



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE

Horizons
of Hope

HORIZONS OF HOPE

Vision AND
Context



VISION



CONTEXT



STRATEGY



PRACTICE

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce *Horizons of Hope – An Education Framework for the Archdiocese of Melbourne*. *Horizons of Hope* will be an instrument that guides the direction of education in Catholic schools. It is the outcome of over 18 months of developmental work involving many teachers, leaders and educators across the Archdiocese, supporting:

the mission, and privilege, of the Catholic school to build a community, where authentic relationships based on love provide the means and the support for all students to flourish and grow into the fullness of life. (Archbishop Denis Hart, Catholic Education Melbourne Strategic Plan 2015–2019, p. 1)

The *Horizons of Hope* framework responds to the Archbishop's call for schools to take every step possible to enhance their Catholic identity. One of the most fundamental responses that a school can make to this call is to reflect on the distinctively Catholic nature of the learning and teaching that unfolds in our schools. It is this deep reflection that *Horizons of Hope* endeavours to invoke.

The framework is a living document that will be added to over coming months and years with examples of practice from schools. Together with the current statements in Pedagogy, Curriculum and Assessment, additional foundation statements will be developed in the areas of Leadership, Wellbeing, Diversity, and Religious Education.

The framework has four tiers:

- 1. VISION** – a succinct statement which outlines our vision for learners in our Catholic schools
- 2. CONTEXT** – a mapping of the current educational landscape, drawing out the challenges and opportunities for learning and teaching in a Catholic context
- 3. STRATEGY** – foundational statements that provide a shared way into tools, resources and materials, supporting the whole system in our work
- 4. PRACTICE** – school examples of practice that give life to the vision, context and strategy.

Through *Horizons of Hope* we commit together to achieving the highest standards possible for each learner, using data, research and evidence to ensure maximum progress and growth in each student's learning. In today's globalised environment, young people must be versatile learners, who develop not only new knowledge and skills, but also new literacies, dispositions and cultural awareness. Learning within this context, and in dialogue with the Catholic tradition, offers all of us opportunities; not only to understand others, but ourselves, our identity and our faith more deeply.

Despite today's context posing many great challenges, the mission and message of Jesus instils a hope and possibility for each person. Learning brings forth this hope – a hope that is based on the experience of God's love and care for all. Pope Francis stated recently that through Catholic education we celebrate all the opportunities which enable young people to embrace the hope of a better world with greater possibilities. It is this *Horizon of Hope* which propels us forward.



Stephen Elder
Executive Director
Catholic Education Melbourne

VISION

Learning brings hope. In a Catholic school that hope is based on the experience of God's love and care for all. Catholic educators see learning as a journey of endless possibilities, where students are energised to seek meaning and explore questions about the world around them. In partnership with parents and the broader Church, Catholic schools contribute to

Learning brings hope.

a life-foundation for students that is centred in Jesus Christ and grounded in truth, beauty and love. At the very heart of each Catholic school is a desire for the full flourishing of each student, across religious, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains. Here we support students to grow in virtue and to embrace a view of themselves and the world that leads to peace, justice, and the prospering of the whole of creation. It is a journey that is enlightened by faith, animated by love and leading to hope.

All members of a Catholic school community are learners who:

- **honour the sacred dignity of each person**, believing that everyone can experience success and be supported to see their lives as being shaped by the God who is at work in all of creation
- **search for truth**, continuously critiquing, questioning, inquiring, imagining and re-imagining themselves and their world in an ongoing engagement with Catholic beliefs and practices
- **embrace difference and diversity** as the context for dialogue, engagement and a deeper understanding of self, others and God
- **build a culture of learning together** through collaboration, partnerships and life-giving relationships which enable all to flourish
- **engage with the deep questions of life**, constantly opening up spaces of meaning which engage Catholic faith with what matters most in the minds and hearts of the students
- **honour equitable access and opportunity for all**, with a particular commitment to those most in need
- **commit to achieving the highest standards possible** based on reflective practice, using data, research and evidence to ensure progress and growth in learning
- **make a difference in the world**, inspired by the Gospel and led by the Holy Spirit to grow in virtue and act for justice and the common good.



- ● ● Young people call us to renewed and expansive hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open us up to the future.

