**catholic diocese
of christchurch**
to sanctify - to teach - to care for

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New Zealand

RE Digital Resources Development - Research/Professional Learning Project … Article 4

> *Learner-centred approaches to technology-enabled learning can empower learners and leverage good learning experiences that would not otherwise have been possible. Technology also often offers valuable tools for other building blocks in effective learning environments, including personalisation, co-operative learning, managing formative assessment, and many inquiry-based methods.[1]*

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Foreword: Why are we undertaking this research/learning project?
Because our learners have changed; because the world our students are growing up in is changing.

Whilst one may wish it were not so, this fact necessitates a change in our teaching practice in order that we might better meet the learning needs of our students and, importantly, help them think deeply and critically.

[AJ Juliani](#) (Director of Technology & Innovation for Centennial School District, Pennsylvania) provides a very interesting metaphor (*at least Mike thinks it's interesting*!) that provides insight into why we might need to provide a mechanism to easily enable teachers to alter some aspects of their teaching practice; a mechanism that supports multiple approaches and flexibility in RE classroom delivery.

Juliani puts it this way:

> When I talk with schools I often give this message: **We need to think and act like Netflix, not like Blockbuster.**

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[1] *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice*, Innovative Learning Environments Project, OECD Publications, 2010 https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/50300814.pdf

A Model That Works, Sometimes Needs to Be Changed
Blockbuster was doing everything right. They had a fantastic business. It was booming and growing each year. They would tweak something here or there. Improve customer service. Move to DVDs or Blu-ray. But the model stayed the same. Because in all honesty: the model was working.

Netflix came along and challenged Blockbuster by telling customers they didn't have to go to the store anymore. Netflix would send the DVDs right to your house…for a monthly flat fee. A lot of people liked this. They could go online, pick out the movies and tv shows to add to their queue, and have a steady flow of DVDs coming in throughout the month.
Blockbuster said, "we can do that too…" – but you all know this is not how the story ends.

Netflix changed their entire business model to meet the growing needs of people who wanted to stream movies and tv shows to their devices.

The difference is simple: Netflix saw how the world was changing around them, and adjusted accordingly. They weren't doing something "better", instead they were doing something "different" because it matched what was actually happening in the world.

We Can Do Things Better, But What Should We Do Different?
To me, this is the big question. I'm not saying schools are like businesses (because they are not). I'm also definitely not saying students are like consumers (because they are not). Instead, let's take this lesson and apply it to our schools with a focus on change … so, if all this change is happening, and we know that change is going to be a "constant" in our lives…let's come together to see what needs to be done differently.

Netflix isn't a perfect model to look at, but we can take one thing away from their story: They have changed with the world, instead of fighting back at it.

So our challenge, as teachers of RE, is to consider teaching differently to meet our students' learning needs because our students learn/think differently from the way we did because the world they experience daily is changing.

Our research/professional learning project aims to provide a digital structure/platform with student-centred learning activities and assessments. We are trying to maximise flexibility of classroom delivery approaches and, ultimately, to make the entire RE curriculum visible for all teachers and students, in order to be able to meet the individual needs of all students.

(1) Recapping the aim of our collaborative research/learning project
Our aim is to assist the teaching/learning process by providing busy classroom Religious Education (RE) teachers with resources that engage the learner. By providing theologically and educationally sound digital RE resources for the classroom we hope to increase the time teachers have to focus on the learning of their students.

In this way we seek to augment the mandated RE programme, available to teachers on Faith Alive, and make the learning process relevant and engaging for the 21st century classroom.

In attempting to achieve these aims we are committed to working with classroom RE teachers and Catholic school leaders to enhance daily RE teaching practice and daily RE student experience throughout the Diocese (and possibly beyond the Diocese of Christchurch).

