

Sabbatical Report

Educational Change in Years 11 to 13

Critique on Current Practice and ideology and a Proposal for Change

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Introduction

The purpose of this sabbatical was twofold. First, to critique the current educational ideas concerning High School curriculum, particularly Years 11 to 13. Second, based on that critique, to put together a general proposal for educational provision at High School. The topic came out of our school's current situation. We have Year 1 to 10 students and are looking to increase provision to include Year 11 to 13.

Sabbaticals are not PhDs. My research has taken me to too few sources, but some very important ones:

- Books and publications by NZ academics and international authors
- Three high schools in Singapore, four large area schools in Sydney and five area schools in New Zealand, ranging in size from 105 to 430 pupils
- One technical college in Singapore
- A number of conferences, most recently the 2018 INTASE conference in Singapore
- Wikipedia research of philosophers, in particular Leotard, Plato and Dewey
- Biblical concepts on education, truth, knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Being a Christian, this is my foundational resource. I treat the Bible as infallible; knowing that people, myself included, are fallible in their interpretations.

This report is a summary of what I have learnt. I have a significant amount of notes taken but have attempted to keep things concise so as to be useful. You can be the judge if the goal has been achieved.

Our Journey So Far

We (ACS school leadership) have been considering arguments for educational change for some time. It was both hard to define but somehow exciting; even unsettling and confusing. There appeared to be a lot of noise, fluff and dead ends, but little substance. We waded on through the confusion, even bought some MLE furniture. We ran a few trials or experiments, dabbling without committing. All the time we were trying to find a common thread, a theory, an idea or two, that seemed to draw all these things together.

You would think that we should first be convinced of the need for change and then begin the process of change. It didn't work like that for us. The 'why, what and how' were learnt together. Sometimes we cannot see the benefit of something, its true value, until we give it a go. Then a new pathway in the creative mind opens up, and more possibilities are seen.

After some years of engaging with the ideas (conferences, books, school visits and experiments), we started to become convinced that the 'thing of substance' was staring us in the face all along; the Key Competencies (KCs). These are the soft skills that students would need in our ever-changing world. Later we would 'discover' the concept of Personalised Learning.

KCs were developed as a central part of the NZC, along with values, subjects, principles. The KCs are described in the NZ Curriculum as 'Capabilities for living and life-long learning' (New Zealand

Curriculum, 2007, p.12). Each Competency can be defined as a cluster of capabilities. “A ‘capability’ is demonstrated in action. It is what the student shows they can do—and is willing to do—as a result of their learning.” (Hipkins, 2017, p.1).

KCs, or soft skills, have had international endorsement as well. Both Andy Hargreaves, and Mark Treadwell have developed their own sets as part of their global curriculums.

In NZ schools, it appears that the KCs were mostly noted but not embraced for many years. Initially, perhaps, it was hard to know what to do with them when they were only generally defined and not accompanied with much PLD. While compulsory they could easily be passed off as ‘integrated’ without specifically being taught. They are problematic to assess, and we always love to assess. How are they taught anyway?

At ACS, the idea of KCs being central to education was tested with a number of educational leaders and the staff in our school. There was agreement that this was of central importance in the change debate, and critical to a good education in today’s world. We began to change, most notably by introducing concept-based learning and inquiry-based learning (through PLD with NZCER and EduKate) as well as experimenting with project-based learning.

As we implemented changes, we began to see other benefits, most notably student engagement and self-direction. We had begun the journey of personalised learning, particularly at Years 7 and 10.

But even now, as we have made these changes, we are finding we have to be drawn back to consider the place and influence of other parts of the NZC; namely the subjects and values along with the principles that lie under our decision making in these areas. This focus back is particularly important as we look into Senior Secondary education.

Summary of Arguments

Why change is needed

There has been a great deal of talk on educational change in the last few decades. Change has always been there. There is now, in the minds of some, a special urgency to it. The ageless aim remains; to prepare our children for the world they are growing up into. But the world is, apparently, a rapidly changing, unpredictable place. The only certainty is change. The argument follows that education must change to suit.

There are three significant aspects of societal change that are drivers for educational change; economic, environmental and sociological.

Some would argue that technology is a fourth driver. However, in my view, it sits apart from the others. This is because the other three have a clearly stated vision for change. Technology does not in or of itself. It is more of a tool to achieve other visions. But tools themselves still influence simply because they bear the imprint of the makers’ values. We may shape them but, without care, they will come to shape us as the smart phone is already doing, and the clock has already done. In fact, the advancement has been so rapid of late that we barely have time to reflect on the influence the advancements are having on the way we think, behave or solve problems. Consequently, I believe we need to view technology as a value laden tool and use it with cautious optimism.

There is another angle on technology as a driver for change, which I wish to refute. We have always had technology playing a role in shaping change and so nothing is different in that sense. However, for some, the technologies create opportunities to solve our social ills in ways we never dreamed of before. The trouble with this view is that people are the same as they have always been. They will take whatever tool and use it for good or ill. The same good versus evil battle rages with the new

tools. In fact, the technologies have contributed to both the ills and solutions. Regardless of how we see it we need our knights of valour skillfully wielding the modern weapons in the new digital world.

Now for the other three drivers of change. **Firstly, the economic.** Advancements in technology mean the industrial age economy has been superseded by what Gilbert calls the Knowledge Society. It is out with masses of people working on production lines and in with job markets that require soft skills such as creativity, collaboration and problem solving; out with managers and their subordinates and in with society needing all people to have those skills. Knowledge now has no intrinsic value. Its value lies in what it does. It is either a commodity that is traded or a tool for problem solving. Consequently, there is no knowledge more valuable than any other knowledge, giving rise to phrases such as “just in time knowledge”, though I don’t hear academics using this. Most significantly for schools, knowledge is so easily accessed that the traditional task of schools downloading knowledge into the minds of students is now unnecessary¹.

Gardner’s intelligences fit the new thinking well. All intelligences are equal in value and importance and usefulness in the problem-solving process. Note there is no empirical evidence for Gardner’s theory. Therefore, its credibility is accorded by the philosophy of the age alone. This brings us to the second driver.

The second change driver is sociological. In philosophical terms we define the societal change as moving from modernity to post-modernity; these being either two distinct ages or the second being the natural outworking of the first. Trust in the science and democracy of the modernist is eroding. Uniformity is more thoroughly replaced by individualism. Equality is no longer sameness but different people having their needs met as different people (Maori as Maori, transgender as transgender, women as women). Any sense of objective truth still left with the modernists is further diminished. Truth is now individualised as much as our consumerism is. We talk of values, not truth. In fact, we talk of values apart from truth². In essence, we continue to strive for a better society, but through the vision given to us by the post-modernist.

