Director’s Message

At this busy time in the school year it is useful to take time to reflect on why we do what we do – what drives and what motivates us in our endeavours in Catholic education?

I am reminded of our joint commitment in the 2011–2015 Directions for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne:

‘In this task we share in and contribute to the Church’s mission of education and evangelisation and draw our inspiration from the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. As partners in Catholic education we share a common set of values that inform our actions, guide our planning and define our priorities. These values act as a unifying force that strengthens our work together as a sector and inspires our common future.’

‘At the heart of all our endeavours is the student. We remain committed to building communities of learning that provide a safe, nurturing and academically stimulating environment for all children. Our challenge for the future is to ensure that all students in Catholic schools become successful learners who are able to embrace opportunities that are emerging in the local, national and global communities. As partners in Catholic education we must ensure that our students are well prepared to manage their future wellbeing and contribute to that of others, and that their lives remain faith-filled and guided by purpose.

This is both our hope and our collective responsibility for the future.’

With best wishes.

Stephen Elder
Executive Director of Catholic Education

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB)

The VCSPB enables the voice of parents to be heard by education authorities and governments. The VCSPB work collaboratively to ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow and achieve their best.

The role and value of parent leadership in Catholic education is an important element in our system. The VCSPB is an important avenue through which parents may exercise their role as partners in the broader context of Catholic education. Further parent representation from schools within the Archdiocese of Melbourne is required on the Council.

Why get involved? Current VCSPB Council members are involved because it is:

’a great opportunity to work at State level to ensure that a Catholic education remained accessible to all and retained its Catholic identity and values’.

‘Two things unite us: a commitment to Catholic education and the drive to advocate for parents. If this rings true for you… why don’t you come and join us?’

National parent voice

In the changing and challenging education landscape, the VCSPB is working towards the best way to establish a new and distinct national parent voice for Catholic education.

If you are interested in learning more about the VCSPB and how you can be a Council member visit www.vcspb.catholic.edu.au and email secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au or telephone 9267 0264.
2013 board chair meetings

Board chairs may be interested in joining a CEOM network. The primary and secondary board chair networks meet once a term.

The Primary Network meetings in Term 3 and 4 are scheduled for 7 August and 17 October at the Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne.

The Secondary Network meetings in Term 3 and 4 are on 21 August (Penola Catholic College, Broadmeadows) and 6 November (Sacred Heart College, Newtown).

To join, please contact Patricia Palman on 9267 0228 or ppalman@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au.

Building better boards

INDUCTION FOR BOARD MEMBERS

It is important that new board members are supported by a systematic and comprehensive induction process to familiarise themselves with those matters. A thorough and supportive induction process for new board members will ensure that they are able to contribute effectively to the board. A good induction process will be well planned and engaging, and subject to review by the board.

The key objective of the induction process is to assist new board members to understand:
- the history of the parish and school
- the mission and vision of the parish and school
- the roles, responsibilities and processes of the board
- how board members, can support the parish priest and principal in their roles

In developing the induction program, the board may consider the following questions:
- What information would be useful to provide to the new member before the first board meeting?
- Is the level of formality of the induction meeting and its venue appropriate to the local context?
- What formation activities would be appropriate for the new board member?
- How will the board and meeting be made welcoming and inclusive to the incoming member?
- Should a ‘board buddy ’ system be part of the process?

For more information and suggestions for an induction kit see A Guide for Parish Education Boards on the CEVN website http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au at the Parish-School Boards page under School Improvement.

Reflect and consider

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are important in building relationships and sustainable partnerships. Whether intentional or not there is no excuse for a bad first impression of your school.

All schools strive to be welcoming and inclusive. What is the impression a visitor, parent or student gets when they arrive and enter your school? Is it the impression you wish them to have?

Have you considered a ‘first impressions audit’?

Have school board members conduct a walk through or seek the assistance of members of your community or parish who are not familiar with the school and environs.

Consider and add to the following:

General signage
- Is the signage in languages appropriate to your community? Is signage appropriate for those with sight problems and other disabilities?
- Is the signage easily read?
- Has thought been given to appropriate font size? colour? the height at which signage is placed?

Specific signage
- Is there ample street signage indicating the location of your school e.g. at the nearest intersection or main road?
- Is the name of your school and contact details clearly visible from the street?
- Are entrance to and exits from the grounds clearly marked?
- Are drop off zones clear?
- Are car parking areas signed?
- Are there clear directional signs to the office or main entrance of the building?

Grounds
- Are walking paths where they will be used, especially from the car park to the office or main entrance of the building?
- Is the landscaping well maintained?
- Is access available for all people?
- Are there clear walk ways?
- Is there adequate lighting?
Building
- Are the buildings well maintained?
- Are the building and open areas clearly sign posted?
- Is it clear that doors slide, open automatically, require to be pushed or pulled?
- Is the foyer welcoming to all of your community?
- Does the school’s artwork best reflect the schools values and aspirations?
- Do the publications in the foyer best reflect your school, Catholic education and the parish?

People
Everyone in the school is an ambassador for the school and for what it values.
- How do staff welcome visitors: manner, tone, language?
- How are queries dealt with: face-to-face, on the telephone, by email?
- How is confidentiality of queries and responses addressed on arrival?

