

Integrating Catholic Social Teaching across the curriculum

Some overarching issues: Holy Spirit, Bray Park

At the end of the pilot phase the ACU facilitator met with the two participating teachers for a debriefing discussion using their individual reports as a starting point. The main issues that arose during that conversation are summed up here under the headings: curriculum integration; teachers' knowledge of CST; resources; dissemination; other issues.

Curriculum integration

Participating teachers used a combination of planned integration, teachable moments, whole class and 1:1 teaching and discussion. In practice they identified a fine balance between integrating a Catholic perspective in a planned way and maintaining spontaneity by using of teachable moments.

Interesting differences emerged between the class teacher and the specialist teacher. The former found she could work across the whole curriculum – 'if I messed up a lesson, I could do it differently the next day'. The specialist teacher found that the pressure of having to achieve her specialist subject goals while also integrating Catholic Social Teaching (Stewardship of Creation) within the confines of one 40 minute lesson per week led to her 'putting pressure on herself and losing her naturalness for a while... then I woke up to myself and got back on track'

The class teacher remarked that her Term 3 'curriculum matched beautifully' with Catholic Social Teaching principles of 'the dignity of the human person' and 'human equality'.

The specialist teacher, who has been involved in Project Compassion, says 'it's part of my teaching, part of who you are'.

Teachers' knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

Teachers agree that their own knowledge of and interest in CST has grown as a result of engagement in the project.

Resources

Both teachers found Caritas resources very helpful. They highlighted the importance of ready access to appropriate resources in order to integrate CST in a way that is pedagogically appropriate and identified the need for school-wide set of resources.

Dissemination

- Participating teachers are seeking an opportunity to present their work to the **whole staff** at Leadership Day
- Both teachers highlighted the importance of **continuity across the whole of the primary school experience** – 'this needs to be threaded throughout the curriculum'.

- Both teachers recognized the need for a **whole school approach** along the lines of Ontario Catholic Education accompanied by relevant **CPD**
- The **APRE** has a critical role in driving this initiative.

Some other issues

While both teachers had concerns regarding the abstract nature of the CST principles for primary school children, there was a sense that introducing these principles during primary schooling meant they would be better prepared to understand and apply them in later life.

The distinction between values education and integrating a Catholic perspective arose against a background where some/many students are strongly influenced by home environments that do not identify with Catholic teaching.

There was a sense that English and Mathematics are 'off limits' for integrating CST because of the heavy focus on literacy and numeracy. However, this can be resolved by appropriate choices of content from children's literature and mathematical data e.g. working with data on pollution, sea levels, ecology etc.

Teachers need advice around the evaluation of pupil learning using approaches other than pre- and post- tests.