



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE

Horizons
of Hope

FOUNDATION STATEMENT:

Families as partners

in Catholic school communities



Spring Is Here

Acrylic paint creates a background showing careful blending and shading.
Black fine liner marks the trunk and branches of the trees and buttons
have been used to represent the blooms. (Maddison, Year 5)

What is the role of families in Catholic school communities?

The three major contexts in which children learn are the family, the school and the community. Families are the first educators of their children. From the moment of welcoming a new life into the family, parents take on the serious responsibility of raising, nurturing and educating their child. This duty extends to every aspect of the development of the human person.

When the child moves beyond the earliest years, families are joined by a school on their child's learning journey. This is when a long-term partnership between


home and school begins. In choosing a Catholic school, parents enter a partnership with the school in which there is shared privilege and responsibility for the child's faith formation, learning and wellbeing. Families have chosen a school community where learning is steeped in the teachings of Jesus, where the quality of the education matches their aspirations for their child, and one where their child is enabled to be a 'beacon of goodness, integrity and justice' in the world (Pope Francis 2014). Families have

chosen a partner to help them help their child achieve the highest outcomes possible – a partner to support them in their role as primary nurturers of their child's formation to adulthood. It 'is a journey in hope and towards hope' undertaken in partnership (Catholic Education Melbourne 2015, p. 4).

The child is held at the centre of this partnership for, as taught and modelled by Jesus, they are at the heart of the Kingdom of God (Luke 18: 16). As children begin school, families and schools forge a relationship to fulfil this sacred educational mission.

Optimising the life chances of students is at the heart of the Catholic school's mandate (Meeting Point 2011). When Catholic schools and families work together for the formation of all children, the school community is strengthened, and the whole of society benefits as a sense of ownership and belonging to community grows for children and young people, and for their families (Bryk et al. 2010).

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How are partnerships with families honoured in a Catholic school community?

Encounter through partnership

Reverence for the sacred dignity of each learner provides the foundation for pedagogy in a Catholic school. Here, pedagogy is understood as learning in relationship with God – the teacher, family and child walking alongside each other in faith.

In this context, a key element of all pedagogy is encounter. Encounter happens when the sacred dignity of each person in the partnership is honoured. Each person brings their own story and world view, and listens with an open heart to the story of others. Each person learns alongside the other, seeing in all the image and likeness of God. In this way, a foundation for partnership is formed. It guides all relationships within the partnership.

The partnership between the family, the child and the school centres around the child, and it re-forms and shapes as the child grows. Each partner has a role to play in developing this relationship within the partnership, designed to enrich each learner's experience of God, community, learning and achievement, and encounter with the Catholic faith.



Living with a Courageous Heart

Each individual spot, reminiscent of a mosaic, has been created from a thumbprint by nearly every student and staff member. Creating this painting in such a way symbolises that together we can achieve great things. (Whole-school collaboration)

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Activating engagement

Leaders in Catholic schools have a clearly defined vision for partnering with families and inspire others to follow this vision. They create the conditions that enable children, families and staff to work together for each child's school education. They plan for and provide the supports and structures that help teachers form relationships with families, and opportunities

for open communication and dialogue. Leaders support parents to connect with each other, helping them form a broad web of relationships within the school community. They ensure the voice of parents is heard at every level of decision-making. In doing this, leaders help strengthen the community and create space for families to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Teachers in Catholic schools reach out to engage with families, bringing them into the full knowledge that their role as parent and their particular knowledge of their child is valued and essential for the best possible educational outcomes. Mindful of the three major contexts in which children learn, teachers are curious about the inner life of the child, and their life beyond the classroom,

seeking to know the family's narrative and aspirations and that of the community surrounding them. Teachers are active in the surrounding community. They differentiate curriculum and pedagogy based on this knowledge, and maintain an ongoing learning conversation with the child and the family, creatively enabling the voice of each to be heard.