The third driver is environmental. It could be argued this is one aspect of the sociological change, but I keep it separate here. Clearly, we are treating the planet poorly. There is a growing conscience and sense of responsibility that has moved beyond a few championing groups and into the mainstream.

So what is needed to address these change drivers? Gilbert sites a 2001 report by the Science and Innovation Advisory Council. It suggest four main things we need to work on (Gilbert, 2005, p.36-37):

1. Cultures of innovation – in all industries
2. Cultural mass – enough people with the knowledge and skills
3. Triple bottom line – all innovations must consider social, environmental and economic impacts and benefits
4. Investment in ICT – in people and in education generally.

¹ For example, recently an eight-year-old student made their own sun dial and a fifteen-year-old student his own aluminium smelter; both at home and without reference to school, or reading, for that matter. Thanks You Tube. A Year 10 pupil in our school who is studying Senior Secondary Physics. He is passionate and enthused. The initiating event was ‘free time’ at school after completing set work, and he has continued research in his own time. A teacher was unnecessary in both motivation and content provision. All the content needed for learning is freely available online and other easily accessible resources. There are also plenty of people available to critique his work effectively, not all of them teachers. Further, (homeschooling) students can gain university entrance without NCEA or an equivalent.

² For example, traits such as humility and self-denial are considered virtues even by capitalists and uniformitarians. However, the philosophical underpinnings of capitalists and uniformitarians more accurately define those traits as vices.

These four proposed responses have implications for all of society. It logically follows that they necessitate change in education and schools. In this next section I summarise four changes to education that are a likely result of above discussion.

Changes for Education

Soft Skills

The first significant change is towards a focus on teaching soft skills such as thinking, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, and relating to others. The situations created for learning these skills need to be as real to life as possible (think project or phenomenon-based learning, or innovations such as Guy Claxton's *Building Learning Power*) so they can make the transition to the new workforce.

Knowledge

Second, given the arguments above, we should change the way we see knowledge. Facts or topics now become the context for learning the soft skills. We no longer need to know a pre-defined set of facts held in the traditional subjects. Rather we need to understand how the domains of knowing function. For example, we don't need to know any particular scientific facts but only how the field of Science generally works. This is so that, when we need certain Scientific knowledge, we know how to go about finding it. Assessment is no longer focused on regurgitating facts, but on the process and outcomes of creative problem solving. Further, evaluation of the process is for the improvement of soft skills aiding future problem solving.

Structure

Third, changes in the way we see knowledge have led to arguments for wholesale structural changes. One such view is that we need to rid ourselves of subject divisions within schools and, instead, focus on problem-solving real-world issues; economic, environmental or social. Learning is holistic. The traditional subjects are now domains of knowing available to us to draw on to solve these real-world problems but should not be the starting point of what we seek to do in schools.

Agency

Fourth, as mentioned, we should allow for the fact that students no longer rely solely, or possibly primarily, on schools for their learning. More than ever, teachers must come to terms with the fact that they are only a part of the picture and should be more aware of the child's whole education. This concept is not a new one but is more amplified. Teachers must realise that students with the will and resource can research and discover everything they need or want to know.

Change With Improvement

Since change is a constant educational reality, and as much now as ever, I wish to make a few comments on the process of change.

Vivian Robinson, in a Radio NZ interview, was commenting on the NZ educational review under way in 2018/2019. She made the simple yet profound point that all change should lead to improvement. Robinson argued for a very careful analysis of what is being done, and what is and is not working, needs to be conducted before careful steps can be made towards change. Unfortunately, this advice is not always followed. Educationalists, and politicians can all too easily catch the bug of innovation and change or be swayed by political advantage rather than sound thinking. I have come across some stories that illustrate this which I include in appendix two.

Jane Gilbert, in *Riding the Knowledge Wave*, uses theories of deconstruction to explain a similarly considered approach to change. Deconstruction involves understanding why we place a high value on something. After identifying the surface level justifications, we explore the deeper level ideas

behind it. If we find the ideas are not valid, we go about making changes. She uses it to deconstruct the traditional approach to teaching subjects, as was referred to above, and then propose some possible ways forward.

The processes above can be summed in a principle of education Howard Moses shared at a conference I attended a few years back; “Do not tear down educational walls³ without having others to replace them.” In the very least such a principle tempers fad and reduces them to trials.

We must also recognize that, in most cases, what we currently do has value, so there is no rush to change. It may not be where we want to be. It may have flaws. But it still has value. Let’s take our time.

Putting that all together looks like this:

1. What we are currently doing still has value and is a load bearing wall. Don’t tear it down without a well-built replacement.
2. Because of 1), change can have the luxury of taking time. It can even produce a few failed experiments without compromising the integrity of the whole. We can afford to be considered, evenly paced, honour teachers who are slow adopters, valuing their many other contributions, go at the rate that teachers’ energy and sanity allows, bring our parents and pupils along for the journey, experiment, be relaxed about failed experiments, and build systems for long term sustainability.

But there is one more step that my study has brought into view. It is a step backwards into the world of philosophy that I believe every educationalist should take. This is because not doing so will leave us open to taking on fine sounding ideas that unwittingly lead to places we don’t want to go. We are busy and there are plenty of people saying, ‘do this’ or ‘stop doing that’. There are middle-men saying, ‘buy this programme’. It is tempting to run with the ideas and programmes without due diligence into the underlying philosophies and, if the philosophies are sound, working out if they have been properly applied. Such failure is a risk to our pupils.⁴

This is what the next section is about – an attempt to discern and critique the presuppositions or world views underlying the arguments for change.

Critique of Ideology

In this section I am primarily dealing with beliefs. My recent experiences require it. Having visited 12 schools, four each in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand, and having read a number of books, I have come to see that educational debate should be governed by a chain of command. Without this chain of command, we will be blown and tossed about.

1. Clarity of Belief
2. Clarity of Moral Purpose
3. Theories or convictions on key issues
4. Practices⁵

³ A metaphorical statement, but could well provide wisdom in classroom design

⁴ The clearest current example of this is MLEs. Anecdotally I have noted an increasing number of MLE refugees from schools where the practice has not been properly investigated before being implemented. See Appendix Two for some examples.

⁵ Julia Aikin lists the priorities in this order: 1) Core values and beliefs, 2) Principles, 3) Practices. I have split beliefs from values because of the conviction that beliefs do, in fact, help define and prioritise what we value and so need to be considered in turn.