We believe our research/professional learning project (RPLP) is very much in support of that which the Congregation for Catholic Education notes, in its 2014 *Instrumentum Laboris*, "Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion", is a vital component in teaching as an instrument for education:

> *Nowadays, the "way" in which students learn seems to be more important than "what" they learn, just like the way of teaching seems to be more important than its contents. Teaching that only promotes repetitive learning, without favouring students' active participation or sparking their curiosity, is not sufficiently challenging to elicit motivation. Learning through research and problem-solving develops different and more significant cognitive and mental abilities, whereby students do more than just receiving information, while also stimulating teamwork. However, the value of learning contents must not be underestimated. If the way students learn is relevant, the same applies to what they learn: teachers must know how to select the essential elements of cultural heritage that has accumulated over time and how to present them to students. This approach also applies to the study of the major questions mankind is facing and has faced in the past. Otherwise, the risk could be to provide a kind of teaching that is only focused on what seems to be useful now, because it is being required by contingent economic or social demands, forgetting what is indispensable for the human person.[2]*

It is acknowledged that innovative teaching can be achieved without technology; that said, we are of the view that the combination of an effective teacher alongside the appropriate use of technology enhances innovation and student learning – the validity of this view is evidenced from the student feedback we received in the second phase of our project. In such a situation the technology simply becomes a commonplace vehicle for teaching and the facilitation of student learning.

It is our collective thinking that will create innovative solutions, not any particular technology. That said, we acknowledge both teacher thinking & technology, and we seek to harness both to give us opportunities in our teaching toolkits that did not exist previously.

(2) Parameters for this third phase/generation of our collaborative research/professional learning project

The parameters of this third phase/generation in our collaborative RPLP are as follows:

- we will attempt that which is achievable within the resources available;
- we will continue to take 'baby' steps before we attempt to walk confidently;
- we will continue to work with real teachers in real classrooms, with real students;
- if this third phase/generation points to the fact that we are still on the right path then subsequent work must be sustainable;
- our resources will be provided with the aim of ensuring consistency in the delivery of the NZ Catholic Bishops' (NZCBC) mandated RE curriculum throughout all schools in the Diocese, whilst also providing space for individual school and student personalisation;
- our resources seek to support teachers and schools in their desire to develop the knowledge, understanding and application of faith for young people;
- our resources will seek to provide authentic learning/faith experiences for students in our Catholic schools.

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[2] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html

(3) A summary of our RPLP to date (for those who are new to our RPLP)
The summary details to date, for those who are new to our RPLP, are as follows:

Within our second version/generation site you will find vocab quizzes, pre and post assessments and a range of student-centred and levelled activities/tasks (*from prescriptive through to open-ended, active inquiry tasks*) to develop your students' knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith, as detailed and provided for in the NZCBC's mandated primary RE curriculum.

Resources are provided for both the Google and Microsoft 365 platforms (as well as pdfs for a paper-based platform).

Here is our Primary RE Digital learning Space.

Here is the Teacher Support Material for our Primary RE Student Digital learning Space.

One might summarise the approach taken in our RPLP in this way: we aim to integrate technology in the classroom in order to maximise teacher-student engagement (*as positive human relationships form the heart of classroom learning*) as well as maximising flexibility of approach for teachers and students alike.

We have taken a blended approach (which teachers may use to a greater or lesser extent, as they so desire) **where digital engagement is embedded within and alongside face-to-face forms of instruction**.

The feedback from our students was clear; they wanted a blended approach, **not** a pure flipped learning approach.

Whilst students very much appreciated being able to return to the videos to capture the expert input that might have been forgotten or misunderstood, and students were happy to sometimes meet the expert input and thus obtain the start to a section of work digitally at home (*assuming they had access to a digital device at home*), for most of the time students wanted to view the initial input with their teacher ☺ and to be able to pause and reflect and discuss its understandings and implications as a group and then they felt better empowered to begin the tasks and activities.

This is a very affirming insight from the Year 7 & 8 students in our trial. For these students are acutely aware that the identity of the classroom hinges on the relationship between the student and teacher; in other words, these students are aware that the human person is at the heart of a successful classroom.

Social presence and feeling that each student belongs in the classroom are keys to learning.

It is through positive, caring and inclusive human relationships that an RE teacher gives witness to Jesus and provides, in the confines a classroom, an encounter with the living Christ. The students in our trial schools understand this. ☺

So our tentative answer to the "flip or not to flip" question would be, in its purest form, "only sometimes".

Perhaps for the majority of the time the video, rather than being used as a pure flipped learning input option at home, could be used as an additional "virtual" teacher in the classroom to provide

input with the "real" teacher being the mentor and guide to group discussion around the input and the director of the attendant tasks/activities to consolidate student knowledge acquisition and learning. Of course an experienced RE teacher may well provide the expert input without using the video.

