Leading inclusive communities and promoting student well being...the role of partnership.

Reference Number: 3117

This symposium will address two aspects of partnership:

1. Partnership in schools and with schools to promote inclusive practices with particular reference to structure and process.
2. Partnership with the Universities as key agencies for educational research and practice towards student wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

In Catholic schools we are called upon to be inclusive of all, irrespective of race, social class, ethnicity, gender and ability. Leading inclusive communities draws not only on the expertise of school personnel but also the establishment of effective partnerships across the broader community.

Within the Student Services area of Brisbane Catholic Education a particular strategy around partnership was launched in 2000. A document entitled, “Educational Partnerships in Schools and with Schools”, (See Appendix 1) describes the way information is generated, shared and stored within a process of consultation and collaboration between schools, parents and caregivers, educational and health support professionals, agencies and associations including government and the universities.
The first part of this symposium which describes the strategic structures and processes for partnership in schools and with schools aims to promote inclusive practices in all schools of the Archdiocese. This includes programs of structured consultancy. The purpose of such structures is to achieve effective parent and teacher participation in 'wrapping around' the educational needs of students, the management needs of classrooms and the themes and issues that school communities address to be more inclusive.

The second part will present a well established partnership with some Brisbane based Universities to meet the increasing needs of schools in the area of student well being.

PART ONE

The School Community:

Figure 1: Dynamic, Interacting Contributions/Exchanges to Support the Inclusive Learning Environment (Cleveland, 2002)
Supporting inclusive educational communities requires planned action to ensure the education of all students within a complex community of learners. In this regard principles of inclusive education include:

- Exploration of the individual profile of the learner to ensure that the community of learning is rich, flexible and interactive and adequately monitors the demonstrated outcomes of all its learners.
- Using syllabus documents which drive outcomes for all learners
- The reform and renewal of educational systems to create environments that understand the human condition, how humans learn and the changing domains for living.
- Learning contexts that consider life/student performance in interconnecting contexts of classroom, family, church and the wider community.
- The provision of specific learning opportunities and various pedagogical approaches for particular students that are applied within a creative decision-making approach most often featuring consultative teams working in partnership

Within this ‘general’ context of the inclusive community, addressing ‘particular’ curriculum and pedagogical approaches for an increasingly complex community of learners goes beyond the expertise of school personnel. It is also necessary that at critical points of planning for the education of some students it is necessary to access the resources of a larger community. Within the guidelines of the privacy legislation, inclusive communities have flexible open structures that allow for expertise to be shared with educators, parents and other professionals as necessary for the exchange of knowledge and understanding about some learners. Particular considerations to promote this vision may include:

1. Evidence based profiles of individual learners with contributions where appropriate from:
   - School/college community personnel; Parents, classroom teachers, support teachers, consultants, counsellors, school leaders, speech pathologists, visiting teachers etc
   - Health professionals; paediatricians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, audiologists, speech pathologists, GP’s, psychiatrists, social workers etc
• **Agencies/Associations:** Government departments (Health, Families-Disability Services, Education), Developmental Assessment Teams (D.A.T), Autism Qld, Cerebral Palsy League, Speld, G&T Association, Disability Advocacy groups etc

• **Universities:** Researchers, Lecturers, Clinics, Teacher preparation, Professional Development etc

2. School/college based structures to allow consultative teams to gather student information towards planning and implementing appropriate learning opportunities (curriculum and pedagogy). Consultative and reflective team work occurs most often at the...

- Point of enrolment
- Determination of individual profile and resourcing e.g. Education Adjustment Programs
- Points of regular review
- Points of transition
- Points of referral (concerns raised)
- Whole school, class, individual ‘wraparound’

3. Centrality of the Classroom teacher and clearly articulated frameworks for teaching and learning in general and for the teaching and learning of students with particular support needs. Partnerships, which provide ready access to information and guidance about the learning characteristics of some students. For example those with...

