

At its heart Catholic Schooling is an invitation by the Church to parents, students and teacher to an ongoing encounter with Christ. Our moral purpose is situated in the evangelising mission of the Church and its commitment to provide Quality Catholic schooling.

In 2007 principals in the Parramatta system of schools met with leaders of the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and developed a new framework for Catholic Education in the Diocese of Parramatta.

Parramatta Catholic Education Framework



The Framework recognises four domains central to our underlying goal of Quality Catholic Schooling. The Framework is supported by the development over time of system leadership documents which explicate different elements. Our Statement on Learning describes the learning model which underlies both the Framework and the Theory of Action.

Quality Catholic Schooling is the expression of our Strategic Intent:

1. Improving learning outcomes for all students
 2. Promoting a professional and rewarding working life for teachers.
- The work of the school is learning, and the Catholic School supports the work of the Church as an agent of learning. The work of the Church, the development of the individual and the good of society are promoted within a Quality Catholic School through improving learning outcomes.

Learning and Teaching is the core work of our system of schools. The Statement on Learning conceptualises learning as:

- Occurring in the learner's context
- Making connections between what is known and what is being learned in an active, lifelong and interactive process
- Requiring metacognition.

Effective teaching is both an art and a science involving who the teacher is and what the teacher does. It recognises how learning occurs and personalises the learning process in order to address the student's context, meet the student where they are, and design the next step.



Leading Learning is an activity in four domains:

- Catholic Culture (the direct interaction between leadership and Quality Catholic Schooling)
- Leading Pedagogy (the interaction between leadership and Learning and Teaching)
- Leading Self and Others (the interaction between leadership and the Community of Learners)
- Stewardship (the interaction between leadership and the Learning Environment)

Effective leadership requires the integration of all four of these domains. Leadership is a team activity modelled on the servant leadership of Christ.

The Learning Environment is constituted by:

- The Pedagogical environment (learner-centred, knowledge-centred, assessment-centred or community-centred)
- The Resourced environment (including learning materials, finances, and information and communications technology)
- The Built environment
- The Natural environment

Construction of an optimal pedagogical environment requires appropriate building and resourcing and must recognise the natural environment within which these take place.

The Community of Learners that makes up both the school and the system of schools is constituted by the intersection of:

- The community of the Church and particularly the parishes within the diocese
- The parent community who entrust their sons and daughters to the care of the schools
- The wider community within which pastors, students, parents and teachers live
- The students, teachers and other staff within and among the schools.

It is this community that leads, teaches and learns within the learning environment in order to deliver Quality Catholic Schooling.



The essence of the Theory of Action is in the four arrows that link the five elements. For example, while there are many things that influence student learning we are particularly concerned with the influence of teaching on student learning - the relationship represented by the top arrow.

This Theory of Action is therefore a statement of four cause-and-effect relationships:

1. The influence of teaching on student learning
2. The influence of teacher-learning on teaching
3. The influence of school leadership on teacher learning
4. The influence of system leadership on school leadership

These four influences are represented in the diagram by the four arrows.

The influence of teaching on student learning

There are many influences on student learning. The one we focus on is the influence of teaching. We use the research of John Hattie and others to understand this influence. (Many of the other influences on learning we have no direct control or influence over.)

Effective teaching requires the exercising of knowledge and skill in the context of rich relationships.

The knowledge and skill required of a teacher can be categorised as:

- Content knowledge, an expert understanding of what is being taught and its conceptual structure
- Pedagogical knowledge, an expert understanding of students, the various ways in which they learn, and the ways in which teaching influences learning
- Pedagogical content knowledge, an expert understanding of the ways in which learners come to understand the particular content being addressed, and the particular teaching methods which are suitable.

The key relationships within effective teaching are:

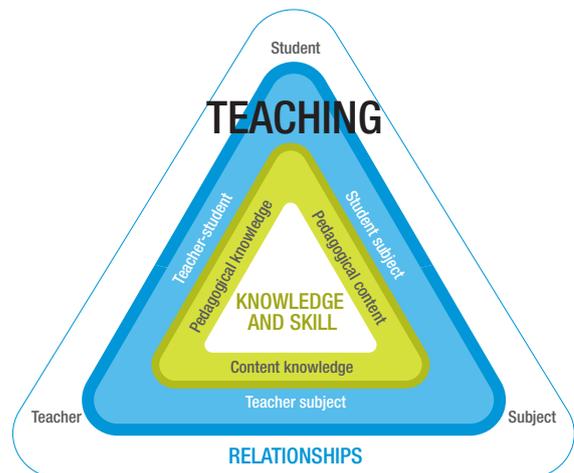
- The Teacher-student relationship, based on respect. The effective teacher knows his/her students, their needs and aspirations
- The teacher-subject relationship. Effective teachers are excited by and passionate about what they are teaching
- The student-subject relationship. As students come to deep knowledge of a particular subject, they develop expertise.