Leaf Study

My inspiration for this piece is my best friend. She once told me that no two leaves are alike and that every leaf has its own unique look. That gave me the idea of using patterns and lines to create something new. (Mikayla, Year 6)

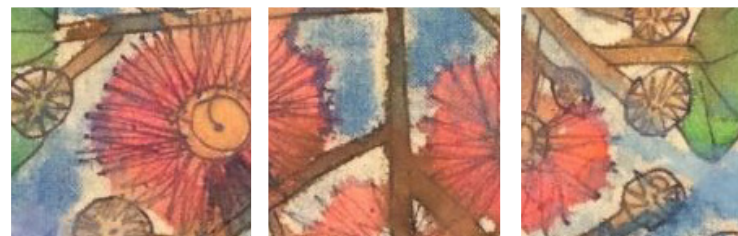
Families entering a partnership with a Catholic school continue their primary role in guiding their child's formation. They have high expectations; they are in conversation with their child, and open them to experiences beyond school that enrich their formal learning. Families are responsive and available to their child, and advocate for them. They remain in relationship with the school,

ever willing to restore and renew the relationship. They respect the other and the experience of encounter with Self, and God as core to formation. Families join together in a school community, adopting a stance of responsibility for all. They teach their child the ways of living in communion with others, recognising that no one child is educated at the expense of another.

Children and young people are at the centre of the partnership. They link home and school learning. They bring families into conversation about what and how they learn, demystifying school for their families. They pave the way for families to feel comfortable and confident at school. Children and young

people share aspects of their life beyond school to enrich learning at school. Empowered through the relationship between school and home and gifted with God's grace, they are animated to become agents for their learning, taking responsibility for their emerging story and shaping who they are.

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In a Catholic school, parents, children and teachers work together to shape learning that draws on the full richness of a child's world.

Three-way learning relationship

Parents, teachers and children come together in a three-way learning relationship. When the unique knowledge of each partner is brought together, opportunities for the full flourishing of the child abound. Parents have an intimate and embodied knowledge of their child (Pushor 2015). Children

and young people have emerging knowledge of themselves and how they learn. Teachers have a deep knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum.

In a Catholic school, parents, children and teachers work together to shape learning that draws on the full richness of a child's world. In this context,

teachers are learners too, seeing learning through the eyes of their students, interpreting formal curriculum to respond to the learning narratives of each child. Families share how their child learns and interacts and contributes; they begin to see school-based learning through the eyes of their child, and through the eyes of the teachers.



Australian Flora

This artwork represents the beauty of Australian flora. It takes me to a special place, my Nanna and Pa's beach house, located on the stunning Great Ocean Road. (Chloe, Year 6)

Koala Family

Watercolour and pastel on paper. (Mia, Year 2)



Why are partnerships with families important in a Catholic school community given the vision and context?

Honouring sacred dignity

The basis for relationships in a Catholic school community is threefold: the education of the child, the Catholic faith and the unconditional positive regard for all. 'Human flourishing is supported by appreciating and celebrating the innate dignity and immeasurable worth of each person' (Catholic Education Melbourne 2018, p. 4). In honouring each of

these elements within the relationship, families and schools find ways to connect, reconcile differences, provide support in adversity, celebrate achievement, express concern and curiosity, and plan for a hope-filled future. They each recognise the face of God in the other, staying focused on the formation of the child, and the integrity and growth of the community.

Belief in the child as formed in the image of God, without question or judgment, deserving of the dignity and respect this affords, means there can be no compromise on quality for any child or any family. 'What so ever you do to the least of mine, you do unto me' (Matthew 25: 40).



One in Christ. Engaging Minds. Igniting Hearts.

The materials used to create the mural are marine plywood, paint and recycled plastic lids, screws and varnish. The mural was created to reflect the Nazareth College 2019 theme: 'One in Christ. Engaging Minds. Igniting Hearts'. (Year 12 VCAL Class)

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Learning together

'The experience of belonging and connectedness is essential for wellbeing to thrive' (Catholic Education Melbourne 2017, p. 4).