- Extraordinary gifts and talents
- Second language acquisition
- Disabilities including sensory (hearing, vision, physical), ASD, intellectual disabilities
- Chronic health challenges eg Asthma, epilepsy, diabetes etc
- Difficulties in speaking, oral language development, reading, writing, spelling, numerical understanding and computation
- Social, emotional, behavioural disorders
- Circumstances of disadvantage related to social or cultural background
To this end inclusive school/college communities engage in practices which reflect
the principles of inclusive education and the standards of the Disability Discrimination

The first point of partnership often occurs at enrolment. The BCE “Enrolment
Application and Support Procedures for Students requiring Significant Educational
Adjustment” encourages all participants in the education process (parents, students,
teachers, school leadership, and student services representatives) to share as
partners, the responsibility for successful outcomes for all students. The process
seeks to reveal and clarify the characteristics of the learner and to assess the
adjustments for accessing the learning and the implications of these for the school,
the family and the student.

From this first point of partnership with parents and caregivers at enrolment, the most
critical partnership emerges, that of the relationship between the student and the
classroom teacher.

With the information about the learner, discerned at enrolment, the teacher is
committed to creating conditions that improve the learning and participation of all the
students. In Brisbane Catholic Education schools, teachers make decisions about
some of the students as learners by forming partnerships with parents/caregivers and
professional colleagues and then with consultation they strive to make the
appropriate adjustments across the classroom and school. This establishes an
ongoing partnership with key support persons testing frameworks of pedagogy and
organisation towards improvement and transformation of the learning and teaching.

The teacher is supported to understand the learning needs and to make independent
judgments about the learner’s needs within a curriculum. In many cases the
teachers continue to manage the diverse needs of their students within the whole
class giving attention to specific instruction and flexible organisation.

When the teacher decides that the usual adjustments to manage diversity are not
adequate, the teacher may seek more formal input from other professional
colleagues a strategic opportunity to allow dialogue around the concerns need to
occur. In Brisbane Catholic Education we have developed models to facilitate these
collaborative partnerships. Effective partnerships develop with the structured
opportunities for collaboration, planning and review.
Most often the schools create opportunities for teacher/parent and other professional partnerships through “student support teams”. The purpose of these teams is to focus on the learner, the learning and the teaching. Different models meet different purposes including collaboration around the strengths and needs of individual students, addressing the strengths and needs of classrooms and examining needs and trends which require the planning and implementation of adjustments across the whole school.

![Diagram of Student Support Team](image)

Figure 2: Student Support Team (Cleveland, 2002)

**Model 1:** As part of an action research cycle the student support team considers evidence that the student/s are engaged in doing, thinking, feeling, and reflecting on their own learning (metacognition) as well as providing an opportunity for the teachers to describe the impact of their teaching and the associated adjustments on the student/s learning outcomes. It is important for the classroom teacher to have an opportunity to describe the learner and the learning context and the current teaching adjustments and their impact on the learning. The descriptions are framed as strengths and needs and the process moves towards further options for success. The contribution of professional support members at the meeting complements the teacher’s dialogue by assisting with diagnostic explorations and providing knowledge constructs that may assist with understanding the learner and therefore the teaching adjustments. This model of student support team may co-opt for example, other professionals such as the Guidance Counsellor, the Speech Pathologist, Consultants...
for Inclusive Education, ESL teachers or Visiting Teachers providing expertise to support students with sensory impairments.

The teacher in partnership then develops a planned action for ongoing learning and teaching effectiveness. The meeting provides a forum for reflective collaboration, action planning and very importantly monitoring and tracking of the student’s learning. Monitoring of successful adjustments to assist the student’s learning is an important element for planning into the future.