It would appear that our students, so adept and immersed in social media, intuitively know and hunger for conversation and community.

They understand what Pope Francis means when he says:

> *The great challenge facing us today is to learn once again to talk to one another, not simply how to generate and consume information. The latter is a tendency which our important and influential modern communications media can encourage. Information is important, but it is not enough*[3].

In her book entitled *Reclaiming Conversation*: *the power of talk in a digital age*, Sherry Turkle echoes the words of Pope Francis (above) where she writes:

> *Research tells us that being comfortable with our vulnerabilities is central to our happiness, our creativity, and even our productivity. We are drawn to this message, weary, it would seem, of our culture of continual performance. Yet life on social media encourages us to show ourselves as "invulnerable or with as little vulnerability as possible." Torn between our desire to express an authentic self and the pressure to show our best selves online, it is not surprising that frequent use of social media leads to feelings of depression and social anxiety*.

> *And trouble with empathy. Research shows that those who use social media the most have difficulty reading human emotions, including their own. But the same research gives cause for optimism: We are resilient. Face-to-face conversation leads to greater self-esteem and an improved ability to deal with others, Again, conversation cures*.[4]

The intuitive desire of the students in our trial to experience a classroom environment in which they are able to learn and converse face-to-face and experience human closeness as well as being able to learn and converse in the digital space, which offers a different and complementary space for encounter and solidarity, is clear.

This is affirming for us as RE teachers for such respect for the dignity of each human person lies at the very heart of a Catholic education; and this is something the Years 7 & 8 students in our trial have come to understand.

Our RPLP aims to provide maximum flexibility in approach for teachers. That said, student feedback might suggest a framework such as this may be fruitful:

    (a) mini lesson (*whole group instruction and discussion - using the video or teacher instruction to open the process is a teacher decision*),
    (b) independent student practice (with teacher support when and where required), and then
    (c) sharing (partner share, large group share, digital publishing share, etc.) of the important work students undertook that day/week/unit.

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[3] https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20150123_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

[4] Turkle, S. (2015) *Reclaiming conversation*: *the power of talk in a digital age*. New York. Penguin

(4) Outline plan for this third phase/generation of our collaborative research/professional learning project

The outline plan for the team's work, in this third exploratory phase/generation of our collaborative RPLP, was as follows:

- review the feedback we received from teachers and students involved in the second phase of our project;
- in light of student and teacher feedback, revise the online resources and videos for the Church strand at Years 7 & 8;
- if necessary, provide revised "how to" videos to assist teachers in copying the resources onto their school's network, ready for use in their classroom;
- if necessary, provide revised "how to" videos to ensure all technologies used in the resources are easily understood for teachers who may not have come across this particular technology;
- request, teachers across the Diocese to trial the soon to be produced (2018) third version resources in their classrooms and provide feedback and feedforward;
- demonstrate to students that questioning is a highly valued skill for the 21st century and that digging deeper, through questioning and challenging assumptions, is an important element of the RE classroom;
- provide opportunities for teachers to create project and inquiry based learning opportunities whilst ensuring appropriate achievement objectives and learning outcomes (success criteria) of the mandated RE curriculum are covered;
- seek to ensure that RE is the source that other curriculum areas spring from.

(5) Feedback and Feedforward - Introduction

In addition to the written feedback and feedforward we received on our second version/generation of digital resources, on Wednesday 8 November 2017 we also facilitated a face-to-face feedback/feedforward session with the following students and teachers:

School	Teacher	Student	Student
New Brighton Catholic School	Bernard Adams	Hayley Reid	Laura Turner
Christ the King School	Abraham Atherton		
Catholic Cathedral College	Grace Kane-Porter	Jumara Muliaga	Charlotte Palmer
St Thomas of Canterbury College	Bernie Lee	Jack Coulthard	Aidan Yates
St Francis of Assisi Catholic School	Rebecca Methven	Hannah Stanton	Grace van der Heever

