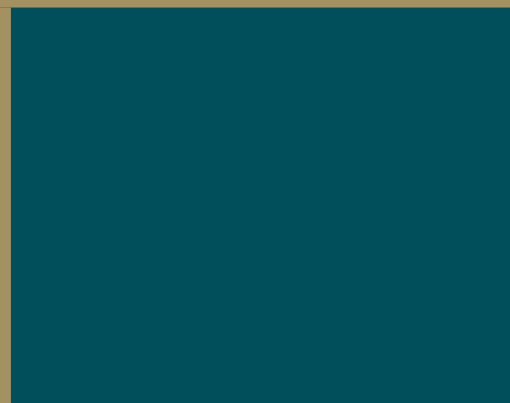


# *Spirit* of Sandhurst



Issue 9  
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Catholic Education Sandhurst





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Top right: Students Abbey Gwilliam and Tiarna Lloyd from Marist College Bendigo with teacher, Nathan Tasca

Centre left: Catholic Education Office Speech Pathologist Ms Josette Godde with Bishop Leslie Tomlinson

Bottom right: Catholic Education Office Director Ms Philomena Billington with Liam Beer from St Luke's Primary Shepparton

Bottom left: Elley-May Featonby and Layla Jennings from Holy Rosary Primary, Heathcote

## Inside Front Cover Photo:

Elijah Kilmartin - St Luke's Primary Shepparton

## Back Cover Photos:

Top left: Maddie Webb and Lewis Beer from St Joseph's College Echuca at the December 2013 Festival of the Sacred in Bendigo.

Centre left: Lucy Newton from Holy Rosary Primary White Hills

Bottom right: Archer Lancaster from St Joseph's Kerang

# Reflections from the Director



*Unity in Diversity* is a key understanding and commitment in our Catholic faith tradition. Three words which at first glance seem simple, but they represent an invitation to a response, not just from some but from everyone in all aspects of life. This edition of *Spirit of Sandhurst* presents a glimpse of the diversity of our Catholic education community. Celebrating diversity is foundational to a Christian community and a mature society. The Second Vatican Council acknowledged parents as the 'prime educators' and you are our 'prime' audience in *Spirit of Sandhurst*. This will continue to enable our commitment to our Catholic Education Sandhurst Parent Leadership and Family Engagement.

Pathways for learning which cater for student diversity are a constant endeavour of educators, students and their families – this is a shared responsibility! As I write I am reflecting on the *Santa Fe Study Tour* which saw parent leaders and principals living and learning together in a different culture for two weeks. The response from participants has been amazing – it is an understatement to say that this has been transformational in every aspect – faith, friendship, family understanding and learning! The blessings of this time will grow and spread across not only their own communities but across the Diocese. There is diversity in our families but the unity is that we are a community focused on God's mission of love for every person so that they 'may have life and have it abundantly' (Jn 10:10).

Partnerships in pathways for students, is very evident in the *Nathalia Community Partnership* which involves all four school communities. Cooperation in secondary provision dates back 30 years and has grown in recent years with students moving freely between St Mary of the Angels' College and Nathalia Secondary College. At the heart of this cooperation is a commitment to 'acts of kindness and good will' coupled with common sense with the wellbeing of students always the focus. What a wonderful example of creative thinking to ensure diverse pathways!

Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel)

*'if we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realize that every person is worthy of our giving, not for their physical appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive, but rather because they are God's handiwork, God's creation.'* (n. 271)

As we celebrate Catholic Education Week 2014 during this year of *Sharing The Story – One in Christ Jesus* we give thanks for the wisdom people who visit our community and inspire us – people like George Otero and Alessandro Colombo and for the people in whose steps we follow, like Monsignor Peter Jeffrey.

We pray for the continuing courage to stand with those less fortunate in our nation where the 'social divide' is ever-widening and for the courage to be the voice for the voiceless strengthened by the unconditional love of God.

Blessings

**Ms Philomena Billington**  
Director  
Catholic Education Sandhurst



# Hoping for Gold

## Inaugural Monsignor Peter Jeffrey Oration

Engaged in Catholic Education in Sandhurst Diocese you are part of a **Golden Story**. Glimpsing that treasure of gold within the Story, we have a mission – to let the treasure glow so that it attracts others with the golden light of faith.

Fossicking for the traces of this gold begun in the latter part of the 19th century continues through you and your Parish and School communities. For a moment let me focus on the early Catholic educators. The Pioneers in our goldfields were the Religious Sisters, Brothers and Fathers who were the founding staff of many of our schools - with assistance from a small number of lay teachers.

The sisters knew the gold of faith – they had encountered Jesus and were drawn to let their light shine especially before the young children who came to their school. They responded to calls from Bishops and Parish Priests and went even to places where often there were no resident Parish Priests.

The brave pioneers in Catholic Education on our goldfields wanted to assist families in the education of their children. The parents wanted to form their children for life via an education that centred first and foremost on Christ - the Way, the Truth and the Life. As well as their dedication to this mission, the Religious were often forerunners in educational techniques and developments. They engaged in this missionary enterprise with a spirit of dedication and devotion. Their place in the history of Catholic Education in this diocese should be written in golden letters.

Often these men and women did it with scant physical and financial resources. The Sisters survived sometimes with the help gained from after school music lessons. Parishioners often called in with bags of produce and samples of good country cooking. These country folk saw the commitment to education and the witness to the faith in the daily living of the Sisters and Brothers and Religious Priests. Parents in those days were prepared to make considerable financial sacrifices to support the school. They were fossicking for the gold of a Catholic education. It was quite remarkable when we realize that this was without any government assistance, until the grants for Science blocks and Libraries gradually changed the scene.

Today we can be very proud of our facilities – here in Sandhurst. In the Catholic system throughout the State we are to be congratulated on the efforts that were made to see that the Building the Education Revolution (BER) money was used in each locality to maximum advantage. Parents want what is best in education for their children. They are choosing our schools for a variety of reasons but we all know very well that in too many cases the formation in faith is not the driving force in the parental choice.