In considering what we believe, these are some of the more popular belief systems educationalists may adhere to:

1. Secular Humanist
2. Material Humanist / Marxist
3. Cosmic Humanist
4. Theistic Christianity
5. Theistic Islam
6. Pantheism
7. Post-Modernism⁶

It is essential here to point out three things about any belief:

1. Every belief begins with a faith commitment, that cannot be proved but is taken to be true.
2. Beliefs are mutually exclusive
3. The dominant belief in any culture does not require justification but demands all other beliefs to justify themselves
4. Despite differences in belief there will still be convergence in practices

I will briefly demonstrate the three lists above (chain of command, beliefs, nature of beliefs), in action through a conversation I had.

At a recent conference, an academic from a NZ university gave a strong argument for the need for educational change, very similar to that summarised above. In her view, it all boiled down to children needing the skills, competencies and capabilities for life-long learning. There was no vision as to why they needed those skills. It may have been taken to be self-evident, but I thought I would ask her after the presentation why they needed those skills. The initial responses were those such as 'so they can do well', 'so they can succeed'. Everyone can agree with such goals. We then got to the penultimate answer, 'So they can have choice'. 'And why do they need choice?', 'So they can live what Dewey termed 'the good life'.' That was the sum of it. A good life presumably includes such things as a good job, holidays, good health, being safe and having good relationships. We could argue, as Gilbert does, that it also means social justice, preserving the planet and economic independence.

This all seems ubiquitous enough and hard to disagree with. But I would argue that it only appears that way because it is the dominant view of our culture. Being of a Christian mind-set I would argue a good life is to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. We should act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God, being stewards of the planet and witnesses for Christ. Working back from that, having choice is valuable, but not nearly so important and seeking out God's will for our lives. Further, the purpose of the skills and competencies is so that we may better serve and worship God and serve others. The good life includes a thorough embracing of self-denial, service and humility. This view of the world is strange to the dominant modern/post-modern paradigm.

I have had personal experience of people finding the idea of a Christian school, or a Muslim one for that matter, objectionable because it does not promote all religions as equal. However, the moment anyone claims we must teach all religions as equal; they have made a mutually exclusive claim that their modern/post-modern view of the world is the only truth. The dominant view demands justification of others but does not require that of itself.

⁶ Noebel, *The Battle For Truth*.

This is true in the literature as well. Gilbert, for example, extensively critiques the platonic and subsequent modernist view of the world and education. She then describes post-modernity, demonstrating how it is behind much of the change we see. She builds her educational philosophy on it; but nowhere does she critique it in any detail, giving the impression that its validity is self-evident. The work of critique is left up to us. But it is work we must not avoid. We owe it to our children. What a tragedy it would be if we rejected one view of the world in favour of a new one, only to find the new one, when it is old, fails also.

I labour this point because almost all of the literature I have read on changes in education is based on post-modern presuppositions.

A Critique of Post-Modernity, The New Dictator

So here is my layman's critique of post-modernism, my views somewhat revealed through the title of this section. Argue back as much as you like. Debate is healthy.

Post-modernity like all views of the world is exclusive in its claims and in competition with others. All world views are competing rather than complementary because each, by nature, proclaims itself to be the only true world view. This is important to understand. Think of the secular humanist who says that all religions are equal, as alluded to earlier. They will not tolerate any religion that says they are the only true religion. The irony is they have just done the same. In declaring all religions equal, they have turned each of them into a deli-bar offering by rejecting each religion's claim to exclusivity. The only exclusive claim left is his; that all other beliefs are equal. All world views are exclusive, including the secular humanist.

The post-modern view on the world seeks to remedy this in some way. The post-modern philosopher Leotard goes so far as to say that there are now *no grand narratives* in the western world but many narratives intermingling. These narratives must learn to live alongside each other. This leads to arguments such as the need to celebrate difference and drive for equity, with the equity undefined because 'equal' means different things to different people. "But that's ok", goes the argument, "We can live with that and see where it takes us." In this way post-modernity sets itself up as a panacea to the conflicts of pluralism.

I don't claim to be a great philosopher, but I believe Leotard's claim, and the subsequent social construction, to be utterly ridiculous because it is itself a new grand-narrative, albeit a covert one. It is a truth claim that there is no truth, the ultimate self-defeating answer to belief. The arguments do not heed the rebuke of CS Lewis in *The Abolition of Man*, that all thought must subject itself to a form of the Tao, or substantive truth. He writes: "The rebellion of new ideologies against the *Tao* is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed, they would find that they have destroyed themselves. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in" (Lewis, 1944, p.44).

In reality, in accepting post-modernity, we accept a new grand narrative. It claims to tolerate all views until any view claims to be true. Ironically, this is not tolerance at all. What it fails to appreciate is that there can be no tolerance without disagreement (hence the book *The Intolerance of Tolerance* by D A Carson). This new controlling influence shuts down opinion. It has led to 'everyone's rights' being embraced; all except those who adhere to a moral code that judges any action of another to be wrong. It is exclusive. Islam, Materialism, Humanism and Christianity all do the same. They are all exclusive. So post-modernity, in the guise of bringing peace, becomes the new dictator, if we let it.

The Place of Love

The answer to the milieu of pluralism is not post-modernity. It is love. Post-modernity will not tolerate anything that attacks its supremacy. Love breaks past this exclusivity, and the exclusivity of other views as well.

You may like to think back to Israel Folau who has courted controversy in expressing an opinion that is unpopular but, according to his world view, true. He attacked no one personally, though many, understandably, felt personally wounded. I won't debate the wisdom of his comments.

There were two types of responses. Some expressed their disagreement with Folau in respectful ways. Others expressed their disgust and outrage and gave vent to their anger. The first were loving, respectful and tolerant in their response, agreeing to disagree. Few saw the irony in the response of this second group, that they were utterly intolerant themselves, and more virulent in their response than the nature in which the comments were first made.

Love, on the other hand, will maintain respect through disagreement, giving freedom to express different views. It is from this position that we are then able to have a proper debate. Love will force us to seek an understanding and sympathy for other narratives. Only then can we begin to answer the important questions about problems, solutions, hope, purpose, identity, truth, and knowledge. That is, perhaps, what Leotard was envisaging.

Of course, the other solution is that we all agree to one belief, something quite impossible and for which there is no appetite, for it requires enforcement. We do need to caution about this. Political Correctness is beginning on the path of being legislated.