Model 2:
Sometimes a teacher may have a need for collaborative consultation around classroom design and adjustments. It may be that the team co-opts the curriculum support teacher or behaviour management specialist to assist with cyclical planned action for increased classroom effectiveness.
Model 3:

Opportunities for whole school reflection and planning are critical to successful schooling. The research clearly tells us that schools that reflect on ‘who is coming to school' and create structured opportunities for planned action to meet the strengths and needs of learners will more effectively manage the diversity. Ainscow (2001) suggests that when schools are successful in moving their practice forward, the teachers perceive themselves as more successful and the school takes on the attributes of Senge’s “learning organisation”. Models for structured dialogue around learning across the school as well as discernment of the resourcing for adjustments for particular individuals and groups of students have the potential to lead deep change and transformation in schools.
Over the past 3-5 years some Brisbane Catholic Education schools have introduced these models of partnership in different forms to meet the need for collaborative partnership and dialogue around learning and teaching in schools.
**Key results** from the introduction of the various models of partnership have not been determined formally but informally we can report some outcomes:

- The centrality of the classroom teacher has been declared.
- Principals report that the engagement of teachers and other professionals in dialogue around pedagogy and organisation provides a very effective form of professional development for all.
- Parents who are key partners in the dialogue about individual students report increased satisfaction.
- Wholistic planning for students occurs in co-operation with various support personnel.
- A wholistic response to the students that is teacher managed and driven is a basic principle.
- Monitoring and tracking of the adjustments for students, the groups/classes or the whole school occurs in an action research cycle and promotes reflective practice leading to transformational teaching.

**Future development:**

Future development of the models requires more specific information and process to guide the dialogue for partnership and subsequently the planned action for the learning. BCE has a well developed construct (knowledge and process) for those students with disabilities eligible for funding support under criteria that has been set by the State and Commonwealth governments. Meeting diverse learning needs and responding to students within an inclusive context requires an inclusive and holistic process of partnership that enables knowledge and expertise to be shared. The strengths and needs of the learners are mapped through BCE’s Learning Framework and the needs addressed according to the particular profile of the students. It is imperative that the partnership dialogue and planning not only explore the learner/s characteristics but also translates the information into new opportunities for students and teachers towards transformational educational experience. It is anticipated that the future development of these models will concentrate on the provision of knowledge, skills and responses easily understood and accessed by classroom teachers as well as various constructs of reference that the professionals as part of the support teams may use to guide
planning and monitoring of the particular support for individual students, groups of students or whole class groups.

PART TWO

The second part of our symposium focuses on the value of joint venture partnerships for educational research and practice. Such partnerships have great promise for advancing the capacity of organisations to innovate collaboratively and achieve far more than either partner could alone. Brisbane Catholic Education has been a part of a number of university partnerships including the University of Queensland (UQ), Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Griffith University (GU). Currently QUT is a partner in the Caroline Chisholm School Student and Family Support Centre in the Brisbane suburb of Dutton Park and GU is a partner in the joint management of the Nyunga Student and Family Support Centre on the Gold Coast. The University of Queensland although currently not a partner was the founding partner in the establishment of The Caroline Chisholm Centre program. This partnership remained strong and productive for more than 10 years.

The current program at the Caroline Chisholm Centre is an important element in the Masters of Educational and Developmental Psychology at QUT. The Nyunga Centre provides placements in our schools on the Gold Coast for students in the Masters of Clinical Psychology program at GU.

The Spirit of Community:

The discussion paper Schools as Learning Communities (NSW Department of School Education, 1995) lists as one of the features of a learning community the ability to develop “more effective school and community partnerships” that “build networks and partnerships between groups of professionals and across the community including schools and other educational sectors”. Such partnerships, or collectives of learning communities, have great promise for advancing the capacity of
organisations to innovate collaboratively, and achieve far more than either partner could alone.

The model of the self-contained and self-sufficient organisation was probably always more myth than reality, but in times of increasing limited resources, it is even more important that organisations open themselves to cooperation and collaboration rather than continue to pursue goals unilaterally.

**What Makes a Community of Learning or Practice?**

The concept of community is itself an elusive one. *Schools as Learning Communities* draws on the work of Senge to define a learning community as:

> an organisation where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desired, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.

