key. Ask questions such as ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘what if’. Quality study session at home and on weekends (4 - 5 times a week per subject)

e) Assess your learning - periodically perform reality checks - am I using study methods that are effective? Do I understand the material enough to teach it to others?

Intense study session

1. Set goal -
• what do I want to achieve now? 2 mins.

2. Study with focus -
• organise, concept map, summarise, re-read, fill in notes, do maths problems etc. 30 - 50mins.

3. Reward
• take a break 10mins.

4. Review
• go over session material 5mins.

Some students will complain that they don’t have time for this study cycle, but the times are flexible and if we really ‘push’ our Culture of Learning at Marian College guidelines and the importance of achieving high in school, this is possible.

In short, with the right preparation and the right knowledge our students can learn.

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Genesis Against Enuma Elish

Ancient Narratives of Mesopotamia

The Babylonian Epic of Creation also known as Enuma Elish has been compared to the Biblical creation narrative in Genesis Chapter One. From the moment it was found by George Smith in 1875, the seven cuneiform tablets have been connected to the Book of Genesis as similar in the creation of heaven and earth. However, the argument against the two sources similarities has become more apparent since Smith’s discovery. In exploring the differences rather than similarities of these two texts the interpretation of Genesis Chapter One will be illuminated. Differences such as monotheism against polytheism, how both texts explain the Creation, before and after and the roles of both and between God or gods and humankind. In this exploration the thought of both texts will be altered and the interpretation will be different.

Deities can be one or can be many, depending on culture, tradition, religion or narrative, the differences in these two sources are exactly that. The Enuma Elish Epic is a Babylonian Creation narrative consisting of many deities of around fifteen, all having different roles and intentions. The Genesis narrative however has the one God who creates everything. This difference is one of the major topics when it comes to argument as it seems that just having the one God in the Book of Genesis makes it a more powerful narrative rather than many.

The extreme difference in the polytheistic nature of the Babylonian poem, asks the question why is this source related so closely to the Hebrew Scriptures on Genesis Chapter One? There does seem to be many similarities between the two sources but this is, according to Alexander Heidel, “In sharp contrast... the Book of Genesis speaks of only one divine principle existing apart from the independently of all cosmic matter.” The Monotheistic God in Genesis Chapter One shows the absolute power of the seven-day creation, each day having a special significance in the making of heaven and earth.

What is also seen as a similarity between the narratives is the connection of the Seven Tablets of the Enuma Elish and the Seven Days of Creation. However the difference between the two is most evident as in the Seven Tablets of the Babylonian Epic, the creation acts do not begin until the end of Tablet Four where as the creation acts in Genesis begin at the first verse. There is only one thing that can be used as a common factor in this concept is the time of rest which both occurs on the seventh tablet and the seventh day, however this does have extreme differences which will be explained later.

The particular contrast in this theory is also the content of each source. The Enuma Elish Epic describes in Tablets One, Two, Three and most of the Fourth the discontent of the goddess Tiamat and the battle between her and Marduk. It describes a violent warfare between the deities before it goes onto the creation of heaven and earth. In Genesis Chapter One it describes the creation of heaven and earth in six days with the seventh day being the day of rest. Rabbi Dr I. Rapaport says, “There is no drama in the thirty-four verses which compose the biblical chapter. It is all a straightforward record, with the creational acts following upon one another; the creational narrative is not disturbed by any non-creational deed or action.” The similarities between these texts certainly are not showing through and the differences between the polytheistic and monotheistic objectives are beginning to stand out. In most polytheistic narratives there is always the themes of revenge, war and discontent and in the Biblical Creation narrative it is seen to be simple and in control. “Thus the narrative in Genesis is unfolded by a God who is supreme and all alone in His work, while the Babylonian poem is filled with numerous gods, all of whom are very much given to mundane preoccupations, including matrimony, birth and death, and mutual hatred and warfare.”

The Creation of the heaven and earth is mentioned in both the Enuma Elish Epic and the Genesis Chapter One, which has been made an immediate connection between the two sources, however there are such
small details that change how these texts are to be interpreted.

The God in Genesis One says that He spoke and everything came to be and we find that method is also in the Enuma Elish,

"'Lord, truly thy decree is first among gods. Say but to wreck or create; it shall be. Open thy mouth: the cloth will vanish! Speak again, and the cloth shall be whole!' At the word of his mouth the cloth vanished.