Catholic school communities build relationships between school and home, between parent, teacher and child, and between learning and

living, focused on formation – particularly the learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children. Learning becomes a collaboration between all in the learning community – and community becomes central to the pedagogy. Catholic school communities want to know the families and their needs, aspirations and life stories, and

acknowledge and support them in their changing circumstances. As families and the community change, the school responds, always seeking new ways to build and strengthen relationships that support every child to flourish, embracing, respecting and celebrating diversity. Together, families and schools empower each child to develop a sense of

meaning, purpose and agency, eager to shape and enrich the world around them for the common good.

'Cultivated in communion with God and in relationship with others, [the] wellbeing [of all] is nourished through the actions, interactions and attitudes of all community members' (Catholic Education Melbourne 2018, p. 4).

Japanese Landscape Scroll Paintings

Students used the technique of dropping ink onto a page using a pipette and blowing the ink around the page using a straw. Once dry, they painted other details with watercolour paints. (Years 1 and 2 collaboration)

As families and the community change, the school responds, always seeking new ways to build and strengthen relationships that support every child to flourish, embracing, respecting and celebrating diversity.

Commitment to highest standards

Family engagement in learning contributes to children's wellbeing, learning and life chances. As schools partner with families, the sanctity of the family as primary educators of their child is honoured. All efforts are based on knowing the child and the family and supporting

the family to engage in their child's school-based learning. By partnering with the school, families equally choose to commit to the highest standards possible for their child, and for every child in the school. This commitment is at the heart of the growth and strength of a flourishing Catholic school community.



Bunjil the Spirit Creator

Bunjil is the ancestral spiritual creator of the Boon Wurrung and Kulin Nation people of Victoria. (Archie, Year 3)

Indigenous-inspired Turtle

Jeremy used watercolours to paint a turtle and filled it with Indigenous-inspired, intricate patterns in blue and green tones. (Jeremy, Year 5)

Sea Life

Pencil, crayons, paint and gold and silver pens. (Hamish, Year 6)

Honouring equitable access and opportunity

All children deserve to learn and succeed at school regardless of their background. This is a moral imperative for Catholic schools.

In any community, where one family is less able to access learning, the curriculum or the dialogue with school educators, the community is less than it can

be. Schools honour the principles of social inclusion, welcoming all families seeking a Catholic education for their child. Working in solidarity, preferencing those in need, and supporting the common good are key objectives of the Catholic school community.

Without judgement, Catholic schools remain in communication with each family, tailoring the means of this dialogue so no

child or family is disadvantaged. As children grow, they become more and more engaged in the dialogue, and the school adjusts the opportunities and means of access for the family and child, just as the family adjusts the way it communicates with their child and with the school. There can be no barriers to this vital flow of information. The dialogue is open and honest, and the trust



Urban Landscape

My piece was painted using acrylic paint on wood and portrays a stylised depiction of New York's urban environment. The artwork reflects a street art style with reference to the artist Farid Rueda, whose work features bold vibrant colours and visually compelling patterns. (Flora, Year 11)

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and communication between the school and the family is focused on honouring the dignity of the family, the school and most importantly, of the child, 'so they may develop as optimistic, resilient young people of faith, ready to be effective members of community, contributing to and enriching the world around them' (Catholic Education Melbourne 2018, p. 3).



Love Is Stronger Than Pride

Treasure the ones that you hold close; who protect, lead and care for you unconditionally. (Natasha, Year 12)

Resources

What resources are available to support families as partners?