What insights and questions emerged? What will you continue doing? What will you stop doing? What will you start doing?

Resources
The CEOM provides online resources to assist with formation of board members and boards of primary and secondary schools. The resources are located on the CEVN website [http://cevn.cecvcatholic.edu.au](http://cevn.cecvcatholic.edu.au) at the Parish-School Boards page under School Improvement.


What does good governance look like? Better Boards May 2012 [http://betterboards.net/articles/good-governance](http://betterboards.net/articles/good-governance)


PISA In Focus 26 ‘Grade Expectations’ [www.oecd.org/pisa/pisainfocus/pisa%20In%20Focus%20n%2026%20(ENG)-FINAL.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisainfocus/pisa%20In%20Focus%20n%2026%20(ENG)-FINAL.pdf)

Social networks: potential for community and evangelisation

By Brad Rowswell, Government Relations and Policy Adviser, Policy, Research and Communications Staff Group, CEOM

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Social media and social networks are now a reality of modern life. If you want to be at the cutting edge of news and current affairs, if you want to be instantaneously updated with the latest trend, stay in touch with family and friends or be part of a dynamic conversation, social networks are increasingly the way to do it.

Papal Message
The 47th World Communications Day was celebrated in Australia on Sunday 5 May this year. Before his resignation, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI prepared and released a message titled, Social Networks: Portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation. In this message, Benedict notes that digital social networks are ‘an increasingly important reality regarding the way in which people today communicate’. He offers some reflections on their potential for creating ‘new relationships and forms of community’ and new opportunities for making known the Good News.

Benedict reflects that in social networks ‘people are engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained, but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how.’ This reflection encourages us to see social media in its best light – an opportunity for responsible and fruitful dialogue.

Strengthening our communities for evangelisation
Social networks are also an opportunity to develop community. Benedict acknowledges this in his message, saying that, ‘in some geographical and cultural contexts where Christians feel isolated, social networks can reinforce their sense of real unity with the worldwide community of believers.’ Social networks also have the potential to bind communities closer together. Many parishes, schools and volunteer groups in the Archdiocese are already experiencing the benefit of this.

Responsible use of social media
In recent times, we have all been aware of some of the ways in which social media can be used for harm. Benedict’s message speaks of engaging in these spaces ‘in a wise and balanced way, respectfully and with concern
for privacy, responsibility and truthfulness'. Then ‘true communication’ becomes possible.

Catholic schools are well aware of the need to ensure safe, respectful and responsible use of social media and technologies generally and their policies, programs and procedures support this. This can be guided by the CEOM’s policy 2.26, *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools*, the National Safe Schools Framework and the Safe Schools Hub. The CEOM also recommends the eSmart initiative. In this context the many good and worthwhile elements of social networks can provide rich opportunities for communication and learning.

**An opportunity not to be missed**

There are many conversations which are taking place on social media right now where a reasoned voice is needed, and a voice of ‘truth and values’. Pope Emeritus Benedict calls on the Church to be an authentic voice in this ever-growing space. He sees the ‘growing dialogue in social networks about faith and belief’ as a confirmation of ‘the relevance of religion in public debate’ and in society generally.

Catholic education has a good story to tell and social media provide a new space to tell it. Many schools already use social media to convey information to their school community and the broader community. This could be news about an upcoming school musical, a student’s sporting achievement or news about the activation of an extreme weather day. Beyond this, social media can be used to increase the connections between the school and its students, staff and families, and strengthen the school community. But there is potential for even more.

**Another way to spread the Gospel**

St Francis of Assisi, the saint from which our present Pope chose his name, is reputed to have said: ‘Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words’. Beyond using social media as an information source, Pope Emeritus Benedict challenges us to use social networks to convey to the wider community our unique Catholic culture and mission.

School communities might fruitfully reflect on: How can we express the faith and culture of our Catholic school through social media? How can we best use social networks to convey our message effectively? How can social media enable us to be enriched by others?

It’s too late to be asking if we should engage with social media. The time for consideration of that question is long gone. Even Pope Francis has recently clocked up six million followers on Twitter! The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) has a Media Blog and is also on Twitter, and the Bishops have released an eBook, *Word Made Flesh and Shared Among Us*, for World Communications Day and other online resources for celebrating the event.

As a member of the Catholic family, by virtue of our Baptism, we are challenged every day to proclaim the Gospel. Use of social media is a new and exciting way to live out this mission. Something which is implied in this message is the reality that social media is now a natural way for young people to communicate. If the Church wants to convey a message for young people to hear, using social media is a must.

Engaging in dialogue through social media can be just like having a really good and meaningful conversation except ... the contributors are many, the responses are instantaneous and the conversation is ongoing. Let’s take up the challenge of World Communications Day and actively be part of these conversations.

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**VCSPB KEY FUNDING MESSAGE**

Catholic schools maintain three funding principles. Catholic schools need:

- **Additional government funding** to close the gap between Catholic schools and government schools.
- **Government funding that keeps pace** with the cost of educating a child in a government school.
- **Fair funding to support the needs of students with disability and other special needs**, regardless of the school they attend.

As a Catholic education community, we will need to work together to ensure that all of our schools receive fair funding so that schools can continue to meet the needs of all students.