



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE

Horizons
of Hope

FOUNDATION STATEMENT:

Assessment

in a Catholic School



What is Assessment?

Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data about learners' progress and achievement to improve learning (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2015) and to support growth along a learning continuum. Deeply embedded in the learning and teaching cycle, the assessment process provides reliable and valid evidence of a student's learning (Partnerships for 21st Century Learning undated) and informs adjustments to teaching strategies that influence the nature, amount and rate of learning.

Assessment is a means of uncovering the narrative of our learners: their progress, success and challenges in learning. At its best, assessment engages students, teachers and families in an authentic relationship about learning. This forms the basis for learning partnerships that enable the full flourishing of every student across all learning domains.



How is Assessment enacted in a Catholic school?

Assessment in a Catholic school focuses on growth across religious, physical, cognitive, social and emotional domains. This multidimensional approach to growth respects the sacred dignity of the learner and engenders a feeling of being valued and understood. When the learning community

is open to encounter, and the importance of relationships is valued, assessment becomes more than just results. Learning communities understand and value the narrative of their students, their context, their world and their families in order to see their students fully flourish.

Assessment in a Catholic school focuses on growth across religious, physical, cognitive, social and emotional domains.



Focused on Growth

Assessment that is relevant and timely to each learner requires teachers to be in dialogue with their colleagues and students. While assessment may differ greatly at primary and secondary levels, the focus on growth is the same. Both primary and secondary learners require educators who provide relevant and timely assessment and who work in a collaborative manner. When assessment design is collaborative and focused on growth, learners can not only understand their learning progress, but also the challenge and effort it takes to achieve

beyond their comfort zone (Masters 2013b). They learn to embrace challenge and feedback and to persevere while forming and valuing positive attitudes towards learning.

Evaluating evidence of learning ensures effective monitoring of growth for every student along a learning continuum. Working individually or collaboratively, educators come to valid, consistent and on-balance judgments (Masters 2013a) of achievement and critically question the impact of their decisions on student learning.

These decisions inform future adjustments to teaching strategies in order to design effective learning experiences for all students.

Effective assessment design also considers ways of gathering evidence of student growth. Student conversations, learning journals, peer assessment, observations or standardised tests all provide opportunities to gather rich learning evidence. Authentic dialogue based on evidence of achievement empowers communities to reveal the narrative of their learners and facilitate growth.

For educators to design learning and teaching that is meaningful and differentiated they must consider where their learners are at a particular point in time. With a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the breadth and depth of curriculum, as well as a well-rounded understanding of what the progression of learning is for each learning area, teachers are able to make accurate judgments. These judgments, based on evidence, are of a student's proximal development (Griffin & Care 2009) and ensure progress is made over time.

An openness to encountering the other and a willingness to continually refine classroom practice is what is required in this dialogical space.

Relational

Respecting the sacred dignity of learners provides a strong foundation for authentic dialogue. An openness to encountering the other and a willingness to continually refine classroom practice is what is required in this dialogical space. Within this active and relational learning community, students, teachers and families continue to strengthen their learning partnerships in authentic dialogue that is linked directly to learning and growth.

It is these learning partnerships that empower learners to work with their families and teachers to articulate clear learning goals, to reflect on their learning and to measure their learning against success criteria. They do this in a range of ways while always being supported to articulate their own progress in a manner that is meaningful to them. When students are permitted ownership of their learning they are more likely to view themselves and their learning positively. Student voice is a crucial aspect of the learning design process and this emphasis creates confident and capable students.

Assessment design that makes knowledge, skills and dispositions explicit allows educators to frame assessment as a transparent, inclusive learning experience. Students are able to make decisions about what they need to learn next, and to take greater responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their own learning and growth.

In this way, learners and teachers are both partners in the learning as the teacher constantly shapes and evolves their practice and pedagogy, while the learner perseveres and progresses in response to evidence uncovered and timely feedback. It is through this relationship that learners are animated to see themselves as capable and successful.

Through such partnering, teachers not only become learners themselves, but also begin to see learning through the eyes of their students. This visibility is essential if teachers are to continuously challenge students to reach for the next step, and if they are to clearly see whether teaching and learning strategies are achieving their intended goals.
(Fullan & Langworthy 2014, p. 12)

Ongoing and Continuous

Assessment in a Catholic school is continuous – effective teachers are assessing all the time, alert to the needs of students, founded on knowledge of each student's narrative. This respect of the individual is demonstrated through continuous opportunities for learners to progress and flourish. For this to happen, educators must use approaches that establish the point that a learner has reached in their learning and share this with students, so that they can set their own learning goals and targets.