Catholic Education Melbourne resources

- *Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing in a Catholic School* (2018): <https://www.cem.edu.au/Our-Schools/Curriculum-Learning-Programs/Horizons-of-Hope/Wellbeing.aspx>
- *eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities* (2018): https://www.cem.edu.au/CatholicEducationMelbourne/media/Documentation/Documents/eXcel-Wellbeing-for-learning_Guide_May-2018_CEM.pdf
- Family and Community Engagement webpage: <https://www.cem.edu.au/OurSchools/Curriculum-Learning-Programs/Student-Wellbeing/Family-and-CommunityEngagement>
- School Boards webpage: <https://www.cem.edu.au/Our-Schools/Parents-as-Partners/SchoolBoards.aspx>

Other resources

- Catholic School Parents Victoria website: <http://cspv.catholic.edu.au/>
- *Parent and Family Engagement: An implementation guide for school communities* (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2020): <https://www.aracy.org.au/documents/item/647>
- *Family School Partnership Framework* (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment): <https://www.education.gov.au/family-school-partnerships-framework-1>

- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] 2011): <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>
- *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2014): <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/toolsresources/resource/australian-professional-standard-for-principals>
- *New Role, New Partnerships: A school leader's guide* (AITSL 2017): https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/lead-develop/scenarios/new-role-newpartnerships.pdf?sfvrsn=dbe0ed3c_4&utm_source=New+role+new+partnerships
- *Partners in Education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships* (Southwest Educational Development Library 2014): <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/framework/>
- *Partners4Learning: Partnership framework* (Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT 2010): <http://www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au/features-apps/partners4learning-partnershipframework>
- *Researching Parent Engagement: A qualitative field study* (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth 2016): https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/312/filename/ARACY-Researching-parent-engagement-a-qualitative-study.pdf

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Francis (Pope) 2014, *Address on the occasion of the 6th Asian Youth Day*, 16 August, accessed 26 June 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco_20140816_corea-leader-apostolato-laico.html.

Meeting Point 2011, *Common Ground, Common Good: Responding to the challenges of social inclusion in Catholic school communities*, Meeting Point, Melbourne, accessed 26 June 2020, <http://meetingpoint.org.au/common-ground%2c-common-good.html>.

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Acknowledgments

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One in Christ. Engaging Minds. Igniting Hearts.
Year 12 VCAL Class, Nazareth College, Noble Park North



Autumn Trees
Gustav, Prep, St Paul the Apostle, Doreen



Koala Family
Mia, Year 2, Corpus Christi School, Werribee



Sea Life
Hamish, Year 6, St Joseph's School, Black Rock



Bunjil the Spirit Creator
Archie, Year 3, Sacred Heart School, Sandringham



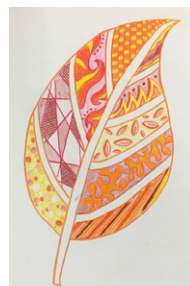
Australian Flora
Chloe, Year 6, St Charles Borromeo School, Templestowe



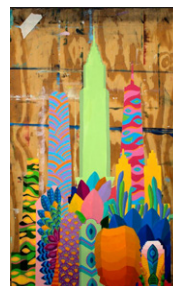
Spring Is Here
Maddison, Year 5, St John the Baptist School, Ferntree Gully



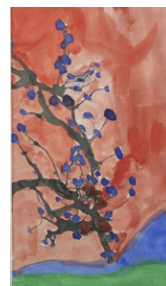
Living with a Courageous Heart
Whole-school collaboration, Mount St Joseph Girls' College, Altona



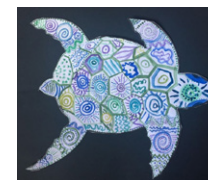
Leaf Study
Mikayla, Year 6, Our Lady of the Way School, Kingsbury



Urban Landscape
Flora, Year 11, Loreto Mandeville Hall, Toorak



Japanese Landscape Scroll Paintings
Years 1 and 2 collaboration, St Anthony's School, Alphington



Indigenous-inspired Turtle
Jeremy, Year 5, St James the Apostle School, Hoppers Crossing North



Love Is Stronger Than Pride
Natasha, Year 12, Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill

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