



**PeRL**

PEDAGOGIES ENABLING  
REDEEMPTIVE LEARNING

PLAYBOOK

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# PEDAGOGIES ENABLING REDEMPTIVE LEARNING

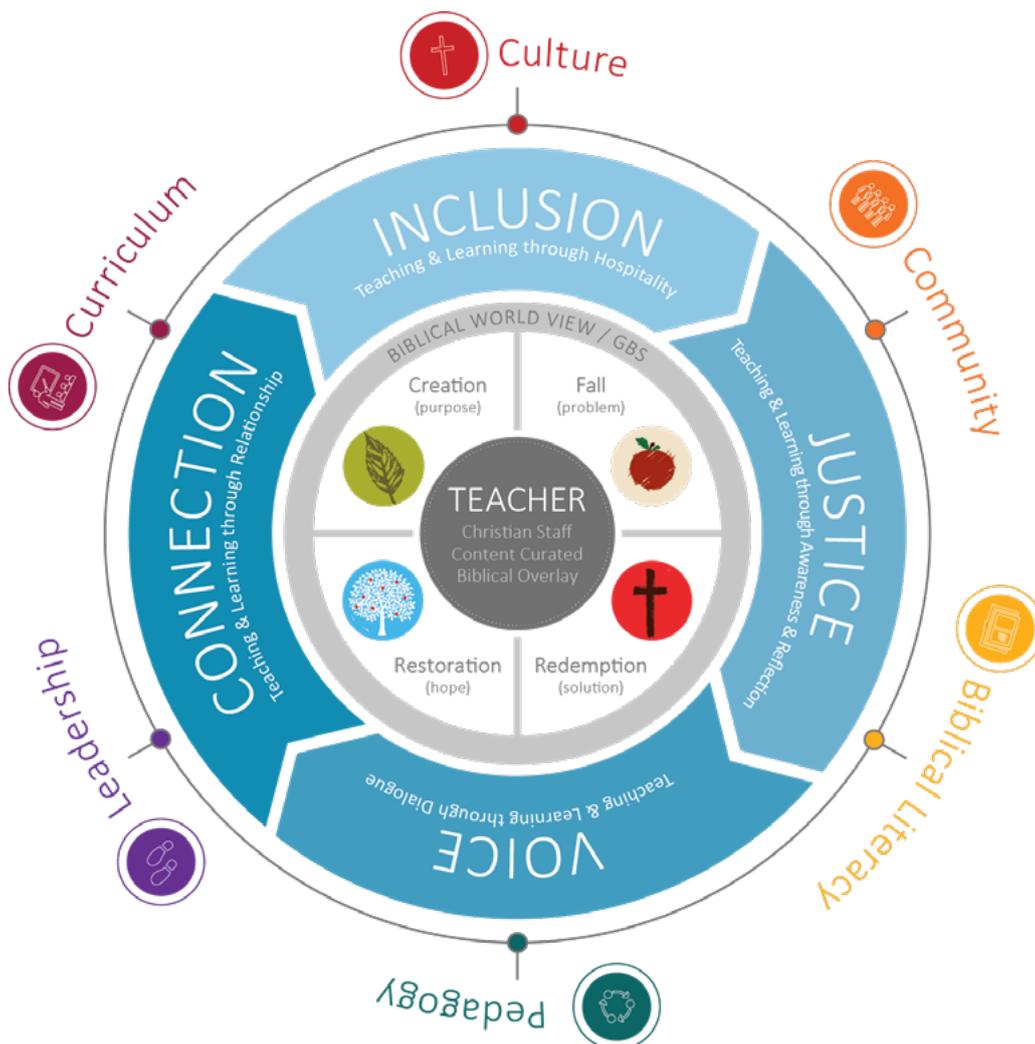
*An introduction to the Playbook.*

All page references within these documents are to the PeRL document available through the **CSA website**. This will be referred to as “PeRLdoc.”