My role ... is to evaluate the effect I have on my students. It is to 'know thy impact', it is to understand this impact, and it is to act on this knowing and understanding. (Hattie 2012, p. 157)


Continuous, accurate and forward-focused feedback to learners is critical so that they can reflect on and evaluate learning. High-quality feedback and encouragement (Fullan & Langworthy 2014, p. 13) supports learners to persevere and

continuously build upon their learning, always developing their capacity to monitor, track and assess learning for themselves. Learners come to understand the process of learning more deeply, actively seeking feedback and providing it to their peers and their teachers alike. They have opportunities to make mistakes, trial, test, experience and practice in an environment that is safe and challenging.

When gathering continuous evidence of student learning, learning communities can harness and share new technologies and tools for understanding, measuring and diagnosing learning progress so that learners are active in leading their own learning. Learners are supported to embrace technology to articulate and share knowledge and understandings, to reflect on and discover their misconceptions, or to create new knowledge, always leading their learning and that of others.



Continuous, accurate and forward-focused feedback to learners is critical so that they can reflect on and evaluate learning.



Why is Assessment in a Catholic school important given the Vision and Context?

If Catholic educators are focused on the progression and growth of learners, across all learning areas, they must be supported to embrace a view of themselves as successful.

Honouring sacred dignity

Assessment in a Catholic school uncovers evidence of a learner's journey in both progress and challenge – uncovering their own learning narrative. Authentic, varied and diverse assessment pays attention to every learner and honours the sacred dignity of each through local assessment, which demonstrates an understanding, valuing and a knowing of each learner in the community.

Learning together

Assessment in a Catholic school requires leaders, teachers and learners to learn alongside one another, as they uncover evidence that informs both learning and teaching. Learners use both assessment and feedback to reflect on and evaluate their own progress, while teachers and leaders use assessment and evidence to inform and shape the design for learning.



Heaven looks like this

Heaven to me is where colours are alive.

[Rachel, Year 3]

Ensuring the highest standards through evidence

Assessment in a Catholic school is deeply embedded in the learning and teaching cycle. As evidence of learning is uncovered, teachers and students use this to inform future learning and teaching opportunities. This also requires richer forms of assessment and data-gathering techniques such as student conversations, learning journals, peer interactions, films, debates and observations-in-action to provide holistic evidence of the learner and their growth.

Honouring equitable access and opportunity for all

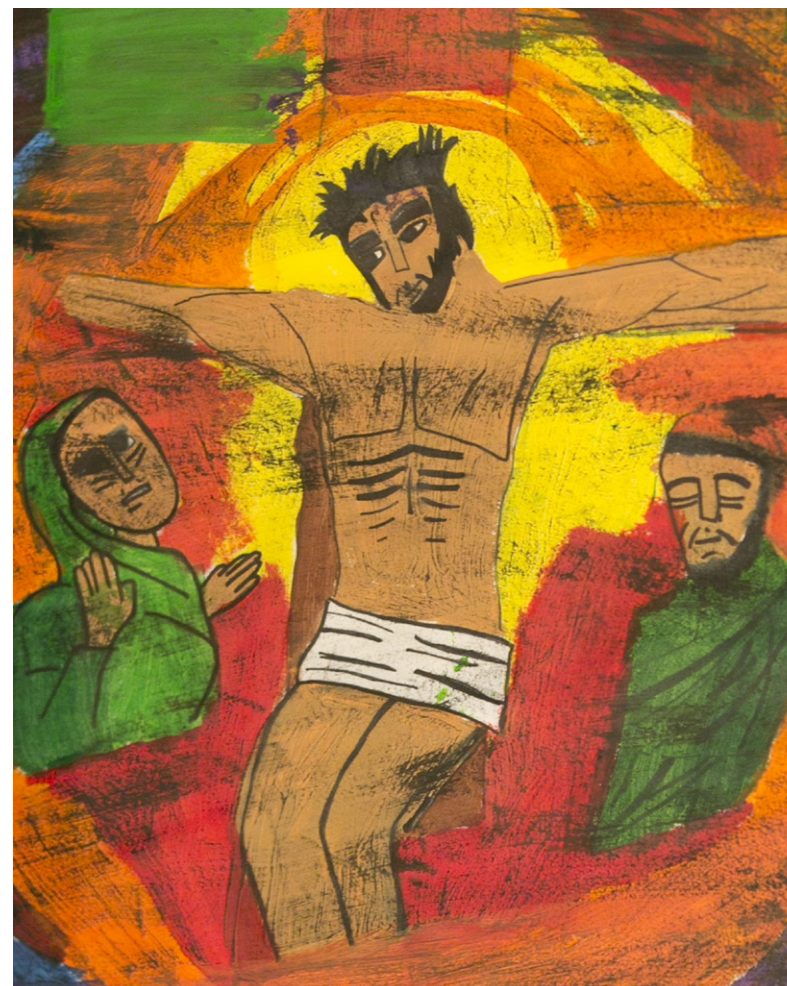
Assessment in a Catholic school is hope-filled, supporting every learner to develop self-belief and confidence in their learning. This happens when teachers make considered choices about the design of assessment, the timing of assessment and the feedback that ensues, in relation to each and every student's narrative. Learners are supported to understand their own continuum of learning; to know what they have achieved, the progress they are making, and to recognise that they are being successful in learning.