**School and University Partnerships**

The concept of partnerships between schools and universities is not new. There are many examples of innovative collaborations both here and elsewhere. Slater, Zaragoza, Slater and Skaruppa (1995) state that:

> Collaboration between universities and public school systems has increased substantially partly as a response to limited resources to meet growing and changing demands. Public school systems reach out to communities to explore new connections and one of the most critical and viable sources of these linkages is with universities because of their resources and expertise. (Slater et al, 1995, p. 1)

They describe a continuum of collaboration. This includes:

- exchange networks
• collaboration in structured inquiry
• cohort partnerships focussed on a specific project or task (and disbanded after its completion) and
• true collaborative endeavours

To use their words, true collaborations are “culture creating” (Slater et al., 1995, p. 2). They result in new modes of operation and new organisational structures and forms. Their success requires “planning, equality of purpose and parity and an agenda or device to bring together both sides because there is a need and a structure” (Slater et al., 1995, p. 2). In such collaborations, both organisations become more adaptable and flexible in their responses to change. In such a collaboration, it takes time to build a relationship that is sustainable. When established, it results in what they label a “transorganisational alliance” that involves newly formed, shared “understandings and visions of the future” (Slater, Zaragoza Slater and Skaruppa, p. 19).

Brisbane Catholic Education’s history of joint ventures with universities illustrates some of the key elements in the development of communities of practice involving partnerships between school systems and universities. Like many marriages, the partnerships grew from the recognition of the way in which a union could satisfy complementary needs.

The University of Queensland and Brisbane Catholic Education Partnership: 1994 – 2004: Impact on Professional Practice

Both agencies in the partnership were seeking to meet needs that seemed to be complementary. From UQ’s perspective, changes to the Act regulating the registration of psychologists in Queensland forced a far-reaching reconsideration of the level of practical experience provided within the Master of Educational Psychology Program. The Act required, from 1995, that all psychologists completing the fifth and sixth years of training should complete at least 900 hours of supervised practice over the final two years of their training. The existing practicum had met the requirements of the Australian Psychological Society, but only involved 100 hours of supervised practice, 800 hours short of the new Queensland requirement. There had been considerable difficulty in finding appropriate placements for the students under
the existing practicum program. A nine-fold increase in the hours of supervised practice presented problems of an entirely different order of magnitude!

As is often the case, need changed to opportunity and necessity was once again shown to be the parent of invention. The changes provided an opportunity to consider, critically, the approach to supervised practice, and modes of learning, within the program. The change forced a recognition of the value of more extensive experience within school settings, the need for a more structured approach to professional preparation, to ensure a high level of competence in all the areas of practice relevant to educational psychological practice, and finally, the advantages of facilitating active approaches to learning, to achieve deeper and more enduring knowledge. The essence of active learning approaches is the achievement of deeper learning, through participation in activities that are highly relevant and meaningful to the learners (Biggs, 1987; 1989; Gibbs, 1992).

From the perspective of Brisbane Catholic Education the partnership offered an opportunity to address an area of need for increased levels of educational psychology service and to have access to the expertise of a range of university academic and clinical staff. It also afforded an opportunity to develop a new approach to service delivery.

This approach moved beyond the traditional focus on individual students to explore the complex contexts in which students educational and developmental problems are located. In essence this represented a quite marked departure from conventional approaches to service delivery that, in turn, required availability of educational psychologists with a new orientation and a new set of skills to work within this framework.

Like many marriages, an element of serendipity played a role in the union. At the time, the University was wrestling with some of the problems confronting the university’s educational psychology and the difficulty that many non-specialist psychologists had in understanding the complexity of educational issues and contexts. The possibility to develop something of mutual benefit to our organisations was clear to us both.

Brisbane Catholic Education was to provide accommodation for such a facility and some secretarial support and UQ would provide a fulltime psychologist manager to
run the ‘clinic’. After long discussions and a lot of goodwill on both sides, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed in February 1994 between UQ and Brisbane Catholic Education. In the meantime Brisbane Catholic Education provided a custom built demountable in the grounds of St Ita’s Regional Catholic School next door to Brisbane Catholic Education Centre and within sight of the UQ. It should be mentioned here that from the UQ perspective both the Faculties of Education and Psychology were to be involved. However as time went by the role of the Faculty of Psychology became less and less. This is important in the light of what was to come.