In my own journey with Catholic Education in my 50 years of Priesthood, I came to appreciate that our schools are the major evangelizing agent within the Parish community. For them to be effective evangelizing agents, we need to be aware of the environments from which our students come. Often they receive little if any explicit introduction to Catholic life in the home. Yet their parents have been keen to enrol them in our



Catholic system. How we respond to this reality is critical if we are to be true to our mandate as a Catholic system. It is not a question of finding the lowest common denominator. We need to be explicitly Catholic and at the same time find ways in which to both meet students where they are in their growth and provide age-appropriate opportunities for them to genuinely encounter Christ.

Pope Francis said recently when he was speaking to the Leaders of Religious Congregations who are involved Catholic Education: *“The educator needs to consider how to proclaim Jesus Christ to a generation that is changing,”* then he said, *“Education is a key, key mission!”*

We cannot predict precisely when we will “strike gold” but we have to be good fossickers. When the golden nugget is spotted by an individual student, it will be a combination of the grace of God and the formation of a mind and heart that is prepared to receive the Golden Seed of the Gospel Word expressed in the living tradition of the Catholic community of faith. Whether it will be a speck of gold on the surface or a nugget deep within the heart of the student depends on some key relationships – the relationships within the school community and the relationships in the home community and pre-eminently being touched in mind and heart with a growing awareness of Christ. When the hidden presence of Christ begins to become explicit – the spot of gold will be noticed and celebrated.

Over the years of close involvement with our schools – especially with staff and school boards – I often marvelled at the time (well beyond union hours) staff gave to individual parents and students in the school community. I admired the compassion and professionalism I often witnessed in the love most staff gave in a self-sacrificing way day in and day out.

*“Richer than gold is the love of my Lord – better than splendour and wealth”*

A favourite word of mine is “magnanimous.” I was delighted to discover that when Pope Francis was speaking at a Catholic Schools Week he asked, “What does magnanimous mean? It means having a great heart, having greatness of mind; it means having great ideals”. What a wonderful way to think about Catholic education! In the planning of our lessons, in the subject of our class discussions, in our conversations with parents and students greatness is at stake. Greatness is our first goal. Not the greatness of the world, of course, but the greatness of Christ. This includes the magnanimity of the Beatitudes, the courage of the Cross, the splendour of truth.”

That leads me to my final cameo. It caught my attention as I was rattling along in the train from Melbourne to Bendigo and was beginning to slow down after Golden Square. Out the window I noticed the poppet legs of the Central Deborah Gold mine. They were dwarfed by the spire of the Sacred Heart Cathedral. The symbolism spoke boldly to me - we won’t discover the true gold of life unless it is viewed in relation to our restless quest for the transcendent.

When Bishop Stewart issued his Pastoral Letter announcing the courageous decision to complete the Cathedral transept and spire, he spoke about the need to have a permanent reminder of the transcendent dimension of life. Seduced and confused by ‘a new idolatry’ of a culture of consumerism, people lose their sense of reality. Everything in Catholic Education must ultimately help each student unearth **“the nugget of gold”** that can only be unearthed with the help of GRACE that enables each one to realise that what matters is who they are before themselves and before a God whose LOVE IS MERCY.



### Monsignor Peter Jeffrey Oration

In 2013, on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee as a Priest the Sandhurst School Education Board inaugurated the Monsignor Peter Jeffrey Oration to be presented annually at the Catholic Education Sandhurst Leadership Gathering.

This Annual Oration is established in tribute to the exceptional wisdom of the homilies and addresses presented by Monsignor Peter Jeffrey across his fifty years of priesthood. This wisdom in the spoken word has inspired generations of students, families and staff in Catholic schools across Sandhurst. Deo Gratias



# Arts on Show

Bronwyn Beer

The Arts are one of the most influential vehicles to strengthen our spiritual base, our awareness of God within and therefore, our creativity. Creativity and The Arts in education is necessary. It involves nurturing imagination and curiosity – two vital elements that can drive learning for all. Research tells us that children flourish when creativity drives learning and through Catholic Education Sandhurst we are wonderfully fortunate to have extended Arts programs that augment student learning and provide them with opportunities to contribute to Diocesan events.

Over the past five years Festivals of the Sacred have touched the hearts of many people within Sandhurst communities. The experience of being involved has had a positive impact on future attitudes, interest and participation in music amongst students. Catholic Education Sandhurst's working relationship with the Australian School of Performing Arts and the A3 Arts Alive Team has enriched the development and capacity of Sandhurst teachers in their ability to bring choral music to schools and has generated equitable opportunity for all students. This success has driven Catholic Education Sandhurst Council for the Arts (CESCA) to the development of a whole Diocesan Performing Arts event. This event has been titled **Sandhurst Arts on Show** and is sure to build on previous learning and take Performing Arts to a new level for both students and teachers. The partnership between CESCA and the Australian School of Performing Arts is infusing and empowering the schools and specialist staff with a rich, comprehensive and sustainable program. It is intended that the Festivals of the Sacred and Sandhurst Arts on Show will alternate every second year.

The inaugural **Sandhurst Arts on Show** is to take place over four days in September at various venues around Shepparton. Primary and secondary students from every school will converge with enthusiasm to share workshops and performances through a variety of Performing Arts disciplines. The workshops on offer are intended to cover all the elements of choral, instrumental, dance and drama. There is to be a focused learning program around the outcome of performance where students will gather in their chosen workshops. At the Reprise at the end of each day they will showcase their skills and God-given talents. The Reprise is to take place in the Mercy Stadium, at Notre Dame College, Shepparton where performances will be given constructive feedback. Students will be present at the Reprise to be active audience members and become inspired. Everyone present at the daily Reprise will participate in the singing of a finale music number. The Reprise will provide a forum for schools with new and developing Arts programs to see the performance outcomes of schools with established programs. Parents and community members will be very welcome to attend the daily Reprise to witness and experience the treasured learning and talents of the Sandhurst students. Schedules will be available soon and will be published through school newsletters and the Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst website – Council for the Arts.