Converging Practice

Despite our many exclusive world views, there will be significant cross-over in practice of people from all world views for two reasons. First, because philosophy does not prescribe a way of educating in great detail, but merely the vision and purpose. Second, because we are living in the same world at the same time with the same problems. There is a great deal we can all have in common and many ways we may learn from and benefit one another.

Each philosophy, however, will continue to act as a filter and interpreter of the various ideas, shaping it to its belief. For the next section, I have chosen three world views and given a brief summary of how I understand the beliefs and how they respond to various aspects in the chain of command.

Ideology, Truth, Knowledge and Purpose

Modernity, Post-Modernity and the Judeo-Christian world views are, arguably, the ideologies that have had or are having the most significant impact on education in New Zealand today. The Table below explores the chain of command, mingling beliefs, values, theories, principles and a little practice. I include this here as it provides a starting point for understanding the educational implications of each view and, in so doing, gives more weight to the importance of our ideological decision making. The table only includes generalised statements which in no way express the variance or breadth of views held within each ideology.

Table 1: Summary of Three Ideologies

Ideology → ↓ Issues	Modernist	Post-Modernist	Judeo-Christian
Purpose of life	To use the resources of the world for the advancement of this and future generations of the human race	To be stewards of the earth for this and future generations	To bring glory to God and enjoy him forever and to fulfil the creation mandate: subdue, rule and care for the earth
Purpose of Education	Master the content required for further education and a future career; chiefly serving the economy followed by social justice concerns and then care for the environment.	To identify and develop all types of gifts in all children to be used collaboratively for economic, social and environmental improvement	To identify and develop the gifts and talents of all children for the purpose of knowing and loving God, serving others and caring for creation
Education and Schooling	Schools central to children's development Learning is life-long so agency must transfer to the pupil in time Schools sort children into academic/future leaders and manual/labourers	All of life is learning and schools support that learning Learning is life-long so agency must transfer to the pupil as soon as possible	All of life is learning and parents are chiefly responsible for a child's education Learning is life-long so agency must transfer from parents to pupil in time
Truth	Whatever can be objectively and scientifically verified is true. Rejection of supernatural realm and any truth outside of the physical. All other beliefs may contain truth but are not wholly true	Truth cannot be known. Rejection of Science as objective. May allow for the supernatural but rejects any religion as being the sole source of truth All other beliefs may contain truth but are not wholly true	God is Truth. His Word is truth. God is outside of the created order and so is the source of truth All other beliefs may contain truth but are not wholly true
Knowledge	Facts or understandings have intrinsic value and practical value. Something Believed, Justified and True (Plato)	A useful commodity. Meaningless without practical use. Knowledge is something we do, or at least a tool to do things with, particularly advance the world economically, environmentally and socially.	Facts or understandings have intrinsic value because through them we gain enjoyment, come to understand the character and nature of God, worship God, and serve God and man in practical ways.
Value of Knowledge	Some knowledge has higher value than other knowledge. Language and Logic or Mathematical are the highest because of their usefulness in communication of ideas and scientific and technological advancement.	No knowledge is intrinsically more valuable than any other knowledge. One parallel argument is that we ought to value all people and talents equally	Language, then Mathematics or logic have particular value because through them we know God's word and learn of his creation Arts have value as they are a way to express praise Technology has value in its use of 'subduing the earth'

Schools and Knowledge	Schools are places to gain knowledge within the different curriculum areas. Mastery is the goal to serve the purposes above. Intelligence is rated against how well you master the material, and is competitive in nature (eg; bell curve)	Schools are places where children learn to solve problems and create solutions to the achieve the purposes above. Knowledge is a tool in that process and only needs to be learnt where problem solving requires it.	Schools are places that support the parents in helping children to see God through knowledge gained about him and his creation for the purposes above. Knowledge is both a tool for problem solving and facts to draw us to worship.
Educational Vision for Change	Carry on as we are. Subjects remain separate and mastery of each is the goal of learning. Ranking of certain subjects over others remains	Re-think structure. Shift from subject-knowledge learning to Key Competencies for the purposes of life-long learning. This can be achieved through innovations such as PBL or Real-Life Problem-Solving scenarios, or Phenomenon based learning	Determine and study knowledge that reveals the wonders of God's created order. Subjects are useful in that they help organize that knowledge but teaching must be focused on awe and wonder. Focus on Key Competencies for the purpose of being stewards of that knowledge. This can be achieved through innovations such as PBL or Real-Life Problem-Solving scenarios, or Phenomenon based learning.
Ranking of Skills, Subjects or Intelligences	Literacy, Logic (Mathematics) and Science are the keys to understanding and advancement. Arts are emotive and so are a luxury extra	All intelligences are of equal value and should be valued equally.	In the beginning God spoke everything into being and so language is the pre-eminent subject. Mathematics and Science and the Arts help us to understand God and his world and are means for discovery and worship.

Philosophical Implications for Senior Secondary

The Judeo-Christian World View is selected as the basis for philosophical arguments in this section. These will underpin the Senior Secondary proposal presented later. In case there are objections to taking this worldview, I would point the reader to the supreme post-modern principle of tolerance. Also note that different views can enrich one another and that philosophical discussions are, by nature, on-going and ever developing.

Purposeful End Goals

The end goal of learning must serve a purpose. Postman (1995), in his book 'The End of Education' makes a strong argument for this need, and how this essential to education. "I mean to suggest", he says, "that without a transcendent and honourable purpose, schooling must reach its finish, and the sooner we are done with it, the better" (p.xi). He proceeds to argue for purposes ('gods' little 'g') that have failed and ones that may serve.

At ACS our purpose is to live out a life aligned with the vision of the Special Character, to the glory of God and the service of others. Such an education is motivational and aspirational. That purpose then needs to link to serving through our chosen careers. Thus, careers become a means to a greater end.

Careers Focused

If you don't work, you don't eat, except by the charity of others. High School, therefore, must be about careers, but never at the expense of its chief end. Rather, career aspirations are set within the context of the chief end.

Character and Values Formation

In order to serve wholeheartedly, young people must have the character that leads to an ability and desire to serve. Such a character includes humility, kindness, gentleness, self-control, perseverance, resilience, self-denial and many other such fundamental and indispensable traits. Education should be deliberate about teaching and providing opportunities to develop these.

Spiritual Formation

This is principally done in the home but secondarily supported, encouraged and developed by close family friends and institutions such as church and school. It is not coercion but influence. Where there is coercion the most likely outcomes are rebellion or legalistic fanaticism. From this basis we will support children in developing a vision for life, in line with our Special Character, a vision that takes seriously the Judeo-Christian values of the home including humility, service and love for God and our neighbour.

