Welcome to the next edition of CSI. I had the pleasure of briefly speaking with the graduating class of ALC undergraduates about Christian Studies in Lutheran schools. I used the CSI initials as a way to identify key features of teaching Christian Studies in Lutheran schools.

C - Christian faith; A teacher’s own Christian faith will impact on the teaching of Christian Studies. Are you on a personal journey of faith developing your identity in Jesus and seeking to make sense of life with all its joys and challenges? How are you nurturing your own faith through the things you read and the people that you mix with? Do you belong to a group or community that encourages you to discuss and reflect on your Christian faith and how it helps you make sense of life.

S – Students; Our students come from a wide range of religious experience and knowledge. We need to be mindful of what our students bring to our Christian Studies units that will impact on their learning. What do you know about your students that can inform your teaching of Christian Studies? What do you know about their religious experience, their likes and interests that will help you design engaging and relevant units of work?

I – Inquiry based learning is an important pedagogical approach in Christian Studies that will engage students on a journey of discovery to explore Christianity and inspire their own questions. As Christian Studies teachers what would you identify as the key features of Christian Studies at your school? What are the three things you would share with beginning teachers about what is important in teaching Christian Studies at your school?

Blessings,
Anne Dohnt & Sue Kupke
LSA Christian Studies Officers

Australian Lutheran World Service—ALWS

Resources for teaching about service and justice issues

Andrew Weiss has worked tirelessly in Lutheran schools across our region developing understandings on service and justice. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you Andrew for your work, passion and inspiration. We wish Andrew every blessing as he returns to Cornerstone and look forward to welcoming the new ALWS Education officer in due course.

If you haven’t visited the ALWS website please do. Please remember the African famine in your prayers and school offerings. www.alws.org.au
A shared vision is not an idea ... it is rather, a force in people's hearts ... at its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question 'What do we want to create?'

Peter Senge

Inspirations for Christian Studies leaders

The year is galloping away from us and it may be a good time to reflect on your goals as a Christian Studies leader and your progress towards them.

- What has been your influence in Christian Studies this year?
- When was the last time you met with your principal to discuss your vision and goals for Christian Studies?
- In what ways have you nurtured a learning community among the Christian Studies teachers through meeting together to focus on a theological or pedagogical interest?

Is Christian Studies the same or different to Christian education, worship, service learning?

The recent SchooLink article, by Barry Kahl provides great stimulus for discussions around the nature and purpose of Christian Studies. Christian Studies leaders at leaders’ days have shared how their staff of Christian Studies teachers is often changing and they have found value in discussing the nature of Christian Studies as key learning area and how it is similar and different to Christian education, worship and service learning.

What are Christian Studies Leaders doing to support the ongoing development of Christian Studies?

The following are some of the activities that Christian Studies leaders have shared with us during school visits. Christian Studies leaders have been:

- Using staff meeting time to discuss, clarify meanings and develop some common understandings of Christian studies, Christian education, worship and service learning.
- Using the Equip module resources shared at CS Leaders’ days for theological study for staff.
- In schools where all classes explore the same CSCF key idea at the same time, teachers have used staff devotion time in the last week(s) of term as a time to read and discuss the theological notes or readings from Equip.
- Developing a DVD of a unit of work to use as the basis for discussing and innovating on Christian Studies units.

Resources for Christian Studies

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt63PKN_8MQ&feature=related

Jesus didn’t come to start a new religion. This is a thought provoking clip that could be used as part of Jesus unit or as a worship or class devotion while studying Jesus. It could be used to provoke questions on the purpose of Jesus’ life, ministry, death and resurrection.

http://edu.glogster.com

At a recent Christian Studies Leaders day, Tori Weiss, the principal of Springhead shared the glogsters that her Year 7 students had completed as part of a unit on Jesus. This is a great multimedia tool for students.

www.wordle.com

A wordle provides the opportunity for students to record their ideas through statements or key words on a topic. The wordle develops a word art based on the most common words.

http://www.max7.org

This site has some excellent video clips of Jesus’ parables and other Bible stories.
God calls us to make decisions. Many of our decisions will prove to be poor. God is neither surprised nor alarmed. God continues to love and forgive us – and to use us, Mark Worthing, p 199, When Choice Matters – an introduction to Christian ethics.