He spoke again, and the cloth was restored." (Tablet 4, line 21-26)

However though Marduk is said to be able to say the words for something to happen, he firstly does not create anything by this method and secondly this passage of Enuma Elish is saying that he is not creating anything but bringing back what had disappeared, like a magic trick. There are three places in the Enuma Elish Epic that suggests creation acts by Marduk the leader of the Babylonian gods. The first is allocated in Tablet Four, line 138 concerning the creation of the firmament and earth, the second in Tablet Five, line 12 concerning the creation of the luminaries mainly the stars and moon and the third found in Tablet Six, line 5-7 which tells of the creation of man which will be addressed later.

Beginning with the creation of the firmament and earth, Marduk creates this by splitting the goddess Tiamat in two and covers heaven with one half and uses the other to make earth. However looking back to the text of the Enuma Elish, Rabbi Dr I. Rapaport points out that in Tablet Four, line 62 that Marduk takes a poisonous plant to use against Tiamat in battle and the use of the wood to make his bow and club in Tablet Four, line 37-38. This implies that the earth, the land and plants, are already in existence, which also implies that the earth did not need to be created nor did Marduk create it.

The creation of the luminaries found in Tablet Five, line 12 Marduk is said to have created the moon. The sun is mentioned earlier on in the Enuma Elish Epic as the god Marduk. Marduk is described as “My son, the Sun! Sun of the heavens!” This corresponds to the polytheistic theme of the Enuma Elish Epic. Bernard Batto says that Genesis “…refers to the sun and the moon only in the most oblique manner, as the ‘two great lights’ … lest even the mention of their names might cause an association with false gods commonly personified by the sun and the moon.” Everything that is created by the God in Genesis is made under His authority, they are not made as deities nor do they become deities such as Marduk in Enuma Elish. The difference between Genesis and the Enuma Elish poem is the order of how the moon
is created. In Genesis 1:14-16 God begins by making the moon and then using it as a symbol of time marking the months, seasons and years where as the Enuma Elish poem, as Rabbi Dr I. Rapaport states, the order is opposite as Marduk explains the months and years and then “caused” the moon to shine being this vehicle of time. So this those change how we look at the Enuma Elish Epic, seeing as time is not a physical aspect of life how can it be fixed in the way that Marduk has stated unless the moon was actually already in existence? As the text was translated “The Moon, he caused to shine...” this wording does imply that possibly the moon was in existence before Marduk created it.

The Seventh Tablet and the Seven Day of Creation has been mentioned to be rather similar, however the only thing they have that is similar is the number and the objective. In the Enuma Elish Epic the time of rest begins in Tablet Six, line 47 in which an amazing temple is build for Marduk. Once it was made the gods celebrated and from line 122 through to the end of Tablet Seven Marduk is glorified with fifty names. The names describe Marduk and praise the many wonderful things he did during this narrative. In the Genesis Creation narrative the Seventh day is named the day of rest. In Genesis 2:3 it says,

“So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation”

The differences are between these texts is that Marduk is praised by all and is given fifty names and a temple, the God of the Genesis narrative is one day of rest as He was satisfied with His work proclaiming it “very good.”

The roles of the gods or God and man are significantly different in these two texts beginning with the creation of man the significance of how they were made really determines their role in life and in relationship with the gods or God. The Enuma Elish shows that it was actually Ea who created man not Marduk, however Marduk did propose the idea of man, in Tablet Six, line 1-46. In the text Ea is said to have made man from the blood of Kingu who was the partner in Tiamat’s revenge against the other gods. Later on, man is seen to have become slaves to the gods and serve them by working the land and become providers for the gods. Heidel states “In full agreement with these divine aims, man’s creation was conceived and executed not as an end in itself or as a natural sequel to the formation of the rest of the universe but rather as an expedient to satisfy a group of discontented gods. Man’s purpose in life was to be the service of the gods.” In Genesis however God creates man out of the earth, which is stated in Chapter 3:19 “…until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return.” God had also designed them in His image, which is stated in Chapter 1:26-27. God then instructed for the man and woman he created “Be fruitful and multiply... I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.” This is the opposite of the Enuma Elish Epic showing that God is the provider for His creation. There is a great reversal of roles in these two texts. The connection between the way man is created and their role towards the gods or God is very simple. The god Ea makes man out of a rebel god, a god who had done wrong against the others. So that makes what is created out of it rebels as well who should serve rather than be served. However the God of the Genesis narrative creates man out of the earth He created which was good and He made man in His image which was very good, so God sees them as His children which He needs to provide for. Still Heidel does make note the “Both in Enuma Elish and in Genesis 1:1-2:3 the formation of man constitutes the final act of creation... Moreover, both account contain clear indications of the high importance of the act.”