Soft Skills/Key Competencies

Learning must be designed to enhance each student's Key Competencies, as these are critical to realising our purpose. This implies that there should be assessment (more likely qualitative) along with deliberate teaching and goal setting.

Competencies are also critical in that they give power to character. They must take a place of central importance, even at High School. High Schools need to create opportunities for developing the KCs in authentic contexts; not tokenistic, but deliberate and planned and sophisticated. This will equip them for the current age.

Knowledge Defined

Knowledge has intrinsic value. It is not just a thing. Rather, we engage with it in relationship. We offer a commitment to learn and it offers us insights into understanding, wisdom and social action. It leads to positive emotions of awe and wonder that lead us to praise or enlightenment; or negative

emotions such as frustration and indignation that lead to positive social action. Further, knowledge provides the muscles to the bones of conceptual understanding. Without it, understanding has no context, no story to give it meaning. Finally, the knowledge we gain is essential for forming our identity and so the selection of which knowledge we learn, particularly in the humanities, requires discernment.

Conceptual Understanding

The world is conceptually designed and can be conceptually understood, a capability that is uniquely human. These realities have their origin in mankind being created in God’s image. Therefore, education should elucidate these realities and teach children to be conceptual thinkers. Those who are meta-cognitively aware of concepts and can apply that knowledge to varying situations and across disciplines, can be powerful problem solvers.

Personalised Learning

Learning must be tailored to the student holistically, giving consideration to the many aspects of their identity. Figure 1 shows some of the significant aspects that make up individuals, though reality is not so neatly arranged as a pie chart.

Some aspects are more specifically related to the purposes of schools. However, none can be ignored in the development of a personalised learning model. For example, consider Student A. She has a general idea of purpose and particular gifts in the Sciences. But she also has a specific learning need in literacy, a weakness in relating to others and comes from a minority cultural background. All realities will feed into a plan for learning.

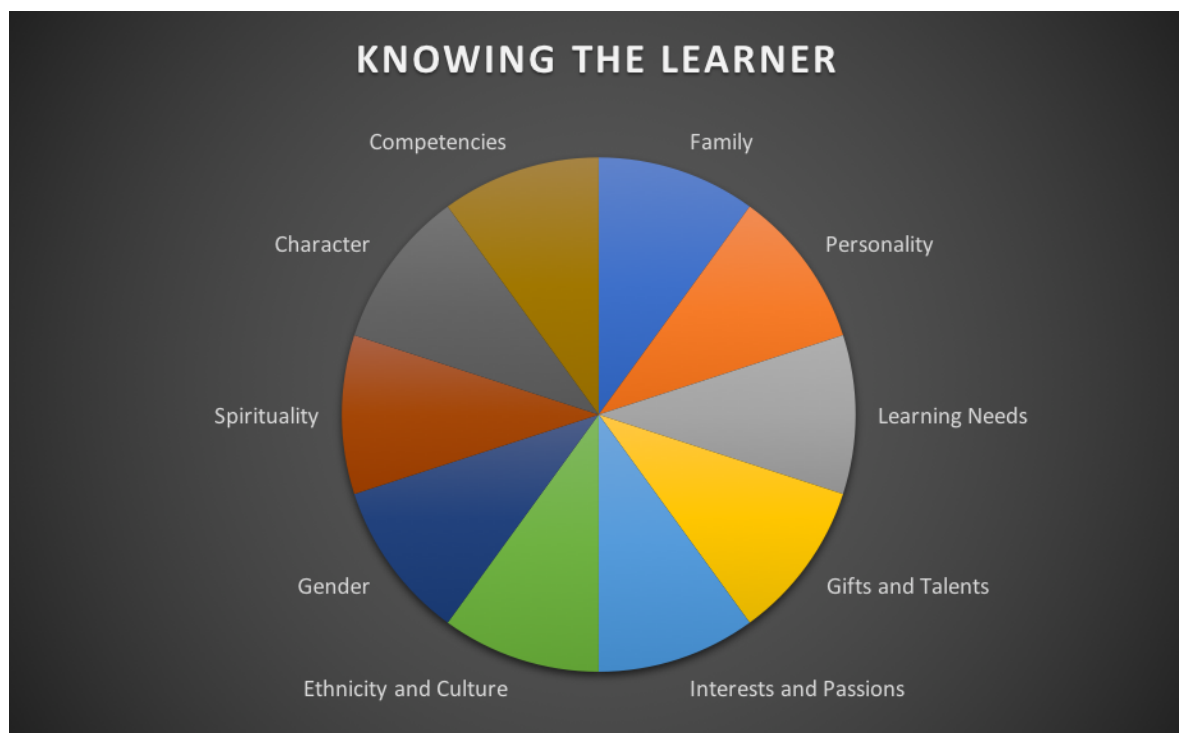


Figure 1: Aspects of a Learner

Collaborative Learning

Note that Personalised Learning does not mean individualised learning. Every child needs to engage in collaborative learning to some extent, for their benefit and for the group’s. It is both a need for learning now, and collaborative problem solving in their future contexts. It strongly links to the KCs. All this considered, collaborative learning needs to be a part of any personalised learning model.

Structure

The structure of the curriculum needs to serve each of the aspects above. Therefore, curriculum design and school systems need to be flexible enough, and primarily designed, to support the needs of the learners, with sufficient structure to ensure learning is taking place.

All Subjects are not Equal

God spoke the world into being. He communicates in two ways - His Word and His creation - special revelation and general revelation. Language, the giving (writing, speaking and presenting) and receiving (listening, reading and viewing), is, therefore, of superior importance to other knowledge and skills because of the access it gives us to God's Word and also a chief means for mankind to explore, discover, praise, encourage, correct, rebuke, train and bless.

Following that, any subject that helps us understand creation, and how to live wisely in it, or to express praise, is of great value. This includes all other subjects. The Arts are an intrinsic part of what it means to be human. They give outlets for expressing awe and wonder and offering worship and praise to the creator. They are also a means for influencing social change, and for delighting and loving fellow mankind. They may, in some cases, lead to a career. Mathematics, Science and Technology (STEM) have become critical to many careers and are direct expressions of how the mind of God works as evidenced in creation. And the humanities give insight, warning and direction to the STEM innovations or ideas we might choose to pursue or resist, giving a vision for their proper use. Physical Education and Health are chief concerns in the Bible, the body being called the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Proposal for Year 11 to 13 Curriculum

This final section is written as part of our application to extend provision at ACS to Year 13, hence the change to more formal wording.