The Arts Network Professional Development Day organised with the support a3 Arts Alive staff was a huge success with many schools participating. Teachers worked across all the elements of song, dance and drama. Teachers left the day feeling inspired, excited and confident about **Sandhurst Arts on Show**. Every school in the diocese has registered for the inaugural **Sandhurst Arts on Show**.

During Terms 2 and 3 Performing Arts teachers will work closely with the professional a3 Australian Arts Alive staff who will provide stability and flow to Sandhurst Arts on Show and foster

high standards for Performing Arts education. Preparation for **Sandhurst Arts on Show** will differ from the Festivals of the Sacred. Festivals of the Sacred saw a3 Arts Alive staff teach repertoire and Sandhurst teachers supported and polished the performance. However, **Sandhurst Arts on Show** will use material created and taught by Sandhurst teachers with a3 staff providing the support and polish. Students will come to the week prepared and confident and joyous about performing before an audience.

**Sandhurst Arts on Show** is a timely opportunity to launch the Catholic Education Sandhurst Curriculum Framework for Music P-6. This music curriculum has already empowered classroom teachers and music specialist teachers to engage students more deeply in the fundamentals of a sound music education, which is core to a well-rounded education and individual student wellbeing. We are privileged to have the knowledge and practical experience of Jenni Heinrich within our Sandhurst community to write and implement this curriculum document. Jenni is a highly accomplished music educator at both school and tertiary levels.

The Catholic Education Sandhurst Arts Network (CESAN) is meeting regularly to ensure that **Sandhurst Arts on Show** connects with the curriculum aims in the area of The Arts and to guide this inaugural event. This dynamic and engaging program is an equitable opportunity for all students to become empowered by performance.



## MacKillop Art Exhibition

Friday 7 November 2014

The theme this year, 'Sharing The Story – One in Christ Jesus' reminds us that all art is an expression of story and is an integral part of our relationship with God. Being open to understanding and responding to everyone's story and sharing life's experiences with each other is integral to our humanity. The Arts are a means of creating, expressing, exploring, processing and making sense of the world – through our own eyes and the eyes of others.

Each year we invite each school to contribute 5 outstanding artworks to the exhibition. These artworks may have been produced as part of the students' regular study in the visual arts or from the Artist in Residence program. They may include, painting, drawing, mixed media collage, sculpture, ceramics, installation, photography or digital media.

Once again the Catholic Education Sandhurst Council for the Arts (CESCA) is offering the MacKillop Art Award which is for Senior Students (Years 10-12). The winners are judged from the exhibition by independent adjudicators.

The opening of the **MacKillop Art Exhibition** begins at 6pm on Friday 7 November 2014 with a liturgy in the Sacred Heart Cathedral. The exhibition will be open in the Cathedral for the following two weeks until Sunday 23 November 2014. It is through art that we can make connections with one another. By making and looking at art we search for meaning from the perspective of others as well as from our own shared experiences. The **MacKillop Art Exhibition** provides us with the opportunity to share our ideas and stories across the Diocese. We look forward to a most energizing and inspiring celebration of the gifts of our students and the generosity and creativity of our teachers.



## Arts Newsletter

Each term the Catholic Education Sandhurst Council for the Arts (CESCA) is publishing a newsletter. It can be accessed through the Catholic Education Office, Sandhurst website – Council for the Arts. The role of the newsletter is to inform interested community members of all things that are happening across the Diocese in the Performing and Visual Arts.



"Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul." Plato



# The Principle of Subsidiarity

## - A Catholic Social Tradition

The notion of subsidiarity is not new to Catholic Education Sandhurst, but when international speaker Dr Alessandro Colombo addressed Sandhurst Diocesan leaders recently they were surprised to discover that he considered Australia to be a world leader in this area.

International expert in the area of subsidiarity, Dr Alessandro Colombo highlighted the importance of subsidiarity, autonomy, diversity and choice, and their relationship to the health and performance of schools and systems. Dr Colombo is Director of the Governance and Institutions Strategic Unit of Eupolis Lombardia – Regional Institute for Research, Statistics, and Training in Milan, Italy. Dr Colombo has published and written extensively in the area of subsidiarity within the Catholic social tradition and has been involved in recent research in Lombardia investigating the impact of school choice.

In its simplest terms **subsidiarity** is the principle that a central authority should have a minor function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. Subsidiarity is one of the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching. This principle holds that human affairs are best handled at the lowest possible level, closest to the persons affected by those decisions. In Catholic thought the principle of Subsidiarity has a positive role, namely to help secure the common good.

Pope Benedict said *“Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others. By considering reciprocity as the heart of what it is to be a human being, subsidiarity is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state. It is able to take account both of the manifold articulation of plans — and therefore of the plurality of subjects — as well as the coordination of those plans.”* (2009)

Dr Colombo spoke of some of the greatest minds throughout history who have written about subsidiarity and its importance to society.

*“Starting from Aristotle’s acknowledgement (384b.c.) that man is by nature a social animal, Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) underlines that the political community assists each member not only in securing the material necessities ‘to live’, but also in securing the spiritual goods needed to ‘live well’, including ‘public authority, which, by the threat of punishment, holds in check the intemperance of those youth that paternal admonition would not be sufficient to correct.”* (2012:1)

Dr Colombo emphasized that Australia was a leader in the area of subsidiarity which he attributed to the unique position of building a relatively new nation. Dr Colombo said Australia’s practice with the principle of subsidiarity was relatively un-documented in an international arena and felt that other countries had simplified the principle, but in Australia, it was more fully developed.

*“Victoria has the best example of subsidiarity that I have seen nationally. Looking from the outside, it is so dynamic, the way you deal with different levels of government within your organisation. I have visited the four dioceses in this state and there is a dynamic unity in Victoria which is impressive,”* he said.

Dr Colombo urged the nation to document the practices within Australia and ensure that the rest of the world had an opportunity to learn about the exceptional situation in Australia through a case study on governance and subsidiarity.

In Catholic Education Sandhurst, the principle is well known and permeates the culture of the organisation. The Sandhurst School Education Board (SSEB) Charter for Governance is based upon the belief that subsidiarity should influence governance directions, maintaining the local identity of each school and using the rich gifts in each school community. This is manifest within the SSEB itself.