Embracing difference and diversity

Assessment design in a Catholic school appreciates and embraces every learner by being transparent, inclusive and responsive. Assessment design involves students in the process, inviting them to determine how and when they will display their evidence of learning and the progress they are making, as determined by their own continuum. Learners are supported to deeply engage with their learning as they begin to choose and be a part of the evaluation process through authentically personalised assessment.

Assessment in a Catholic school is hope-filled, supporting every learner to develop self-belief and confidence in their learning.

Saviour



Resources

What resources are available to support assessment in a Catholic school?

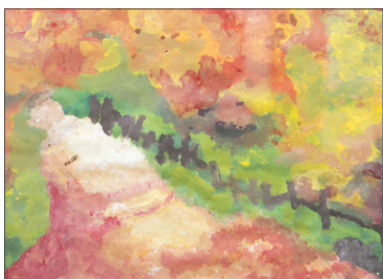
- Curriculum Renewal in a Catholic School – Design elements resources (Catholic Education Melbourne 2015)
 - A series of resources to assist Catholic educators in designing holistic curriculum in Catholic schools.
- Curriculum in Catholic Schools portal (Catholic Education Melbourne 2016)
 - A portal for all things about curriculum implementation, including resources, communications and examples of practice.
- Guidelines for reporting student progress and achievement for all Victorian Catholic schools (Catholic Education Victoria 2015)
- Insight Assess Portal VCAA (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2015)
 - The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) portal for providing information and advice grounded in research from around the world about the role of assessment and feedback in improving student progress and achievement in learning.

References

- Catholic Education Melbourne 2016, *Curriculum in a Catholic School portal*, Catholic Education Melbourne, East Melbourne, accessed 8 August 2016 <http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/css/ausvels.htm>.
- Catholic Education Melbourne 2015, *Curriculum Renewal Resources*, Catholic Education Melbourne, East Melbourne, accessed 8 August 2016 <http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/css/ausvels/holisticplanning.htm>.
- Catholic Education Victoria 2015, *Reporting Student Progress and Achievement – 2016 Guidelines for Victorian Catholic Schools*, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, East Melbourne, accessed 8 August 2016 <http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589934959>.
- Fullan, M & Langworthy, M 2014, *A Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies Find Deep Learning*, Pearson, London.
- Fullan, M & Langworthy, M 2013, *Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, Collaborative Impact*, Seattle.
- Griffin, P & Care, E 2009, 'Assessment is for teaching', *Independence*, 34 (2), 57–59, accessed 10 December 2015 www.arc-ots.com/alp/resources/M1_reading.pdf.
- Hattie, J 2012, *Visible Learning for teachers*, Routledge, London.
- Masters, G 2013a, *Reforming Educational Assessment: Imperatives, principles and challenges*, ACER, Victoria.
- Masters, G 2013b, *Towards a growth mindset in assessment*, ACER, Victoria, accessed 7 September 2015 http://research.acer.edu.au/ar_misc/17.
- Partnership for 21st Century Learning undated, *The 4Cs Research Series*, P21, Washington, DC, accessed 29 January 2016 www.p21.org/our-work/4cs-research-series.
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) 2015, *Insight Assess Portal: Understanding Individuals*, accessed 7 September 2015 www.insight.vic.edu.au.

Acknowledgments

This document has been developed in 2016 as part of the *Horizons of Hope, Education Framework* publication series. Catholic Education Melbourne wishes to acknowledge the following schools and students who have contributed artwork to support the development of this *Horizons of Hope Foundation Statement: Assessment in a Catholic School* publication.



Impressionist-inspired landscape
Chloe, Year 7
Padua College, Mornington



In Memory of Vincent
Tayla, Year 10
Catholic Regional College
Melton, Melton



Heaven looks like this
Rachel, Year 3
St Anthony's Primary
School, Alphington



Saviour
Benjamin, Year 6
St Margaret's Primary
School, Maribyrnong

First published September 2016

Catholic Education Melbourne
228 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002

© Catholic Education Melbourne 2016

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

Printed on environmentally friendly,
recycled paper



Licensed under NEALS
The NEALS License permits
Australian schools and educational
bodies to copy print and digital
materials for educational use in
schools free of charge.