Personalised Learning

“And we urge you ... warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14

The central feature of the curriculum delivery will be the design and establishment of a personalised learning model. The model proposed here will be developed further over time but reflects current thinking. It begins with a Purpose and Vision that leads to consideration of career pathways, consideration of KCs, the learning plan (including tasks and assessments) and goal setting.

Throughout the process, the goal is that the student becomes the leader in their own learning, gaining increasing independence in this. The teacher is not only a teacher but also a facilitator and partner in their learning.



Figure 2: Personalised Learning Process - Mark 1

Purpose and Vision

Through interviews with the Local Support Team (see below), students will discuss issues related to purpose, gifts and talents and likely careers. These will take into consideration all aspects of the young person’s identity as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Career Pathways

By Year 11, and earlier for some, students should have the benefit of individually constructed career pathways. These will take into consideration the gifts and talents, passions and interests of a student. The process will begin in the Middle School years, depending on the developmental maturity of each child, and be built on over the following years. Key stakeholders should have input into that construction including the student, caregiver, school and, directly or indirectly, people from industries or fields the student is considering working in.

Competencies and Capabilities

Assessing or evaluating each student's strengths, needs and next steps in developing Capabilities for Life-Long Learning will allow them to gain increasing independence in managing their long term, yearly, termly, weekly and daily goals.

Building a Personalised Learning Plan

Based on the demands of the learning pathways, and also the needs of the whole child, build a personalised learning plan for every year 11 to 13 student, and possibly Year 9 or 10 students. Rather than being bound to a subject with its usual set of units or standards, there will be the ability to select assessment tasks that best suit the personalised learning plan. Students, when ready, will be given increased agency in the development of learning experiences.

Setting Goals

This is building on goal setting strategies already in place in the younger years. The purpose is that they gain independence in this area. Long, medium, and short-term goals will be developed. The long-term goals relate to purpose and careers. Mid-term goals work towards entering vocational or tertiary pathways. Short term goals relate to the current term, week and day.

The goals would be developed with a consideration of the whole child so could include any of the aspects in Figure 2. As an example, a child strong in the Sciences, but who struggles in collaboration will have academic learning goals in his area of gifting, but a learning programme structured to build his capacity to collaborate.

Collaborative and Individual Learning

Personalised learning is not individualised learning. In the development of learning plans, it is important for development of competencies that students continue to have rich and meaningful opportunities to work in collaboration or cooperation with other students. They must grow the ability to maintain a disciplined focus on individual learning tasks. This will be planned in the following ways.

Teaching sessions

With the high value we place on knowledge, teaching curriculum content will remain an important part of the learning programme. Where the educational goals of students converge there will be combined teaching sessions. These will include, individual and group work, much the way traditional classrooms have been structured.

World Studies

With the value placed on knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and our desire for children to develop their special character values, character and vision, we propose to develop a compulsory subject, currently called World Studies. It will build on the existing Year 9-10 subject titled 'Issues' but will be more structured. It will be a central point of difference in our programme and be in line with our Special Character.

The curriculum will cover topics that aim to build a strong world view. It will be a safe place to express any world view as we are aware children do not always share the views of their parents. There will be opportunities for respectful debate and discussion and the development of thinking skills and the other competencies. It will also aim to provide purposeful opportunities for positive social action.

Assessment will be optional. The purpose here is to unfetter learning from the assessment in order to give it maximum flexibility. For students wishing to gain NCEA credits, there will be extra learning and assessment options and linked to the programme.

Project Based Learning

There are likely to be projects that draw people together and serve different students' personalised learning plans simultaneously. One such example we have already put into practice is our most recent school production, where students took on all the lead roles including script writing, directing, producing, advertising, set design and construction, technical, and costume design and making. The purpose was to impact the audience with a message on forgiveness, which was achieved with great success.

There will be consideration to the development of projects that require collaboration for a common purpose and that still meet the needs of students individually. The projects will have both a learning focus and a service component, in line with our philosophy above, that learning, and life should be linked to purposeful, altruistic outcomes.

Personal Learning Tasks

These will be naturally drawn out of the above three and out of their Personalised Learning Plan.

Local Support Teams

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14

“Without counsel, plans go awry; But in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Proverbs 15:22

In developing a personalised learning plan, each student will meet with their lead teacher (ako teacher), and a parent or caregiver. The goal is the student will take increasing levels of responsibility for actioning the plan, with support or freedoms given based on maturity levels.

The ako teacher's responsibilities will be the following:

- Co-ordinate personalised learning planning meetings
- Co-construct the plans, including bringing in key people or agencies relevant to that student.
- Monitor the students' progress
- Mentor the student in each of the five points above
- Set up and maintain robust communication systems between child, home and school. Use them to report progress against the goals of the plan
- Create and maintain links with industry

The student, caregiver and ako teacher will have the following people in support:

- Fellow senior school teachers
- Chaplain, counsellor or other such appointee
- Principal or deputy principal
- A careers advisor
- Experts in industry

This team will be jointly responsible for the pastoral care of the students, with recognition of the home as the first and most important centre for pastoral care of each child.

A programme for identification and promotion of individual Gifts and Talents will expand into the senior college years, with further opportunities given for each student to explore how to use these. Literacy Components will remain compulsory, with the option of being integrated, as communication is central to all learning and future careers.

Staffing and Resources

In considering the structure for staffing, two challenges have been identified:

1. Over-reliance on a few teachers in a small school requires greater reliance on digital technologies to offer curriculum content.
2. Digital technologies, by nature, reduce the vital relational component to good teaching and learning.

These challenges will be met by structuring staffing provisions in the following ways:

Lead Ako Teacher:

There will be a number of different ako teachers available to students to ensure a good match. Each specialist teacher could, theoretically, have a number of students.

Local specialist teachers:

These will be employed by the school. The expectation is to have teachers with specialties in each of the domains or areas of learning. A wider benefit of this in the smaller area school context is the ability to use specialist teachers across the whole school which will result in a more seamless curriculum delivery and coherent curriculum development for Year 1 through to Year 13.

Specialist teachers in other schools.

Where they don't have a particular skill, these will be filled through established links with teachers outside of the school. By way of example, if a particular specialist Mathematics teacher has a gap in trigonometry, the ACS teacher will have access to a trigonometry specialist in another school. It will be arranged that the specialist will, say, have termly visits to ACS and weekly skype sessions. The local teacher will support and monitor the setting and achievement of goals. Middleton Grange have already shown their willingness to work at this level. Note that ACS personalised learning plans allow flexibility to work in with the timetables of teachers in larger schools.