The intention of the Charter is to provide alternative models for Governance which are within the statutes of Canon Law, enabling broader participation in the mission of Catholic Education and importantly, enabling school governance to be maintained at the local level and by relationship to build the People of God.

When the Bishop of Sandhurst, Bishop Leslie Tomlinson endorsed the Charter at the end of 2012, he wrote, *“the SSEB Charter for Governance is breaking new ground. It calls for us to read the signs of the times, to imagine ways in which new structures will meet the needs of a changing Church and to remind ourselves that our real task remains the living out of the Good News of Jesus Christ, in our schools and in their governing bodies. Ongoing formation for all levels of Governance will continue to be provided to ensure the competence and growth in faith of all engaged in this important ministry.”*



Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst Mrs Phil Billington, St John of God Hospital Volunteer Services Co Ordinator Mr James Breene, Dr Alessandro Colombo, SSEB Parent Representative Mr Michael Devlin, Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body Representative Mr Morgan Murphy and Sandhurst Youth Ministry worker Ms Darcy DeLosa

## Guiding Principles for Governance of Sandhurst Schools

### 1. MISSION

a commitment to working as Church to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all, to renew and transform the world.

### 2. STEWARDSHIP

a ministry of service expressed through “care of the tradition, the spirit, the story, the corporate and personal memories of the institution” and just and proper use of material and human resources “through prudent management, wise investment and usage”.

### 3. DIALOGUE

a conversation founded on shared experience and discernment, leading to understanding, sound judgment and decision making.

### 4. SUBSIDIARITY

the rights of individuals and community to develop their potential, exercise natural levels of authority and determine respective competencies. Each level of governance has the right to exercise authority without one level assuming authority in another’s decision-making processes. It is not equated with autonomy, but supports the interdependence of all, requiring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level.

### 5. CO-RESPONSIBILITY

the common responsibility for the common mission of the Church shared by all its members through Baptism. It is not to be confused with the question of “authority” - the authority for governance remains with the ordained. (2012:21 SSEB Charter for Governance)

In governance terms, Dr Colombo tells us that subsidiarity implies that political structures should only intervene when it is necessary to protect the common good, and to perform those tasks which cannot be managed at a local level. Subsidiarity emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals with the resources to develop and deliver the services they need instead of a centralized system where local autonomy is lost to a larger more powerful entity



**Definition: Subsidiarity**  
in all levels of human coexistence, predominant individuals and communities must not replace the smaller ones in the exercise of their functions... But on the contrary they should help them in the fulfillment of this task. (Dr Colombo Lecture)

“the power of the society, or legislative constituted by them, can never be supposed to extend farther than the common good, but is obliged to secure every one’s property.”

John Locke (1632)



# In my own words

## Daniel Giles

I'm a young man on the Autism Spectrum and would like to share some of my journey leading to employment. In this article, I intend to take you on a journey through my education, employment and my passion for teaching people about Autism from an insider's perspective.

I was diagnosed with Autism at the age of two and a half years. As a child I had severe language delays and I felt like I starred in a video that I had no control over. I couldn't understand the people around me and also, did not spend time with other kids my age as the world was a confusing place for me.

My Autism also impacts upon me in other areas, such as difficulty understanding non-verbal communication (such as body language), being overwhelmed by too much sensory input and literal interpretation of language. Also, understanding how to approach social situations is like learning a second language. However, I also consider Autism to be a gift, as it has helped me to structure my graphic design work and has enabled me to showcase a unique way of seeing the world through my photography.

I commenced my education at the Bendigo Special Developmental School, prior to transitioning to a regular school part-time, while I continuing to spend some time in the Special Developmental School. I had the support of an amazing integration aide who empowered me to become independent with my learning

By grade five, I graduated from the Special Developmental School and moved into a regular state primary school full-time. Graduating from the special school was a proud celebration for me, complete with streamers and a party.

I completed my secondary education at Catholic College Bendigo, abbreviated as CCB. It was a time of great growth for me. I was involved in various leadership programs and even went up to Outback NSW to undertake maintenance work on school buildings. All of these activities were rewarding and I discovered that even while living with Autism, I can be a source of encouragement for the community.

I was also pleased to complete year 12. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be educated in a Catholic school, not only for the academic learning but also the support I received and my faith development, which continues to strengthen me to this day.

During my time at CCB, I began to also teach other people about living with Autism. I often spoke to teachers and fellow students about my experience and I was also invited to speak at a professional development day for teachers in Shepparton.

Since graduating from CCB, I completed a Bachelor of Graphic Design (with Honours) at La Trobe University. I enjoyed graphic design and used my time at university to discover how my gifts and talents could be used to create a better future for others. A passion for using my graphic design skills to assist other people with Autism was developed and for my honours project, I created a series of visual social skills resources to assist children with Autism in navigating the social situation of a church environment.

During my university holidays, I would also often undertake work experience in various graphic design studio environments,

including one week for the Melbourne Archdiocese Communications Office and working in-house for a disability service in Melbourne.

In addition to my academic development, university also provided me with the opportunity to develop my independent living skills. I lived on campus for two years and this was a great stepping-stone to independent living. Upon completing university, I moved into a unit, which I proudly call my home these days.

Upon the completion of my degree, I set up my own graphic design business and undertook some projects for clients. However, I discovered through the process of working with clients and my struggles in trying to navigate interactions with clients that I am better suited to a structured workplace environment.

After a year of self-employment, I undertook part-time employment on a short-term contract to an Autism organisation in Melbourne. Although it was a short-term contract, I enjoyed the experience of working in an office environment and felt it was the best work environment for me. This motivated my desire to look for more part-time employment.

I'm pleased to say that I am now employed by the Catholic Education Office, I enjoy working there as it's a supportive work environment and I enjoy using my skills to benefit an organisation I'm passionate about. I am undertaking meaningful work and have enjoyed using my skills to benefit the CEO. The other staff treat me as a fellow colleague, not as a person with a disability. I have especially enjoyed creating illustrations for a classroom environment, photographing school and parish buildings, photographing the launch of Project Compassion and most recently, sharing my experience of living with Autism with the staff student and parent community of St Joseph's College, Echuca.