(a) Student Feedback/Feedforward Summary

Question	Student Feedback/Feedforward
Did you enjoy RE using the digital platform? Why?	• The tests (pre/post tests) helped us remember the material ☺ • The videos enabled us to go back and find something we had missed or not understood or forgotten during the day ☺ • The videos gave us a variety in the way our teacher provided the input to a lesson – sometimes independently (flipped – either at home or in class), sometimes we watched the input video as a whole class and discussed it before setting off to undertake our assigned tasks, and sometimes our teacher provided the initial input (and we had the video as a back-up if we forgot what our teacher said!) ☺ ☺ ☺ • It felt like we were getting ready for high school – studying for a test and then reviewing our test results ☺ ☺ • We liked the Kahoots and Quizzes; they made it rewarding to be remembering our learning ☺ ☺ ☺ • We liked the friendly competition with our classmates of the Kahoots and Quizzes; they were fun ☺ ☺ • The tests on Google Forms made testing quick and easy and helped us see the questions I didn't answer correctly after I had finished my test ☺ • We liked having the goals for each video/lesson provided at the start ☺ • We liked knowing and being able to see the structure of each unit at the beginning ☺

Did you enjoy RE using the digital platform? Why not?	- It was hard to find the answer to the questions in the video because they didn't say: "the answer to the question is this" ☹ … *the teachers thought this was a good thing as students had to think hard*! ☺ - The questions were not in the order of the video, so we had to think ☹ … *the teachers thought this was a good thing*! ☺ - There wasn't any humour or smiling on the videos, so it could be a little tiring watching them ☹ - Some videos were more boring than others and sometimes you would find yourself drifting off and you needed to watch the video again ☹
What did you like best?	- We like doing the tests on our iPads or Chromebooks ☺ - We liked trying to get better each time, competing against your friends; the tests were fun ☺ - We liked being able to put your answers into your own words ☺
What needs improving?	- Add some humour to the videos to be more engaging ☺ - Maybe add some videos linked to YouTube to provide variety of input ☺ - Perhaps you could have a separate video for the answers, giving specific feedback on each of them ☺ - It would be good to make the videos shorter and use examples when explaining something to help students understand ☺ - Use some visuals in the video rather than just seeing people talking ☺ - Have a variety of people on the videos ☺

(b) Teacher Feedback/Feedforward Summary

Question	Student Feedback/Feedforward
Did you enjoy RE using the digital platform? Why? Why not?	- Straightforward to deliver. - Engaged children. - Answered questions I couldn't (initially) answer! - The videos provide excellent syllabus content knowledge/learning for beginning RE teachers. - Allowed children to work at their own pace. - Digital aspect children really enjoyed - having 1-1 devices certainly helps.

	• Allowed me to clearly see what children did and did not know (pre-tests & post-tests).
	• Students enjoyed the vocab quizzes and the kahoots- which we have been using now in class (children made their own).
	• I liked how the children had to find the questions in the video, and read between the lines sometimes (*and sometimes they didn't enjoy that because they wanted to be spoon-fed*!).
	• I think the learning tasks were a good idea, although I found it hard in my programme to give children time to complete them (1 at max).
	• It gave me more confidence having the videos with the content at the beginning and I loved the range of activities students could access.
	• It had a good structure and was easier to deliver the content to the students.
	• Agree with above - also that the students found this a more engaging way for content to be delivered.
	• I think the more we use the resource the better we will become in adapting and customising it for our students.
What did you like best?	• I liked the question format; it gave children a chance to think and then ask others (gave time to go to others to answer questions).
	• The summary notes helped reinforce the summarising skills for children.
	• The range of choice students had when learning.
	• The variety of activities that the students could choose from and having that choice also enjoyed that it was a more engaging for the students.
	• The accessibility - how it is altogether in one place. I, as the teacher know where to find any content needed and so do the students.
	• The vocab quizzes are really great, students already love doing Kahoots, so they know how to use that platform and enjoyed them; they were a good start.
	• Having a self-marking, digital pre-test and post-test for the strand is excellent, because it means the teacher does not have to create the test and the teacher can skip over quickly key ideas the students already understand.