Te Kura teachers.

These may be used; but a relational model would have to be set up. If the Te Kura teacher cannot build that, the ako teacher or specialist teacher best suited, will take a closer mentoring role for that subject.

Non-teacher industry experts:

One example of this currently is being played out in Years 9-10 where an artist has been employed who has taught at Polytechnic level, though does not have a teaching degree. The home room teacher, together with the specialist, have set up a schedule of learning and assessment. Online art lessons are of a high quality and widely available for little expense. These courses are supporting the learning of basic skills and the specialist and home-room teacher are supporting the development of their portfolios of work. This has also been achieved in dance and languages and are the school is looking to develop this model to other subjects.

Student Chosen Sources:

There are many text-based and online resources to support teacher designed resources. These, together, provide rich content with robust assessment in NCEA or CENZ available. These will supplement the relational models above and be monitored by the ako teacher.

Links with Other High Schools:

There is already a spirit of cooperation, innovation and collaboration within the Mid-Canterbury district, and our links with other schools will strengthen the breadth of what is on offer. Ashburton College have already made it possible for ACS pupils to form sports teams representing Mid-

Canterbury and will share transport to Te Ara courses in Timaru. There is also openness to explore other areas of cooperation such as extra-curricular activities and possibly STAR and Gateway coordination. These links have also been established with Middleton Grange in Christchurch.

Online Learning

“There is nothing of significant value or complexity that is not greatly enhanced by learning about it either partially or wholly online. Nothing.” Dixon (2016) *The End of School As We Know it*, quoting Olsen, p17

The argument of technology being a tool that has a value laden shaping influence can be noted. But it is a tool that has become central to the learning process. It is an important servant of the learning above. But as it is value laden, it must also be understood objectively.

Currently ACS uses technology to enrich learning experiences in many subjects (See Appendix 2: Year 9 and 10 Options Board Report). Further to this, digital technologies is a compulsory part of their technology programme for the purpose of improving digital literacy and building capabilities. These programmes will be built on as Year 11-13 options.

The school aims to provide quality equipment. Year 7 to 10 students have 1:1 devices and access to school photography, robotics and video production technology. They also have access to industry standard equipment at the Ashburton Trust Event Centre.

Qualifications and Other Considerations

NCEA has incredible flexibility in offering individual learning pathways. The school intends to use that flexibility to personalise learning and ensure that each student has the credits required for vocational pathways or entrance into tertiary institutions.

School staff would continue to moderate the schools secondary programme with other schools, as has been done with Years 9-10, to ensure all career pathways remain open and that academic standards and performance are high.

Cooperation with local colleges will be important, but also wider cooperation with the New Zealand Association for Christian Schools, to offer a wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities.

The school will ensure there are work experience opportunities in industries through STAR and Gateway, and that there will be good professional relationships with the providers, as well as with local businesses.

The Graduate Profile

ACS Aspiration: Every student who graduates from the school will reflect the four key aspects of the school's Special Character vision.

Love: That graduates will have the character, will and vision to love the creator, love others in action, love creation by being its responsible stewards, and love who they have been made to be.

Know: That graduates will have a powerful personal narrative which defines who they are, where they fit in history and how they wish to live their lives for the betterment of all

Serve: That graduates understand and are committed to servant leadership, using their gifts and talents faithfully, confidently, and with humility

Impact: That through the attributes above, graduates will have made a positive impact through their learning and continue to do so in the rest of their lives.

Concluding Remarks

If anyone does happen to read this document and has some further insights or challenges that could benefit us in the journey, we would love to hear from you. There is never really appears a conclusion to the evolution of schooling.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Cautionary Vignettes on Change

Changing Pedagogy

The bug of change caught one school. They presented their innovation at a conference. The principal decided that their four Year 7/8 classes would alter teachers in Mathematics and Reading every two weeks for two reasons. First, instead of just one teacher knowing 25 children, all teachers could know all children. Second, all teachers could report to any parent on progress.

The idea seems to have been born out of other stories of open plan classrooms where five teachers taught 120 children. But in this case, both objectives had no direct bearing on learning and no justification of any benefit based on research or good practice.

What was the actual result? In talks with staff after the presentation it was clear that the workload was increased, creating fatigue. It was also clear that relationships between pupils and staff were not as deep, and that, while teachers could comment on all 100 children, they could not comment on all aspects of all learning so teachers had to spend a lot more time reviewing the assessments of other teachers before they could comment to parents about progress.

Changing Buildings

Here are three stories relating to changes in building design and their actual consequences.

(1) Our staff recently visited a new flexible learning space for primary pupils. In this school, we asked what they did when the juniors wanted to sing or dance. Singing and Dancing had been removed from the programme because of the noise disturbance to the other three quarters of the pupils.

(2) In another open plan dilemma, there was no improved engagement in learning noted. However, what was noted was poor self-managers disappearing to the furthest wall to avoid work, and the noise continuing to be a major issue. In this school, the educational philosophy was strong and making a difference, but the building was not contributing to its implementation.

(3) A group of principals, myself included, were given a tour of a new open plan school with over 400 pupils. It was ergonomically designed to reduce noise carry and had varying work spaces. We were treated to a very good description of their educational philosophy based on Julia Atkin's *Principles to Practice*. It appeared that the educational philosophy was very sound and would make a significant impact on the children's learning.

The question was put, "If you went back to single cell classrooms tomorrow, what would you lose?" The first loss was flexibility of learning spaces, though they acknowledged they hadn't worked out how to use that yet. The first two building stories illustrate that open plan is not necessarily more flexible. This was not the case here due to the design. But it wasn't yet any better than a single cell arrangement.

The second thing they would lose was transparency of teaching practice; "bad teachers can't hide". However, my experience is that schools have never had significant trouble exposing bad teaching in single cell classrooms. It may be easier in the open plan, but not much easier and no more or less possible.

In brief, this school had an excellent educational philosophy that could have worked just as well in single cell 1970s prefabs. At least in this case the buildings did not hinder learning.

Appendix 2: Year 9 and 10 Options Board Report

March 2019

This board report is aiming to update the ACS BOT in the optional subject programme in Year 9/10. It will outline each subject and give details on the special character, curriculum, assessment and resourcing. It will also suggest the next steps.

The Process

At the end of Year 8 and 9, pupils are invited to select the subjects that they would like to take in the forthcoming year. The enrolment information is distributed with the Year 9/10 handbook which contains information on each course. There is also an informal evening where parents are invited to discuss their options with their child with the Year 9/10 teacher.