In addition to my employment, I also travel around Australia educating school communities, university students and a range of other groups about what it's like to live with Autism. It is important to educate people on what it's like to live with Autism, as only we who are on the Autism Spectrum truly know what it's like living with Autism.

I am so blessed to have been on this journey so far. My prayer is that God will continue to use my gifts and talents to bring glory to him.

## Daniel Giles Profile:

Lives: Bendigo

Age: 24

Employed: Speaking Insights (self-employed)  
Insightful Design (self-employed)  
Catholic Education Office, Bendigo (part time)

Education: Bendigo Special Developmental School  
Quarry Hill Primary School  
Catholic College Bendigo  
La Trobe University, Bendigo

Qualifications: Bachelor of Graphic Design with honours

Achievements: City of Greater Bendigo  
Young Citizen of the year 2008  
Rotary Club 'Shine on' Award 2008  
National Gallery of Victoria award  
Highest academic and artistic merit 2008  
Westpac Award for outstanding community service 2009  
Australian Graphic Design Association  
Most Professional Student Award 2010

Committees: Australian Catholic Youth Festival  
Victorian Disability Advisory Council  
Autism Stakeholder Advisory Group



Students from St Joseph's College Echuca (L-R) Jamiah Clarke, Jack Elliot, Taylah Smith, Ihaka O'Brien and Mikala Todd pictured with Daniel Giles who spoke to students about his experience as a young man living with Autism.

The VET students are completing their Certificate III in Education Support, and are currently focusing on working with diversity in the education environment and in particular students who are on the Autism Spectrum.

To raise awareness about Autism the entire school viewed a clip entitled, 'A teen's guide to Austism'. The VET students then created posters with facts and information about Autism which they placed around the school.

At St Joseph's Foundation Day in April this year, the VET students held an Autism Awareness stall where students were rewarded with blue cup cakes and lollies when they shared what they had learned about Autism with the students.



# Students with Diverse Learning Abilities

## Autonomy for students with Aspergers



**Dr Mary Keeffe**

Associate Professor Inclusive Education  
Post Graduate Coordinator  
Faculty of Education  
La Trobe University Bendigo

Students with Aspergers are in very precarious situation with regard to fulfilling their own potential and continuing to university, further education, employment or independent living - and schools play a critical role in positioning students for lifelong success and quality of life.

The profile of mixed learning strengths and difficulties may be extreme in a student with Aspergers. A consistent focus on learning deficits will create a learning environment that is fraught with failure, boredom with practice, low-level repetition, reduced expectations and a lack of engagement that becomes more pervasive as the student gets older. Students with extreme mixed abilities will be less tolerant of a learning program that focusses on 'fixing up' learning difficulties while their strengths, interests and abilities are ignored. A balanced approach promotes learner resilience to persevere with the attention and effort required to overcome learning difficulties and rewards learner motivation with work in areas of strength or interest. Grandin (2012) and Robison (2011) are advocates who encourage students with Aspergers to be proud of their strengths and to use their areas of interest to inform decisions about career pathways. While it is not possible for schools to ignore learning difficulties, a negotiated, strengths based approach to learning will sustain the student and maximise their success in their chosen areas. Negotiations for a more personalised approach to learning usually begin with making learning skills explicit so students can have a greater say in their own learning experiences.

Our understanding of the nature of student autonomy is poorly defined and vague, yet the core concepts relate to teaching students how they learn best so they can take more responsibility for the quality, value and direction of their own learning. Student autonomy is part of a lifelong process of 'learning how to learn' and how to find and use information constructively. Student autonomy invariably involves skills that may need to be taught explicitly to the student with Aspergers. At the very least, these attributes include:

- Cognitive: do I have an understanding of how I think and learn best?
- Metacognitive: how do I critically reflect on the efficacy of learning processes?
- Affective: do I have the personal attributes of perseverance, motivation, personality, goal setting, and interest?
- Enquiry: can I access a range of information, expertise or digital technologies?
- Personal choice and voice: do I know what I want and do I have a plan about how to get there?

It is important to be explicit when you teach students with Aspergers how to reflect on the way they learn best, particularly when their approach to learning is influenced by language or learning disabilities. Part of the feedback that students need comes from a clear understanding of their progress from grades, subject results, state-wide benchmarks or national curriculum standards. A note of warning for the teacher is that these results may not be an accurate reflection of ability. Poor concentration, distractibility and disorganization are also characteristics that frequently recur for students with Aspergers yet they may not be aware that they are distracted.

Metacognition or critical reflection is a complex task for most students as it involves a level of insight and personal reflection that is assumed rather than taught as an explicit part of understanding oneself as a learner. 'Mind blindness' is a familiar theory in the autism literature as it describes the reduced ability to read the way others feel or interpret situations. The understated part of that theory is that students with Aspergers also have difficulty in identifying their own moods and social dispositions. As such, subtle inferences about how to: solve a social problem, interpret success, persevere, or evaluate efficacy, may be too discrete. In addition, their own feelings and perceptions of themselves as learners are undermined by a constant level of anxiety.

Personal attributes that facilitate or inhibit learning such as perseverance, impulsivity, organizational skills or motivation can be as mystery to the student with Aspergers, as it is for many students. The notion of student autonomy involves increasing the student's awareness of their own learning habits so they can progress towards a self-determined approach to learning. Students with Aspergers will already have some research skills as they have probably investigated their special interest areas in significant depth. They may not understand how those research skills apply to any topic. It is possible they have mastered: problem identification; trial and error; text based information; online databases; barriers to resolution; strategies to gather a wide range of information; and an evaluation of possibilities. By making these skills explicit, the teacher is acknowledging a skill set that may exist already. The task for the teacher and the student is to apply these same skills to different topic areas and expand the special interest area or, even more challenging, to apply these skills to problem solving social situations.