The Babylonian Epic of Creation, Enuma Elish, does illuminate the Genesis text in its importance and detail. The Epic shows a number of flaws in its comparison to the Hebrew Scripture of Creation as the similarities are only very few. The Genesis narrative shows a most powerful interpretation through comparing the differences rather than the similarities because it shows a much simpler but powerful creation story rather than the conflict between deities in the Enuma Elish Epic. The interpretation of both texts has changed in which the Enuma Elish Epic is now been challenged rather than the Genesis narrative.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

TEXTS
NRSV Bible

SECONDARY SOURCES
In July this year, members of staff gathered in the library for a webinar about a (new?) program called Code Club Australia (CCA). Being based in NSW the session was presented by Ian Wedlock (Teacher Trainer Manager), who roughly outlined what the program is. In a nutshell the CCA is inherently supportive with the national STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) push for educators. The program is really just the facilitation of coding curriculum, training for volunteers/teachers and support for coding clubs to be run. CCA is supported by Telstra, Australian Government, Vivant, Seven West Media, Sphero and Twitter Australia.

A much better outline of the program is given by Vivant, which says;

**CODE CLUB AUSTRALIA**
Code Club is a network of volunteer and educator-lead coding clubs for Aussie kids aged between 9-11 created to teach computational thinking.

Code Club offers projects for volunteers to lead at after school coding clubs, as well as training to prepare teachers to bring coding into the classroom today. One hour a week, more than 15,000 students across the country enjoy hour long projects in schools, libraries and community centres building skills and confidence around digital technologies.

**BACKGROUND**
Since 2013 Vivant has been working with universities as part of our CSR program to take on interns and nurture talent from an early age, teaching core skills in teamwork, creating validated opportunities and developing skills under lean and agile principles. As the move towards an innovation nation gains momentum, the development of talent in this sector is paramount for the future success of our nation.

The natural extension to our program was to introduce children to technology and teach them skills that would excite them to create. Vivant are proud to support Code Club Australia on their continued journey to bring strong problem solving skills and relevant technologies to every child for free through this not-for-profit programme.

**TEACHING CODE TO KIDS**
In a very short time, Code Club Australia has quickly become the fastest growing and largest group of coding clubs in Australia, teaching kids code through the creation of games, animations and websites.

Since formally launching in 2015, Code Club has launched in every state, established 400 clubs and currently serves 15,000 (and growing!) Aussie kids, 52% of whom are girls. Code Club is committed to diversifying interest in STEM careers in Australia, and creating more opportunities for Australian innovation to flourish for the next generation.

Recently Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull acknowledged the Code Club team and stated his support behind the initiative, which will determine a stronger economic future powered by innovation and disruptive technologies.

Code Club Australia has successfully raised continued funding from the Federal Government, Telstra Foundation and Google Education to secure its operations for the next 12-24 months and continues to seek partners as they grow and expand further into rural and remote Australia.

What does this mean for Marian? Well hopefully it will mean that some of our 16 feeder primary schools will get involved and give opportunities for coding to interested students. As we already use one of the softwares in the program, namely Scratch, with our Year 8 Computers classes we will continue to do this. We could change the sequence so that Year 7s get to program and the 8’s and Year 9/10 electives may go on with some of the other more technical coding such as CSS, HTML or Python. All the possibilities lie before us.

The exciting part to coding is that students love it. Once they realize that they can determine the outcome. With motivation the options for students to work across traditional disciplines are too easy. Once an idea is formed for a project students have to think rationally, logically, critically, creatively, etc. to complete it. The concreteness of having the game, animation or website at the end is really rewarding for them. To leave your with a practical question. What project ideas, themes, topics, assignments could be done with coding for your subject?
THE CULTURE OF LEARNING AT MARIAN COLLEGE

Our Commitment to Learning
We encourage excellence and perseverance in learning
We strive for continuous improvement.

Classroom Expectations

- Trial and consistently build into our teaching the five strands of Dylan Wiliam's model from Formative Engagement:
  - Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
  - Evidence of learning
  - Feedback for Learning
  - Peer Supported learning
  - Self Regulated learning

- Know the students as learners
- Punctual commencement of classes
- Provide a variety of tasks in each lesson
- Respect the learning environment
- Set high standards and expectations re student preparation, behavior, engagement and work standards
- Prompt return of assessed student work
- Set homework related to the class-work and check homework tasks when due
- Implement consequences for breaches of the Student Learning Action Statement

Student Learning- Action Statement

I WILL:

- Learn in every lesson
- Come prepared for every lesson in attitude and action
- Respect the learning environment
- Respect the rights of others to learn
- Accept new challenges
- Persevere and complete all tasks to the best of my ability
- Accept feedback as a chance to grow