What did each partner get out of it? As the Vice Chancellor at the opening said “In all marriages, for them to work, each partner had to feel they were getting the best part of the bargain”. For UQ they had unlimited access to our schools, access to Professional Development provided to Guidance Counsellors and a custom built facility. From Brisbane Catholic Education’s perspective the schools were now receiving extra help in the form of provisionally registered psychologists visiting schools, seeing students who had been referred to them by Guidance Counsellors, and seeing students and parents of our community of schools at the clinic. The Chisholm Centre began to build up a solid reputation for itself in our schools.

**Griffith University and Brisbane Catholic Education Partnership: 1997 – present**

In the meantime Dr Paula Barrett (author of the Friends Program) who was a lecturer in Psychology at Griffith University Gold Coast, was aware of the Chisholm Centre and approached Brisbane Catholic Education to gauge interest in a similar relationship with Griffith University. It was explored how this might occur as Griffith did not have an Educational or Developmental Psychology course but had a very strong Clinical Psychology program. It was decided that Griffith would provide a clinical service three days per week to Gold Coast catholic schools. A Psychologist/Manager was to be present on those days and Brisbane Catholic Education would provide a part-time secretary and again accommodation. Some rooms in an old convent at Marymount College, Burleigh Heads were renovated and an agreement for their use agreed to between Brisbane Catholic Education and the Burleigh Waters Parish.
Today the services provided by the Nyunga Centre are clinical; most of the work is done at the clinic. However the university students do visit schools and classrooms and as well as providing clinical services to our Gold Coast schools, they also do group work with a number of schools. The students' placement at Nyunga is only one of their clinical placements.

Change and Challenge with UQ Partnership:

Political issues seemed to challenge the partnership with UQ. What became known as the Vandstone Reforms began to bite into the tertiary sector and all courses came under scrutiny including the Masters of Educational Psychology. To cut a very long story short, the Faculty of Education at UQ had to make cuts, and the Masters of Educational Psychology was seen as an anomaly in that it was a Psychology course offered in an Education Faculty. Somewhere along the line the Faculty of Psychology had ceased to be actively involved in the project. So in a faculty that was required to make cuts and go back to basics, an Educational Psychology Masters course did not fit. The University of Queensland decided to discontinue this course despite the fact that it appeared to be growing in popularity and in stature. It could be said that at this juncture of the course development the profession of Educational Psychologist had begun to become well established in Queensland.

New Directions in Recruitment

As was said earlier, for us at Brisbane Catholic Education, through this partnership, our ideas on what was required to service schools changed when we saw what the course was producing. Prior to this in Queensland, generally we had Guidance Counsellors who were teachers and had a one year full time equivalent Masters in Guidance and Counselling. Now we were looking at Educational Psychologists who by the time they were finished would have six years of study of Psychology thus ensuring a greater depth in the area. Those who were not teachers, it was argued that some would not have as good an understanding of the classroom etc. We decided to include non-teacher Educational Psychologists as well as the traditional candidates in our short listing for Guidance and Counselling positions and let the schools decide. Many schools preferred a psychologist, while some insisted on
teachers. Either way we now had greater flexibility about whom we employed. We have employed many graduates of both the UQ program and the GU program.

New Partnership formed with Queensland University of Technology, 2005 - present:

We at Brisbane Catholic Education believed we could not let this project go. It was too valuable to us in many ways. It is a means of providing well qualified Guidance Counsellors, extra services to our schools, and it is in many ways a training facility into which as a result of the Memorandum of Agreement we have input into course design etc. As a result we went looking for new partners and in the middle of this process, QUT approached us with an offer of partnership. The result is, we are in partnership with the university and again around the training of Educational Psychologists. One major difference between this arrangement with QUT is that from the university’s perspective this is a joint project with both the faculties of Education and Psychology taking turns at running the course. This, it is hoped should prevent a reoccurrence of the UQ situation.