Some special interest areas do not 'fit' neatly into any traditional curriculum area and there is a risk of disaffection from school and a claim that school is irrelevant to their needs and interests. In those cases, the school may need to link students with experts in the community so a mentor can help them to access the relevance of their special interest to the regular curriculum. Linking the student with a like-minded person in the school or the community will establish a social network of support that is so important for the student and may influence future career experiences and choices.

Personal choice and voice or negotiated learning outcomes help the student to assume ownership and autonomy in the learning process. Again, student choice must be informed and structured so students make informed decisions based on

a sound understanding of their strengths as well as areas that may need more direct instruction and practice. Interest areas and aspirations often motivate student choices in curriculum and subject selection. A student without any goal in life or in learning will fail to see the point of the learning choices offered, or indeed may not see the relevance of attending school at all. Stages in structuring authentic student choice may include:

- Create or identify aspirations. Access to a wide range of information and guidance about post school options is required. Consider the student's strengths and interests and encourage ambition. Guide the student towards sources of information about all options. Do not stymie aspirations and be patient when they change. This is to be expected as students gather more information about pathways and understand themselves as learners.
- Evaluate current performance. Begin with a careful explanation of the students' current ratings in National or statewide benchmarks.
- Identify strengths and link to aspirations to explore and affirm possible pathways.
- Always provide a step-by-step progression to address areas of learning difficulty (structure within the curriculum). Be explicit. Document these steps so the student is clear about how to progress. Create an expectation of success. Use digital technologies for practice activities.
- Negotiate learning goals in two or three major areas for one semester. The identification of learning goals should be a student lead process with some fine-tuning from the relevant teacher (are student expectations too low?). Include steps to attain those goals. Set a review date.
- Include one area of self-awareness or self-regulation in the learning goals. Areas may include: Learning how to control impulsive behavior, Getting organized, Learning to manage anxiety, Learning to manage change and so on. This creates the opportunity for an explicit focus on strategies to address behaviours that interfere with learning.

- Encourage the student to aim for goals beyond their current ability levels.
- Structure programs to include a balance of extension work, in areas of strength or interest (projects, portfolios, research), and direct instruction in basic skills.
- Avoid streaming students into low or high ability groupings for any more than three-week blocks. Cluster groupings according to student choice, readiness, age, ability, interest, random, gender, teacher choice, learning preference.
- Identify mentors, peers or digital technologies that can support or extend learning.

Students with Aspergers have the ability to be independent learners in their areas of strength or interest while at the same time they rely heavily on set strategies to overcome or avoid learning difficulties. Students will remain focused and committed, perhaps even obsessed, if the learning task is their area of strength and interest. At the same time, they are unable to approach areas of learning difficulty without some level of anxiety and apprehension. So, their learning experiences include a logical 'flow' in areas of strength and a barrier to action at all for areas of learning difficulty. The students know there is a discrepancy but they are unable to assimilate this as part of an understanding of themselves as learners. A recurring pattern of failure will also reduce confidence and motivation and reinforce negative patterns of avoidance. Avoidance strategies may reduce anxiety in the short term but they also undermine the motivation, structure and effort required to address all learning experiences.

*"A balanced approach promotes learner resilience to persevere with the attention and effort required to overcome learning difficulties, and rewards learner motivation with work in areas of strength or interest."*



# Unity in Diversity

## Pathways for students

Many Secondary Colleges in the Sandhurst Diocese are giving graduating students the opportunity to be employed as a Trainee after completing year 12. The Traineeships enable graduating students to work for a 12 month period, whilst gaining valuable life skills and a Certificate III qualification.

### Catholic College Bendigo

Faith & Ministry - Nik Verbeek and Caitlin Elie-McGovan  
Health/PE (LaValla)- Sebastian Greene  
Health/PE/Outdoor Education (Coolock) - Stephanie Cleary  
Promotions/Audio Visual - Gabrielle Stokes  
Information Technology Support - Andrew St Clair  
La Valla Chapel/VCAL - Georgia Byrne

### Notre Dame College Shepparton

Learning Enrichment - Andrew McMillan  
Faith and Ministry - Grace Holland  
Production/Drama - Georgie Wolfe  
Sports - Gabrielle Forrest

### Catholic College Wodonga

Faith & Ministry - Jackson Garvey  
CEW/Parish Youth Ministry - Jess Coates  
ICT - Jordan Eitler  
Hospitality - Zoe Zawora  
PE - Steph Bracher

### Galen College Wangaratta

Junior School Officers Trainees:  
Jonathon Panozzo, Tess Rowland, Cody Schutt & Isaac Smit  
Receptionist - Chiara Benedetti

### Sacred Heart College Yarrawonga

ICT - Alicia Brown  
PE/Sport - Jacob Adkins  
Classroom support - Mikaila Hemphill

### St Augustine's College Kyabram

Sport & Recreation - Eamon Ogden  
ICT - Tom Ford

### St Joseph's College Echuca

Trainee - Lauren Backman

### St Mary of the Angel's College Nathalia

PE/Special needs - Laura Crowther  
ICT - Josh Hayes



**Name: Zoe Zawora**

**Position: Hospitality Trainee - Catholic College Wodonga**

#### Job description:

On a day to day basis my role involves assisting the teacher in cooking demonstrations, laying out all ingredients for the class demonstration and for students. Setting up for cooking demonstrations and cleaning as well as cooking for Café Nganala once a week are part of my role.

#### Why did you apply for a traineeship?

When I was a student at Catholic College I always wanted to study hospitality but never had the chance as it clashed with the other subjects. When I found out about the traineeship I thought it was the perfect opportunity to experience working in the hospitality industry as well as working with students. I've always thought about becoming a Food Technology or Hospitality teacher and this is the best way to see if this role is something that could suit my skills and personality.

#### What skills do you bring to the role?

Being fresh out of school and starting a full time job meant that I didn't have many skills in the working field. But being a student at Catholic College I had an idea on what the students wanted more of, I was able to express my ideas as a past student and expand on ideas to make little changes for the better.

#### How difficult has it been to make the transition from student to staff member?

It hasn't been difficult it's just very different, different ways to talk to students, learning to stay distant but connect with them on a professional level. It was hard for me to adjust by calling my teachers by their given name rather than their surname, also having to learn their given name!