The Theory of Action



If the Framework described above provides the 'What' for activity, the Theory of Action describes the 'How'.

Our theory of action states the connection between the actions undertaken and the effect/s which these actions are meant to produce. It is critical to establish a rational and well-researched basis for believing that the cause is strongly related to the intended effect. (There is no point in merely hoping that doing something will produce the desired effect.) Our Theory of Action is based on the best research available on how schools and systems can go about achieving the best of student learning.





Good teacher-learning occurs in the teacher's own school, with the community of teachers learning from each other - a possibility enhanced by the use of agile learning spaces.

The beginning point is an assessment of the data which identifies students' learning needs. This gives a common basis for a professional dialogue around what the student need is.

The distinguishing characteristic which identifies a school staff as a real Professional Learning Community is the second stage of this cycle: using the assessment of student needs to identify the learning needs for teachers. This process - notably the top-ranking of Hattie's teaching effects, with an effect-size of 0.90 - leads to changed teaching practice, and provides teachers with an opportunity to directly interrogate the interaction between their own activity and the student-learning that results.

Just as for student-learning, good teacher learning:

- Occurs in the teacher's own context
- Establishes connections between the teacher's activity and the student learning
- Is enhanced by metacognitive reflection on both the process of teaching and the process of learning about teaching.

The influence of school leadership on teacher-learning

School leadership acts to promote student achievement through its influence on teacher-learning. This is the Leading Pedagogy element of the Leadership Framework and in the overall Parramatta Catholic Education Framework it represents the influence of the Leading Learning domain on the Learning and Teaching domain.

The research of Viviane Robinson identifies five different dimensions in which pedagogical leadership influences student achievement:

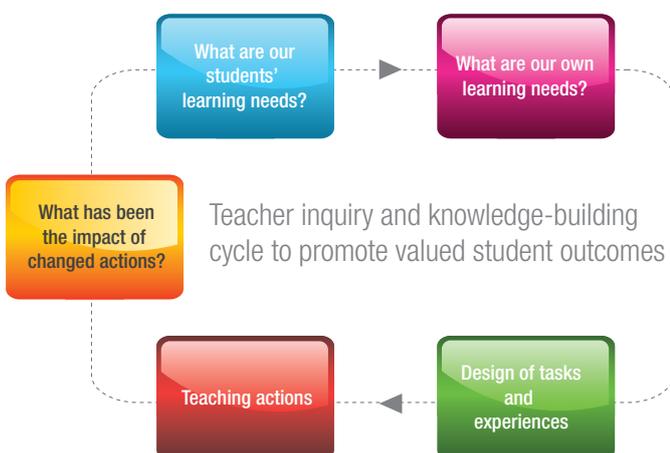
- **Establishing goals and expectations:** Includes the setting communicating and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations, and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals.
- **Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum:** Direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and the provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers. Direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination across classes and year levels and alignment to school goals.
- **Strategic resourcing:** involves aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals; includes provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment.
- **Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development:** Leadership that not only promotes, but directly participates with teachers in, formal or informal professional learning.
- **Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment:** protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms.

Hattie's research notes that techniques and attributes of teaching which are most effective in producing enhanced learning outcomes include:

- Formative evaluation of teaching practices and programs
- Teacher clarity
- Reciprocal teaching
- Feedback
- Positive teacher-student relationships
- Spaced vs massed practice
- Meta-cognitive strategies.