	• I liked the idea of a test before and after each key idea, it just meant that if students hadn't "got it" they could go back and review it.
	• The follow-up learning tasks were also good because students who take longer to complete tasks due to ability could work at their own pace and complete maybe one task; while others completed three tasks.
	• Collaborative tasks are a great idea.
	• The tasks were nice and open, which created a balance between the bookwork of the WSQs tasks and the follow up tasks.
	• It's a really good idea having a space for questions and to allow students to summarise, which makes the student accountable.
	• Flipped learning is just brilliant, students working at their own pace and reviewing parts they do not understand was just great. It also meant I could let the independent workers continue and the children that need more help I can work with in a little group.
	• I used a mixture of this resource and the Faith Alive slides to put on my Google Classroom RE lessons; this was easy to do.
	• I think the assessment for teachers allowed us to deliver a catered programme for our students. For example, my students in the pre-test did not do well regarding their knowledge and understanding about the Bishop and Pope, therefore we focused on this area.
What would enhance the delivery of this programme?	• There was a lot of material packed into the strand, but I understand that these are the ideas that need to be covered in the mandated RE curriculum; I wonder if the amount of information could be reduced?
	• Perhaps the later learning tasks for children could be more open ended, for the creative types?
	• Children like watching a variety of different videos, so perhaps find links to other videos and post these to express the concepts (animations etc.)?
	• Adding a little humour into the mix could be good, not quite sure how you would do this, but making the link at least to children's lives so that they can make the learning connections to their lives.

	• Children liked the idea of a video giving the answers to each question. • More videos on the site – perhaps from students explaining the tasks (less reading for struggling readers). • More visuals within the videos - some students struggled to focus and watch a person talking without any 'extra' visual aides to support the content. • Instead of a video being about 4-5 minutes long it would be good if they could be broken down into two videos of 2-3 minutes duration; the reason for this is that a student knows the answer is on the video but is not sure where they have less time to wait to get to the answer! • It would be good if the presenters on the videos could use more student-friendly language; the sort of language that our teachers would normally use when they are introducing a topic to us – the language sounded as though it was being read from a book.
Should we progress this research/professional learning project? If so, how would you like to progress this initiative?	• More strands - our students loved learning in this way. • Definitely all the strands covered on this digital format would be amazing.
Other comments or ideas?	• Could there be a way for students to track their own progress to see what content they have covered and what they still need to learn? Student logins for self-assessment and formative feedback? • The delivery of the digital platform was delivered differently across various schools - some opted for the students to watch the video and then gather meaning; whereas some worked as a class and then broke down the learning to increase their understanding – this can impact upon student feedback (above), such as: "it was hard to find some answers to the questions in the video"; in a number of cases the teacher used the video as an overview of the lesson, not necessarily as a place to find the answers to all the questions.

(6) Where to from here?
Rory, Jeremy, Whitney, Cushla and I will gather together in Term 1 (2018) to review and reflect upon the feedback we receive.

Given the positive feedback we have received, we will continue into a third phase/generation of our RPLP.

In our third phase/generation we will be looking to crowd source other voices and faces from teachers and students (and priests/bishop) throughout the Diocese to be the voices and faces of our knowledge/content input videos.

We will be sharing our learning and this structure and this collaborative process with the National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS) and the NZCBC.

In this way, if our structure and process continues to prove to have validity and "legs", we (i.e. *RE teachers and administrators throughout the various Dioceses of New Zealand*) **might consider collaboratively crowd sourcing and taking responsibility for particular strands and thus relatively "quickly" provide such online resources to augment the teaching of our NZCBC-mandated primary RE curriculum** (and Years 9 & 10?).
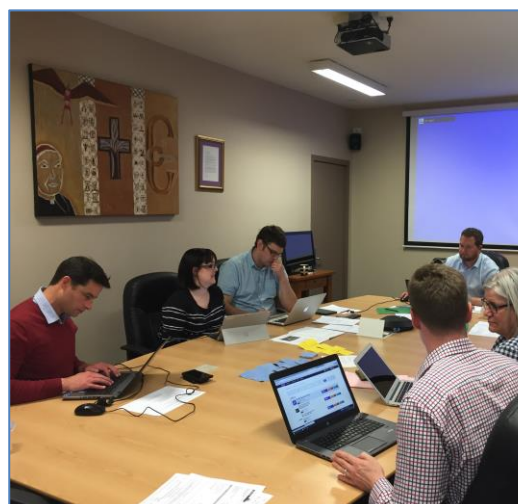
(7) Breaking News – our secondary colleagues are with us ☺

Our secondary colleagues …

- Thomas Newton (Villa Maria College)
- Andrea Craig (Villa Maria College)
- Rosemary Madden (Catholic Cathedral College)
- Stephen Woodnutt (Catholic Cathedral College)
- Hamish McIntyre (St Bede's College)
- Sylwia Smiarowska (Marian College)

… joined together with us for 4 days in the week beginning 13 November 2017 to begin a complementary RPLP; starting with resource development for the Year 9 unit entitled, The Church's Story: The Beginnings.