#### Do you gain any qualification?

I gain a Certificate III in hospitality.

#### How do you expect your experience as a trainee this year will shape you as a person?

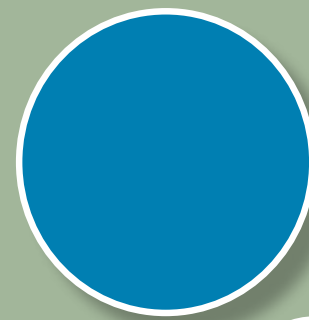
Open my eyes to new challenges, take any opportunity that comes my way even if it scares me.

#### What do you see as the advantages of taking a gap year?

Learning to work full time is something you only get by doing so. This has taught me about the "real world" everyone talks about when you leave school. Also doing a traineeship in a "Gap" year gives me an insight on what I may want to continue next year.

#### What are your plans for next year?

I would love to continue working in the hospitality industry, whether it's going to University to study teaching "Home Economics" to become a Food Technology teacher, or even an apprenticeship as a chef.



**Name: Nikolas Verbeek & Caitlin Elie-McGovan**

**Position: Faith and Ministry Trainees at Catholic College Bendigo**

#### Job description:

To assist with the organising of major College events and to help with everything that falls under the banner of Faith and Ministry.

#### Why did you apply for a traineeship?

Caitlin: I applied for the traineeship for a number of reasons, including the need for a break from intensive study, an opportunity to gain an extra qualification while taking a gap year. My main reason for taking the traineeship however; was to be a part of the Catholic College Bendigo Community for another year. Over the past six years as a student, the College had helped shaped me into who I am and I wanted to 'give back' to the community by working as a trainee. It also meant I didn't have to say goodbye for another year.

#### What skills do you bring to the role?

Nik & Caitlin: We aim to bring enthusiasm to College events and assist in making those events enjoyable for both staff and students.

#### What sort of programs/events will you be involved in as a Faith & Ministry trainee?

We are involved in the Opening Mass, Retreats, Encounter Days, Caritas Walk and Carnival, Caritas Fun Run, Ash Wednesday, Easter Liturgy, Graduation Mass and many other College events.

#### How difficult has it been to make the transition from student to staff member?

Nik: The transition hasn't been too difficult, as you already have strong relationships with many staff members, however it takes some time to adjust to sitting in the Staff room and feeling like you should be there.

#### What has been the biggest challenge so far this year?

Caitlin: The Faith and Ministry traineeship has tested our organisational skills more than anything and has also developed our communication skills.

#### Do you gain any qualification?

We gain a Certificate III in Information, Digital Media and Technology.

#### How do you expect your experience as a trainee this year will shape you as a person?

Nik: The Traineeship has helped me improve my communication skills, given me new experiences and opportunities that I couldn't previously complete due to studies or other commitments. The Traineeship opens up many different doors, with each day being an exciting new challenge.

Caitlin: I believe the Faith and Ministry traineeship will give me skills I would not have gained otherwise. It has also given me a new appreciation for how much effort and organisation is put into the school events. The traineeship, through retreats and encounter days, has additionally allowed me to explore and express my own faith and has given me insight into how others within the Catholic community do the same.

#### What do you see as the advantages of taking a gap year?

Nik: A great way to learn new skills, take a break from studies and gain key life experience.

Caitlin: I believe the gap year will mainly provide me with a break from the intensive study of year 12, allowing me to be mentally and physically ready for the challenges of University. The Certificate III I will obtain at the conclusion of my gap year will give me additional qualifications and hopefully make job seeking next year easier. The savings I make over this year will additionally ease the financial burden of moving to Melbourne for University and overall make the transition from Bendigo to Melbourne easier.

#### What are your plans for next year?

Nik: I have been accepted into Commerce/ Law at ACU in Melbourne.

Caitlin: I plan to move to Melbourne for university, undertaking a Bachelor of Science at Monash University.

### Name: Andrew McMillan

**Position: Learning Enrichment Trainee - Notre Dame College Shepparton**

#### Job description:

Working with the Learning Enrichment students on programs and regularly reporting to both the Learning Enrichment Team Co-ordinator and the classroom teacher on the student's progress.

#### Why did you apply for a traineeship?

I am looking to study teaching and I wanted to see if I liked working in a school.

#### What skills do you bring to the role?

Computer Skills, ability to work with a group, confidence in public speaking and willingness to learn new skills

#### What sort of programs/events will you be involved in as a Learning Enrichment trainee?

Study Club - After school program assisting students with their studies instead of them doing all their study at home.

Delaney's - A Notre Dame based program that allows students to develop communication skills.

#### How difficult has it been to make the transition from student to staff member?

It has been difficult as I have had to change from calling teachers by their last name to calling them by their first name.

#### What has been the biggest challenge so far this year?

Ensuring students know that I am no longer one of them, I am a staff member.

#### Do you gain any qualification?

Certificate III in Education Support.

#### How do you expect your experience as a Learning Enrichment Trainee will shape you as a person?

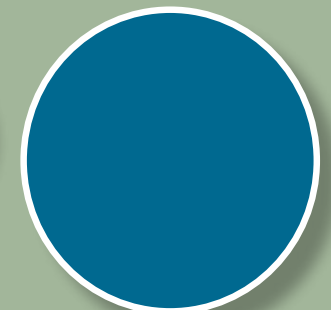
It will help me make up my mind on whether or not working in a school is for me.

#### What do you see as the advantages of taking a gap year?

It gives me a break from full time study.

#### What are your plans for next year?

University to study Teaching/Education







# STRONGER

*Igniting the Flame*

## STRONGER YOUTH

*"Young people  
Encountering Jesus  
Christ and His Church,  
becoming STRONGER and  
empowered to live as  
disciples who impact the  
world."*

This is the bold mission statement of the STRONGER youth program running in the Sandhurst diocese. Not only does it emphasise the key aspects of discipleship, it draws from the key aspects of youth ministry as outlined in 'Anointed and Sent' – the national document for youth ministry in Australia.