(Francis 2013)

CONTEXT

Our context is to carry
on the mission of Jesus

An act of hope:

OUR EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Catholic schools were founded to proclaim Jesus' message of God's love for all. Our Catholic faith calls us to embrace the contemporary world with a Catholic imagination, and a particular hope-filled view of the human person and all of creation. Catholic educators invite students to make sense of their world and their lives within a faith community that is faithful to the mission of Jesus.

The contemporary world

The world is complex and diverse. We are challenged as a Catholic community to find a transcendent faith

Students live in a dynamic world that is diverse, complex and fast changing. As they mature, students experience a kaleidoscope of views, life options and religious possibilities. As the desire for freedom of expression increases, the certainty of religious authority

is questioned. Young people today want to hold responsibility for constructing their own beliefs. The challenge for Catholic educators is to create communities of learning which engage young people with a Catholic faith that is filled with life, hope and meaning within this diverse context.

The context is increasingly secular. We are challenged to find a new sense of self within the Catholic tradition

Contemporary society increasingly favours a broad and general values-based approach to education. In a Catholic school we seek not just a sense of moral values for all students, but also a way of being that is enlivened by the life and teachings of Jesus. We befriend difference and

diversity not just out of a sense of respect for others but also as a way to know ourselves more deeply in relation to God. And when we seek out the deep questions of the world, we do so not just to critique our own beliefs, but also to come to a deeper and more meaningful place within the Catholic faith.

God in all worlds

We are challenged to make a difference in the world inspired by the Gospel

Our students encounter a world with many great challenges. We see the pressures on the natural environment in the warming of the earth's atmosphere and the impact of human behaviour on God's creation. We see the marginalised seeking refuge from violence and oppression, and many young people grappling with challenges to their personal health and wellbeing. Within this context, the importance of a faith tradition – which sees the infinite potential of each person, and which challenges us to stand up in solidarity to make a difference in the world – is of the utmost importance.

Digital technologies pose not just risks but tremendous opportunities

Young people today have the world at their fingertips. Digital technologies are revolutionising access to the world's learning environments, opening up the potential for previously unimagined approaches to learning. The networked environment carries within it both possibilities and risks. Every educator is challenged to embrace the possibilities and safeguard against the risks. When the process is working well, students are led to connect, create and design for a brighter future.

The globalised environment requires new literacies and cultural awareness

Today, a globalised environment means that young people must be versatile learners who develop and apply a range of capabilities associated with working, communicating and collaborating with others across the world. These capabilities include not only new knowledge and skills, but also new literacies, dispositions and cultural awareness. Learning within a globalised environment offers new opportunities not only to understand others, but to understand more deeply one's self, identity, and cultural practices.

Caring for the love of God



Learners

Knowing and caring for learners provides the foundation for learning

Every individual has a personal narrative, a story of experiences that colours what they question, the answers they seek, the possibilities they see, and the ways they come to know truth. The mission of Jesus instils a hope and possibility for each person. Teachers come to know and understand the life experiences of each student in their care – the rich tapestry and diversity of students’ family lives, the local and global communities to which they belong, and the interests, passions, aspirations and questions they have in their life and for the future. It is this feeling of being known, valued and understood that provides the foundation for learning and success.

A sense of belonging is critical to students being able to thrive

Living in a rapidly changing world offers great potential for learning, however constant change can leave learners feeling isolated from one another. It is crucial that students feel a sense of belonging and connectedness within their lives, family and community. This sense of belonging and being in relationship with others builds and strengthens the ability of learners to understand and manage their emotions, develop their sense of self, their agency and their resilience in the face of difficulty, challenge or adversity.

Learning is strongest when learners feel a sense of belonging within a community. We are challenged to animate and energise students within the current world

Positive relationships form the basis of strong learning partnerships. These learning partnerships instil confidence in students to seek feedback and learn from their mistakes in a supportive environment. Given the value of working collaboratively, students need to be provided with opportunities to work this way in spaces that are safe yet challenging.

Dialogue is critical to questioning ourselves and world

The connected physical and virtual environments of a young person today challenge schools to energise learners in new ways. Students are energised and engaged through uncovering what matters to them: the diversity of their interests, their deep questions of life, and knowing and understanding different ways of learning. By being keenly aware of the world as experienced by students, educators can open spaces for dialogue with self and others where students think deeply and creatively, see layers of meaning within experiences, and realise that the world around them is always changing.

Learning in a Catholic school needs to encompass more than just the formal curriculum

Learning in a Catholic school is always formative for the students. They are taught knowledge and skills specified in formal curriculum frameworks but their learning is always illuminated by the light of faith. The Catholic school is a meeting place for Catholic doctrine, liturgy and moral teaching as well as policies in areas as diverse as child safety, bullying, disability and wellbeing more generally.