Our secondary colleagues will benefit from our two years of experience in our RPLP and will follow the same format for their RPLP. ☺

(8) Why might it be important that our secondary colleagues are with us?
Mike Nolan is of the view that this a vital step in our aim to assist the teaching/learning process by providing busy classroom Religious Education (RE) teachers with resources that engage the learner.

If our big dream came to be a reality in the future all RE teachers from Years 1-10 would be able to see the entire suite of digital RE resources used to support the teaching of the NZCBC's mandated RE curriculum from Years 1–10.

Why might this be important?

Mike's view is that this would enable RE teachers to be in a position to truly differentiate the RE curriculum to meet the needs of individual students.

For example, if a pre-test shows that a particular student already knows the content of a unit of work that is about to be taught, then a teacher might do two things:

(1) this student might be encouraged to simply undertake the higher level thinking "create and share" task for the unit; *and*

(2) this student might also be encouraged to undertake the pre-test for the same unit at the next Year level up (*or similar unit if it is a Year 8 moving into the Year 9 secondary curriculum*) and then move through that unit of work as the pre-test results might indicate.

In this way a student is always able to access the next steps in their academic journey and are not simply marking time on content they already know.

In a similar fashion, a secondary RE teacher who has a student who is not academically ready for a particular secondary curriculum unit of work would be able to direct them to the same unit of work (*or similar if it is, say, a Year 9 student undertaking a Year 7/8 unit of work*) at a suitable academic level.

These approaches to providing individualised and differentiated pathways would become possible because the entire NZCBC-mandated RE curriculum would be digitally visible to all RE teachers and all RE students.

At least that's our big dream and vision … reality might suggest otherwise!

Nevertheless, nothing great was ever produced by dreaming small; albeit that small steps are required to achieve big dreams!

(9) Conclusion

Our RPLP aims to work with teachers and assist teachers in the creation of rich RE classroom learning environments.

Teaching today is no easy task! This is a time of great change and it is the only time we have to live in. In "Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion", the Congregation for Catholic Education writers note the complexity of the teaching/learning process in this 21st century and great time demands upon teachers:

> *Professional competence is the necessary condition for openness to unleash its educational potential. A lot is being required of teachers and managers: they should have the ability to create, invent and manage learning environments that provide plentiful opportunities; they should be able to respect students' different intelligences and guide them towards significant and profound learning; they should be able to accompany their students towards lofty and challenging goals, cherish high expectations for them, involve and connect students to each other and the world. Teachers must be able to pursue different goals simultaneously and face problem situations that require a high level of professionalism and preparation.*[5]

Our RPLP is an attempt to work with teachers and to assist teachers rise to this challenge in the prime curriculum area of our Catholic schools, RE. We look forward to our journey; a journey that Dr Seuss probably best describes:

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[5] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20140407_educare-oggi-e-domani_en.html

"You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know.
You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go.
So be sure when you step.
Step with care and great tact
and remember that life's
a great balancing act.
Just never forget to be dexterous and deft.
And never mix your right foot with your left".

Nevertheless we hope we are off to great places.

The path we are on has been affirmed. ☺

We have been:

1. provided with great feedback and feedforward from students and RE teachers - thanks so much;

2. given lots to do in terms of modification and providing the third generation of our digital Year 7 & 8 Church strand resources - we ask for your patience;

3. asked to form a teachers' working party to further develop our model and begin providing trial digital resources for the Year 7 & 8 Sacrament strand … Mike and Cushla will talk with principals about this request - we have some ideas for your consideration.

We will let you know the places we end up as we continue our adventure. ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

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(15 November 2017)

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RE Digital Resources Development - Research/Professional Learning Project … Appendix

The great challenge facing us today is to learn once again to talk to one another, not simply how to generate and consume information. The latter is a tendency which our important and influential modern communications media can encourage. Information is important, but it is not enough[6] [Pope Francis].