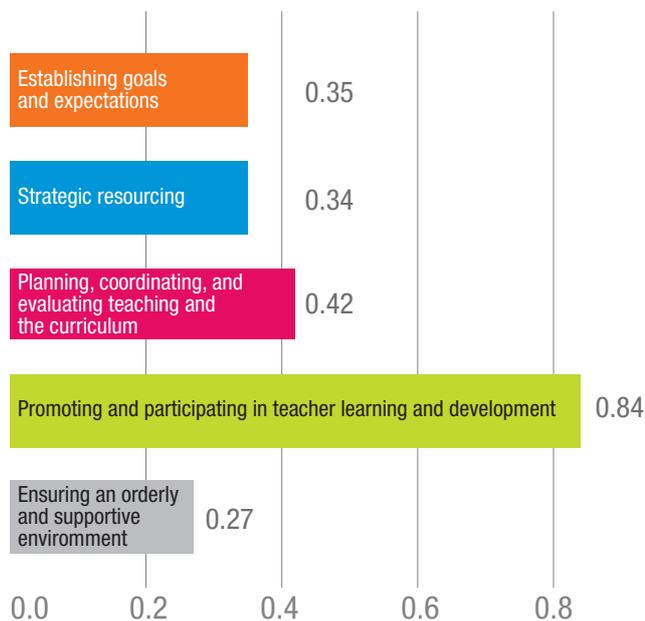
The influence of teacher-learning on teaching

Teachers learn best from each other. We use the work of Helen Timperley and others to understand the influence of teacher-learning on teaching, and to understand the ways in which teachers learn from each other. Good teacher-learning arises from de-privatising practice. Teacher learning is most powerful when the school leadership is deeply involved. (from Timperley et al, 2007)



The effect size of each of these dimensions shows that of them all, the most effective is promoting and participating in teacher-learning and development:

(From Robinson, 2009)



Effective school leadership is the work of a team focused on student learning and working within the teaching staff in teacher-learning.

The influence of system leadership on school leadership

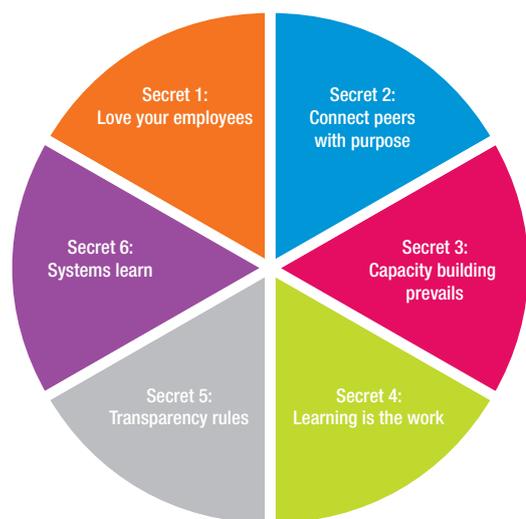
Just as teachers learn most effectively from each other, so school leaders learn most effectively from each other. The 'system leadership' in our understanding is constituted by the leadership teams from all of the schools working with the leadership of the Catholic Education Office.

By being engaged within the system leadership and by aligning the broad system Strategic Intent to the particular context of the school, school leadership teams enhance the impact of system leadership and promote student learning.

Michael Fullan identifies six 'secrets' in ensuring that this model of system leadership is effective:

- **Secret 1: Love your employees.** It is the second element of our strategic intent that we promote a professional and rewarding working life for teachers. Teachers' ability to positively influence students is enhanced as their working lives become more rewarding; conversely, their working lives become more rewarding as their students' learning is enhanced.
- **Secret 2: Connect peers with purpose.** The aim is to promote enhanced teaching through processes which are tight enough to ensure engagement and loose enough to allow for individual insight.

- **Secret 3: Capacity building prevails.** Leaders, teachers and students become engaged as they experience the development of both their own and the system's capacity
- **Secret 4: Learning is the work.** Learning, and learning to work better, are one and the same thing.
- **Secret 5: Transparency rules.** The data when well-used frame good questions, they do not rush to judgment. The data should be available to all and trivialised by none.
- **Secret 6: Systems learn.** What an individual learns departs with him or her. What the system learns develops an enduring culture that is beyond the individual. (From Fullan, 2008)



Bibliography

- Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L. & Cocking, R.R. (eds), (1999) *How People Learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* Washington: National Academy Press
- Congregation for Catholic Education, The, (2008) *Educating Together in Catholic Schools* Vatican: Self
- Fullan, M., (2008) *The Six Secrets of Change* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Hattie, J., (2009) *Visible Learning* London: Routledge
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. & Lloyd, C. (2009) *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why*, Wellington: Ministry of Education Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration.
- Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Heather, B. & Fung, I., (2007) *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis* Wellington, NZ: Ministry of education