School Community

The Catholic school community contributes to the full flourishing of all learners

The notion of a Catholic school community includes learners, their families, their teachers and other staff at the school; young people and adults in the parish; and others in the local, wider and global communities – all of whom come together to form a connected and organic learning environment for the benefit of students. This sense of connectedness and belonging provides the foundation for the full flourishing of each student.

The profession is challenged to use evidence to become more accountable

Teaching is increasingly called to be more accountable and evidenced-based as a profession. The teaching profession is significantly enhanced when it is able to articulate standards for the professional growth of teachers and leaders across their careers. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards provide teachers and leaders with a shared language to reflect together on their professional practice, identify further professional growth opportunities and gather evidence of the positive impact of improved practice on student outcomes.

Evidence enables us to focus on the growth of the person

Catholic educators draw on a range of evidence to measure the learning growth, progress and improvement of every student and to determine where to next. Testing and data gathered at the local level enables educators to make precise decisions for their learners within their context. This data assists us to understand more deeply who our learners are, where they are at and where they need to go. Continuous and accurate feedback to learners is critical for reflection and evaluation of progress. We are challenged to value more than just results; to value the narrative of our students, their context, their world, and their families in order to see them flourish.

Bowerbird

Along with the co-existence of man and beast, a fragile and smaller animal that has been increased in size symbolises the significance of nature in comparison to the objects that are scattered below the bird, when usually the bird is so much smaller than the manmade world in reality.

(Alexandra, Year 12)

We are faced with an abundance of evidence in which to ground our educational practice

The globalised nature of the education environment provides schools with an abundance of data. This ready availability of data presents a challenge for us to ground our educational practice in evidence. The question of which evidence to consider becomes very important, with the accessibility of data such as PISA, NAPLAN and sites such as *MySchool* challenging and supporting schools, systems and leaders to focus their attention on maximising growth for every student.

We are called to reimagine our approaches to school improvement

It is here that the Integrated Catholic Online Network (ICON) offers core technologies that will enable schools to consider, interpret and analyse a range of data both at the local level and system level to focus on the development of the whole person.

The dynamic landscape in which we work requires new thinking specific to school improvement and renewal. We are challenged to be entrepreneurial as we imagine new spaces and possibilities for learning. The capacity to meet these challenges is increased when we create communities of practice and seek out innovative partnerships with business, community and philanthropic enterprise.

Transformation requires strong religious leadership

Transformation within the increasingly secular landscape requires strong religious leadership. School leaders have a particular role in allocating time and space for the personal, religious and professional formation of their staff, students and communities as a whole. But religious leadership is also a responsibility shared by all within the Catholic school community. Teachers, leaders and the community come together to lead the mission of the Church, modelling the role of witness, specialist and moderator in the integration of faith, life and culture.



Untitled – *This indigenous piece captures the use of art as a way to express feelings in a complicated world.* (Brooke, Year 6)

The capacity to navigate the current landscape – to learn together, to work from evidence, to animate and support learners, and to lead in faith and transformation – presents us with great opportunities and exhilarating challenges.

• • • **Our opportunity**

Catholic educators are called to meet these opportunities and challenges with courage and with faith, hope and love for their students.



Acknowledgments

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Catholic Education Melbourne
228 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002

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Correspondence to:

The Executive Director
Catholic Education Melbourne
PO Box 3
East Melbourne VIC 8002

T: [+61 3] 9267 0228
E: execdirector@cem.edu.au
www.cem.edu.au

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Gum Leaves
Shannyn, Year 1
St Mary's College for
Hearing Impaired
Students, Wantirna



Gum Leaves
Elaina, Year 1
St Mary's College for
Hearing Impaired
Students, Wantirna



Gum Leaves
Avinash, Year 1
St Mary's College for
Hearing Impaired
Students, Wantirna



God in all worlds
Rithiha, Year 5/6
St Kevin's Primary School,
Hampton Park



Caring for the love of God
Cassandra, Year 5/6
St Kevin's Primary School,
Hampton Park



Loneliness
Scout, Year 5
St Mary's Primary School,
Hampton



Bowerbird
Alexandra, Year 12
Loreto Mandeville Hall,
Toorak



Untitled
Brooke, Year 6
St Thomas More Primary School,
Belgrave



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