In one way you could say that Stronger was a fruit of World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney in 2008. Sometime after WYD, Bishop Joe Grech and Fr Rob Galea invited young people from the across the diocese to join them for a retreat. Only eight accepted. As one of those who attended that first retreat, it was a beautiful time to stop and pray, read and reflect, discuss and laugh with people of a similar age to whom faith in Jesus Christ was a serious and fundamental part of their life. It was like so many passages from scripture that describe a moment of encounter between God and person.

Since that first retreat, Stronger has continually grown. The additions of Rallies and D-Groups have enabled more to experience a vibrant, real and life-giving expression of faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ. At present Stronger has a threefold approach: **Retreat, Rallies and D-Groups**.

The **Retreat** is held over two and a half days. The aim being to allow young people to remove themselves from their everyday situations and to reflect on their life, relationship with Jesus and how they live their call to be a disciple in the world today. The theme, which has been examined in different ways throughout the year at the rallies, is again examined at a deeper level. There is small group and personal reflection time. The sacrament of Reconciliation is available and Eucharist is celebrated. Praise and worship and the all night adoration are key aspects of the retreat.

The **Rallies** are held throughout the year and are hosted in different parishes across the diocese. The aim of the rallies is to provide a snapshot of what a young person would experience at the retreat with catechesis, praise and worship and ice breakers. An addition to previous programs has been a panel discussion where young people are able to ask questions to the panel via text messages. This has been very popular with many more questions asked than can be answered.

Discipleship Groups or **D-groups** are based within a parish and are broken up into three areas: Topic night, Series night and Fun night. Topic night is aimed at looking at a particular issue that is a challenge to young people in being a disciple. Series night is where the group works through a series of video presentations and discussion points of various aspects of the teaching of the Church and how to live as disciple.

With the continuing strength and development of these three aspects of the Stronger program, the focus has now turned to the development of the leadership potential of young people engaged in the program. From sharing testimonies to running icebreakers at the Rallies, different experiences of prayer and time to socialize, the leadership days provide the opportunity for the strengthening of young people's witness to their faith in Jesus Christ. The engagement of young people in the leadership of the various Stronger events sees, to some degree, the fulfillment of the Stronger mission statement. It demonstrates Stronger's ability to strengthen and empower young people in their conviction and action of their faith.

This was demonstrated in a particular way by the involvement of many people from Stronger at the recent Australian Catholic Youth Festival. From MC to dancers, it was a great illustration of the leadership of so many young people within our diocese.

The opportunity for encounter with God is a fundamental part of Stronger. Whether it is partaking in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or all night adoration at the retreat, to the praise and worship at the rallies or the joy and laughter at a D-group, this is the heart of Stronger. Without an encounter and relationship with God, Stronger becomes just another youth program. Just as the scriptures illustrate, this encounter can take place in many ways. Through the traditions, rituals and charisms of the Church, Stronger seeks to provide this opportunity of encounter and then the development of relationship with our living God.

The journey of Stronger and those who take part in it can in some ways be seen as a parallel to that of the first disciples in those days after Easter. Though they may have been confused, frightened, saddened or lost, they come to encounter the Risen Jesus time after time. Their eyes and ears were opened. They saw Jesus in a new way.



*"Young people Encountering Jesus  
Christ and His Church, becoming  
STRONGER and empowered to live  
as disciples who impact the world."*



# From the Ground Up

*Wonderful learning facilities forged through partnerships and enabled by Government Funding and local community contribution, are in operation across Sandhurst providing increased pathways for students of all ages, especially adolescents.*

## TRADE TRAINING CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS

FCJ College, Benalla joined with Sacred Heart Yarrawonga, Galen Catholic College Wangaratta and Borinya Specialist Education Setting as a cluster for Australian Federal Funding under the Trade Training Centre (TTC) program. The TTC program across these schools will deliver Certificate I, II and III qualifications in Agriculture, Allied Health, Engineering, Food Processing and Hairdressing.

### FCJ COLLEGE – BENALLA

The Trade Training Centre at FCJ College was formally opened at the end of Term 3 2013. The first class facilities are now in operation and include state of the art machinery, welding bays, a tuition area and space for soldering and electrical work.



### SACRED HEART COLLEGE – YARRAWONGA

Sacred Heart Yarrawonga Trade Training Centre includes impressive Allied Health and Engineering facilities. The Allied Health lab has been purposefully designed to provide a simulated health environment, containing a fully-equipped exercise area, medical and hospital equipment, and a disabled aids equipped bathroom. The engineering workshop will enable students to gain VET certificates in both metal and electrical engineering.



### GALEN COLLEGE - WANGARATTA

The construction of a new Hospitality Centre and Engineering Workshop has created exciting opportunities for Galen students to receive certified training in Engineering/Fabrication and Hospitality in industry-standard facilities. The hospitality centre's adjoining dining area was named 'The Soul Food Café' by staff and students in late 2013. The Soul Food Café and Engineering Workshop are welcome additions to Galen's already impressive facilities.



### BORINYA Wangaratta Community Partnership

The Trade Training Centre at Borinya Wangaratta Community Partnership has been in operation since the commencement of the 2013 school year. The multi-purpose facility is currently being used for hospitality and retail baking certificate courses and TAFE tasters. Hairdressing subjects, which are taken jointly by Borinya, Galen College and Wangaratta High School students are also undertaken in this wonderful learning space.



### SACRED HEART PRIMARY SCHOOL – YARRAWONGA

Officially opened in term one this year, Sacred Heart Primary can look forward to a new chapter in its history with brand new, purpose built facilities. Built in three stages from 2009 to 2014, the primary campus attracted an astonishing amount of community support and almost \$5 million in funding. More than 400 primary school students and teachers have moved to the new school now located on Woods Road in Yarrawonga. The new campus features four open learning centres, a library, a large gathering centre, modern staff and administration areas along with a large undercover sports arena. The last stage attracted \$2.48 million in funding and \$290,000 from the school and other community support.



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This Spirit of Sandhurst magazine captures the spirit of Catholic Education in the Sandhurst Diocese - its uniqueness, vibrancy, innovation and commitment to enhancing the lives of its students, families and teachers.