The Influence of the Partnerships

As mentioned earlier by (Slater et al., 1995, p. 2) these joint ventures change culture. Our Guidance Counsellor culture was changed by our partnership with UQ, GU and QUT. The partnership over Educational Psychologist training led to cooperation between ourselves and academics at the universities which led to many academics consulting on other issues outside of the partnership and becoming members of various standing committees within Brisbane Catholic Education. There was also cooperation in seeking research funding.

We would like to believe some of what the Universities learn as a result of the partnership is practical and culture changing. For us there have been many excellent outcomes:

- New and expanding professional networks
- Building the capacity to innovate collaboratively
- Pursuing goals together
• Changing service delivery models
• Expanding patterns of thinking
• Setting free collective aspiration
• Learning together
• Sharing resources and expertise
• Taking risks and reconceptualising
• Influencing professional bodies eg: APS
• Improving Educational Psychological practice
• Managing change and challenge
• Reaching out to Brisbane Catholic Education students and families
• Changing culture
• Maintaining a dynamic approach to student wellbeing

QUT's slogan is “QUT. The University for the Real World”, to which some loyal UQ staff respond “UQ. The Real University”. Whatever the reality, universities and service providers such as Brisbane Catholic Education can only benefit from managing the reality together. We believe that our partnerships with the universities have addressed not only the realities of our professions but the realities of children and their families.
EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN SCHOOLS AND WITH SCHOOLS

A Catholic school is a community within the Church. It includes students and their families, staff members, clergy and religious, and members of the school leadership team.

A school enrols students. It has integrity when enrolment occurs. Enrolment is a process that reveals and clarifies the respective requirements of the school, the student and the family, and the contribution each can make to the educative process.

Through its administrative processes, the school organises all that is needed for responsive and responsible teaching and learning to occur.

The contemporary Catholic school is an increasingly complex community of teachers and learners. In such a community, problems are faced that are very difficult and can often not be solved with the patterns of thinking to which we may have become accustomed.

At the centre of the complex community of learners is the class teacher. Class teachers are the key providers of students’ educational experiences at school. They provide settings and adapt programs to suit students’ educational needs. To do this, they require high levels of skill and understanding in essential professional competencies, including pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum, syllabus organisation, classroom management, problem-solving and right relationships.

Integral to our schools and classrooms in a complex and demanding environment is the reciprocal relationship that exists between school communities and those who provide support services to them. Amongst such providers, Brisbane Catholic Education Centre (BCEC) personnel support schools in partnership to ensure that all students are fully included in each school’s efforts to provide maximum educational benefit.

BCEC personnel bring their particular skills and understandings to an exploratory or problem-solving situation within a complex educational environment. This requires a
global understanding of the issues presenting in the school, together with a sensitivity to the unique character of each school community and the range and depth of resources available to any one school. The skills and understandings are applied in a collaborative, collegial setting. It is understood that information, practical vision and problem-solving processes have already been brought to each situation and levels of resolution sought from among the resources and partnerships already available within the school and its wider community.

Partnership with schools and in schools and their communities gives rise to support for teachers in program development, problem-solving and the fostering of right teacher-student and student-student relationships. Partnerships can occur at a number of different points and times and may include, as required, any of the following participants:

- Class teachers
- School leadership team
- Parents
- Specialist teachers, support teachers and visiting teachers
- Other support personnel and individuals within the wider school and parish community
- Formal organisations and agencies in the community
- BCEC personnel, including consultants and managers.

Through their participation in a formal network of Archdiocesan Catholic schools, all systemic schools benefit from partnership in a variety of ways, including:

- Co-leadership and direction
- Supervision and positive visioning
- Quality control opportunities
- Professional development
- Resourcing, and
- Collaborative/Interactive consultancy.

The partnerships that follow from the presence of a systemic network of schools and support services occur in the context of increasing diversity and complexity in our school communities. This will result in change and realignment. Some practices will be discontinued; some will continue on. Some practices and approaches will be reinvented. Whatever the circumstances, changes will be needed in our abilities and
understandings, in our mental maps of authentic help and service, and in our
expectations of outcome.

BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION
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