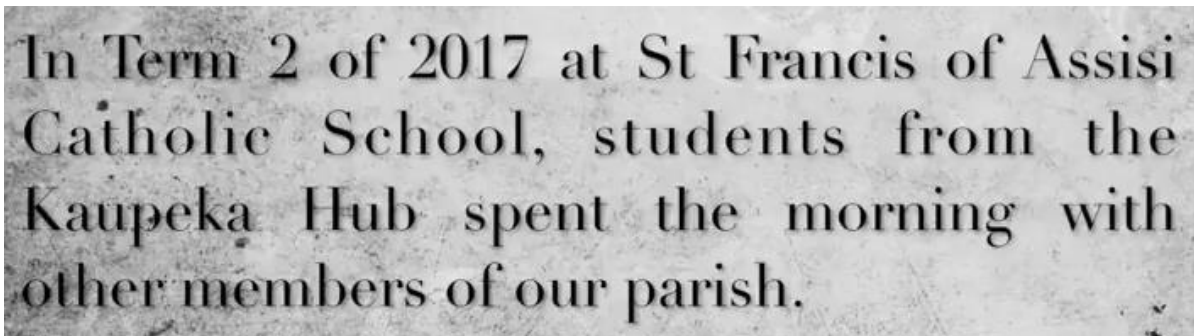**Appendix: It's not all about technology!**

An example of how one school enhanced Parish-School relationships, used the knowledge and wisdom of senior parishioners, strengthened a sense of our Catholic community and provided a face-to-face means of delivering an understanding of the required Years 7 & 8 Church strand vocabulary.

At St Francis of Assisi Catholic School (Mairehau) the Years 7/8 teaching team (Siobhan Cummings, Katherine Wilson, Tracey Bryce & Whitney Hansen) and Clare Bell (Pastoral Worker, St Francis of Assisi Parish) planned to provide The Years 7 & 8 students with an explanation of the necessary and specialised vocabulary associated with the Years 7 & 8 Church strand curriculum, in a non-digital and face-to-face manner.

Senior parishioners were invited to be "teachers" for a morning. Clare organised the parishioners, gave the parishioners a particular vocabulary word (encyclical, Cardinal, Jesus, authority, etc.) and invited them to discuss their understanding of this word with the students. They readily accepted this challenge. ☺

The students invited the senior parishioners to join them for morning tea after the weekday Mass in the Parish – the students supplied morning tea as part of their food technology curriculum learning – and then the discussion/teaching took place in small groups.

These excerpts from the video the students made provide the context for this project:

In Term 2 of 2017 at St Francis of Assisi Catholic School, students from the Kaupeka Hub spent the morning with other members of our parish.

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[6] https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20150123_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

We wanted to share the rich resource we have in our parish community. It was also a great opportunity for our visiting parishioners to see our students in action, and to see how our Parish school is operating.

It was so valuable in growing the relationships in our Parish Community. The visting parishioners shared their faith and the students took the opportunity to ask some questions they had based on what they were learning in Religious Education.

Because the school is an arm of the parish or a group of parishes, the school is part of a larger pastoral community. The school "fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community." Within a diocese a common good ethos and practice must underlie the relationships between all the parishes and schools, as all ultimately participate in the teaching ministry of the Church. A strong commitment to the common good should unite and support parish and school in carrying out their individual roles and the role they share.

Here's [the video the students made of this teaching/learning process](#) ☺ … Whitney notes that the sound quality of the video is a work on for next time ☺

This simple, yet very powerful process for delivering a necessary curriculum aim – understanding the specialist Church vocabulary associated with the Church strand curriculum – clearly supports the blended approach to our research project; **where digital engagement is embedded within and alongside face-to-face forms of instruction** (*and in this case the senior parishioners provided the face-to-face instruction/teaching*).

But even more importantly, this simple, yet powerful process gave witness to the fact that it is through positive, caring and inclusive human relationships that a Religious Education teacher and parishioner gives witness to Jesus and provides, in the confines a classroom, an encounter with the living Christ.

This RE curriculum-driven process provided a vehicle for building community and provides senior and young parishioners with a strong sense of belonging and living and working in the one Catholic parish-school family.

We would love to hear of other RE curriculum-driven initiatives that similarly enhance relationships and build community within our Catholic parish-school family.

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(15 November 2017)