At the start of 2019, pupils had 14 different subjects and a further 6 languages to choose from. For a child in Year 9, it was compulsory for a pupil to sign up to 2 languages, 1 subject in the Arts and a minimum of 5 subjects in total. For a child in Year 10, it was compulsory for a pupil to sign up to 1 language and 1 subject in the Arts and a minimum of 4 subjects in total.

In some cases, there are special circumstances and these are accommodated for through the discussions of parents and school.

In John 17, Jesus prays his longest prayer. He prays that whilst we will we will be sanctified from the world with the word, we are also to be in the world. Therefore, studying a language was made compulsory in Year 9/10, so that our pupils can be well equipped to make an impact in any culture whilst on their worldly mission. In addition, it is proven that the learning of languages can also help those pupils who find English difficult.

The Learning

Pupils are asked to manage their own learning time each week. Therefore, they are free to prioritise certain subjects if it fits with their workload. In 2 Timothy 1, we learn that the spirit of God has given us power, love and self-discipline. In 1 Corinthians 9, we find the result and the need to have self-discipline – ‘...we do it to get a crown that will last forever.’ By managing oneself and resisting temptation, we are pleasing and honouring God. Each Monday, the teacher works with the pupils to set their schedule and complete their goals (tied to Rock awards). This enables these conversations around self-discipline to take place. This allows positive conversations to happen where pupils are praised for their self-discipline and diligent endurance. It also allows for an opportunity for learning conversations to take place. When a pupil is finding it difficult to manage themselves, the teacher can help to understand why it is important to do and give them tools to allow them to progress. This is hugely beneficial for the future and is often not taught in schools.

Optional Subjects

Music	Art	Drama	Photography
Videography	History	Geography	Primary Production
Coding	Passion Pursuit	Design Tech	Graphics
Entrepreneurship	Dance		

Languages

Te Reo Maori	Japanese	Chinese	German	Spanish	French
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Music

We are using music academy which is an online course where pupils can choose between guitar, electric guitar, bass guitar, piano, drums, vocals or PA. Each course begins as if the pupil has never played before. It contains theoretical knowledge. As pupils learn, they play along to worship songs (it is a Christian worship training academy for churches)

Next Step: to visit Ash Col to check the expectations of Music in Year 11 and report of whether our course will suitably prepare our students.

Visual Art

This course was developed by Julie Whiteman who is experienced with secondary Art. She has developed a curriculum that prepares our students for their next learning institute. Lizzie Bowen has now taken on the Art and added further media to the course to fit with NZC.

Next step: how can our special character be seen in Art?

Drama

This is taken from the NZCEA Level 1 ESA study book. It is adapted and differentiated to fit a Year 9/10 pupil (i.e. the course does not religiously stick to the course content). Instead, pupils apply their knowledge with a yearly school production (promo film or play). In Matthew 5, we are called to let our lights shine before men. By producing a piece of media each year, students are glorifying God by letting people know the news of Christ in creative ways.

Photography

This is an online course and is delivered by Lizzie Bowen. It has been assessed by a professional photographer who recommends the content as a good base for future learning.

Next step: how can our special character be seen in photography?

Videography

This is an online course and is delivery by Year 9/10 teacher. The course runs for 1 term and then students team up with the Drama students to collaborate on the yearly special character school productions.

History

The course is taken from 'The Story of the World' which is 4 volumes of books written by a Christian author. It is delivered by Lizzie Bowen. This course is helping our pupils to understand one key part of our school statement: know. Pupils are asked to know the story of the world and how they fit in it pivoting around our faith, who God, at the centre created it all.

Next step: research if the course is preparing pupils for further education (Ash Col etc)

Geography

This is taken from the NZCEA Level 1 ESA study book. It is adapted and differentiated to fit a Year 9/10 pupil (i.e. the course does not religiously stick to the course content). Instead, pupils apply their knowledge with set case studies set by the Year 9/10 teacher.

Next step: how can our special character be seen in Geography lessons?

Graphics

This is taken from the NZCEA Level 1 ESA study book. It is adapted and differentiated to fit a Year 9/10 pupil (i.e. the course does not religiously stick to the course content). Curriculum is delivered by Lizzie Bowen.

Next step: how can our special character be seen in Geography lessons?

Entrepreneurship

This course has been modelled by the Year 9/10 teacher on the Young Enterprise project in NZ. Pupils are asked to think about their business models and how their faith will impact how they run their business. The book of Proverbs is used as a book of wisdom to help pupils understand the values.

Next step: how can pupils use their businesses to impact the community?

Dance

This course is run by LDA. It covers theory, practical and the teaching of dance. Pupils use Christian music to teach Dance to younger classes. In 1 Corinthians 6, we learn that we are vessels for the Holy Spirit for God to use. Therefore, in multiple ways we are to honour God with our bodies.

Next step: collaborate with LDA to assess the course in preparation for next year.

Coding

This is an online course.

Next step: compare the course's curriculum with the new NZC technology curriculum.

Design Technology

This is an extension to the compulsory Tech pupils take each Friday for 2 terms. As pupils return from Tech, students will be applying their skills to practical, useful needs around school. Hebrews 6:10 'God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help him.' Pupils will serve the school helping them to understand our school statement and how God sees all of their work; they may not benefit from the work they complete, but others in the future will and they will bring glory to God in doing so.

Languages

This course is online and prepare our students for future learning. We offer subjects that are options at Ash Col and Mt Hutt. In John 17, we are called to mission and make an impact in the world whilst being set apart with His word. We are preparing our pupils for different cultures, so that they can make an impact now and, in the future, wherever God will take them.

Next step: to develop and secure authentic relationships with members of the community to help with the effectiveness of the assessment of each target language.

Resourcing

The budget is allowing all courses and equipment to be provided for. The new building will provide an asset to Year 9/10 as the spaces can provide multi-purpose uses to better equip some of our subjects. For example, Dance can make use of a large space similar to a dance studio.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Year 9/10 optional programme is developing and now going through its first full-year with the current supply of staff. The two-year Schemes of Work have been written for each subject and the Long-Term Planning is being written by the relevant members of staff as their subjects' progress. There is a base line of assessment criteria which will form the starting point for this year's end of year assessments, so that they can be reviewed and suitably improved. It is essential that due to the timing of this programme, the overarching next step, (as well as the individual subject next steps) will be to constantly review the programme as it progresses into maturity from infancy. Part of this will be to gain an understanding from the pupil voice at the end of year.