EQUIP Module 8: Theology

How do you live your life? What guides the decisions you make?

How do you know right from wrong?

These are big life questions and just some of the questions we have been exploring in Equip Module 8. Module 8 provides the opportunity to consider different approaches to the teaching of Christianity in the world Key idea 3, which explores how people make decisions using different frameworks. In a world that loves a quick opinion poll as the solution or response to often quite complex issues, it can be helpful to teach our students to think deeply and critically and to reflect on the decision making frameworks available to them. In this issue we provide some inspirations that have been drawn from Module 8 and our work with schools. We hope that it provides some stimulation for your classroom or staff meetings.

Ethics: a definition

When we think about what is good or evil, right or wrong with regard to an action, attitude, speech, or some other thing, we are engaging in ethics. Ethics is not a list of do’s and don’ts, as is sometimes supposed. Ethics is our reflection on moral guidelines and their application to concrete life situations…

Ethics is the theoretical reflection on particular actions and behaviour. Ethics has to do with our thinking about and evaluation of the consequences of particular actions and behaviours…


Some important theological considerations in a study of ethics:

- How a person decides how to live involves more than a study of moral dilemmas. An alternate essential question is what kind of person am I becoming?
- A study of ethics is strongly connected to what it means to be human. Christian ethics encompasses people’s relationship with themselves, God, others, creation.

EQUIP Module 8: Pedagogy

Teaching ethics

In the teaching of ethics and decision-making we need to support students to become ethical thinkers. How do you support students to think deeply? The following examples can provide a beginning for your reflections on your classroom strategies.

Thought encouraging questions—Depth

Could you give me more details?
What connections/distinctions can be made?
Is that the same as or different from this idea?
What are the implications of that?
How should we explain this?
If someone agreed, what would follow?
What does that tell us?

Adapted from Developing a Thinking Classroom C. Golding (2005)

Discussion strategies—Keeping a conversation going

Resist responding to student comments yourself. Become comfortable with silences during class discussion, and wait while a student formulates an answer. Remember that good discussion is based more on responses than on reactions. The difference between a reaction—which is intuitive, instinctual, instantaneous, gut-level—and a response—which is well-considered, thoughtful, deliberative, analytical—is a matter of seconds. Help students respond to one another using conversational roles.

Adapted from http://drscavanaugh.org/discussion/inclass/discussion_strategies.htm
Reflection on practice

Schools for thought:
Compass screened a three part programme on how state and religious schools are teaching ethical decision making. This is a great resource for leading a staff session on developing your school’s approach to teaching ethics, philosophical thinking and decision making.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqbAWAllEnY (Part one of three)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E95QrKs6hb4&feature=related (Part two of three)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud6aCjPUaBc&feature=related (Part three of three)

Decision making frameworks

There are many helpful decision making frameworks that can form a part of the class or school student well being programme. Stop, think, do and POOCH are two that have been identified by Equip participants as helpful either at a class or school level. What framework do you use in your class? Would it be helpful for the school to discuss what happens at different year levels and consider a school approach?

P - What is the problem?
O - What are the options?
O - What are the likely outcomes for each of these options?
C - Choose one of the options
H - How did it go?

Inspirations for teachers

Jan Grajczonek writes in her article, Christian morality and young students, that picture books can be a very effective source for teaching decision making. The following picture books may be helpful;

Moral Decision Making
Pfister Marcus, The Rainbow Fish, North South Books, New York, 1992 (Primary)
De Paola, Tomie, Now One Foot, Now the Other, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1981 (Middle Primary)
Fox, Mem, Whoever You Are, Hodder, 1997. (Primary)
Fox, Mem, Koala Lou, Puffin Books, 1991 (Junior Primary)
Joslin, Mary, The Minstrel’s Tale, Lion Publishing Company, 1999
Sandy Sasso, God Said Amen, Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 2000 (Middle-Upper Primary)
Wild, Margaret, Miss Lily’s Fabulous pink feather boa, Penguin 2005 (Junior Primary)

Social Justice and Ethical Issues