CSA has an approach to Christian schooling that is built around **six architecture levers**. These levers shape the values, beliefs and outcomes of a Christian approach to education. This architecture is a multi-leveled approach to education and its aim is to equip students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches and communities.

You can explore CSA’s architecture in more depth on pp.4-8 (PeRLdoc).

This project - both the videos and manuals - hone your focus onto the four pedagogies within this architecture: Connection; Inclusion; Justice and; Voice. It uses these words as a gateway into exploring how the classroom can become a place of radical transformation.



## **What are pedagogies?**

For some, the word 'pedagogy' is just a fancy academic term used in universities to overly complicate the process of learning to teach. However, the word comes (like so many words in the English language) from the Greek word paidagogos which simply means "teacher." Nowadays it has come to represent the 'art and science of teaching'.

But this isn't all that pedagogy represents. The word also contains a broader definition, one which speaks of teachers as moral guides; those that spark wonder and imagination. The pedagogical shift taking place is one that compels teachers to go on a journey with their students, a journey into relationship transformation and social imagination. A journey that, if navigated well, is hopeful and redemptive.

Where pedagogy becomes important is when we consider what the purpose or aim of teaching really is. For many people a successful teacher is one who communicates their content effectively, navigates the lesson plans with grace, and treats students with dignity and respect. These things are all important, but what PeRL aims to show is that teaching is also about so much more than this.

The pedagogical shift taking place is one that compels teachers to go on a journey with their students, a journey into relationship transformation and social imagination. A journey that, if navigated well, is hopeful and redemptive. For a more detailed discussion on the pedagogical shift, see pp.9-12 (PeRLdoc).

## **Why redemptive?**

What teaching looks like, and the impact it makes, depends largely on our understanding of the story of God and our place within it. How we see God, others, and the world around us, radically shapes the posture we have to the world.

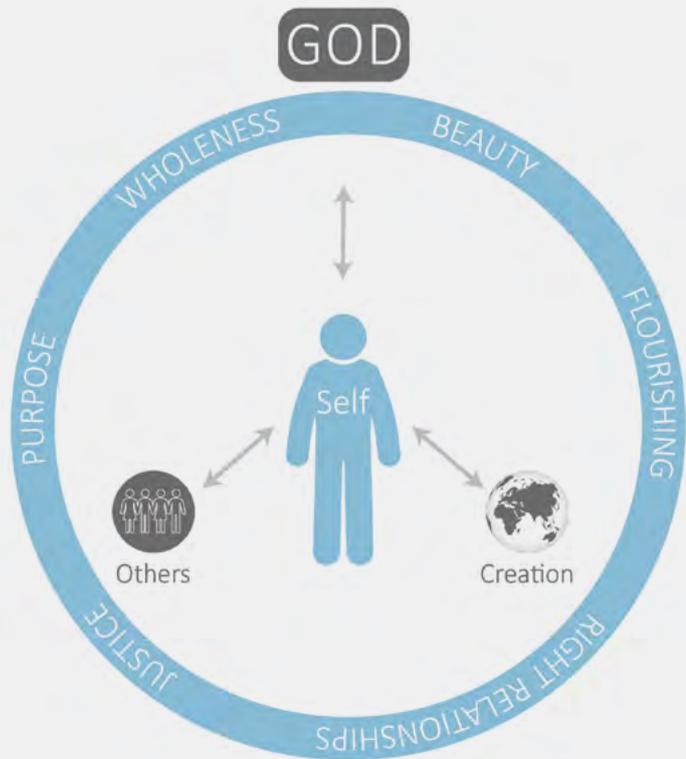
If we believe that God is angry and punitive, waiting for us to trip up so that he can chastise us – then our approach to life will be fearful and rigid. However if we see God as gracious and kind, slow to anger and abounding in love, then even in times of challenge we can face the future with hope.

If you want to dive into the way our worldview and beliefs shape the way we see life and others, you can have a look at the [Open Book](#) or the [Flourish](#) resource.

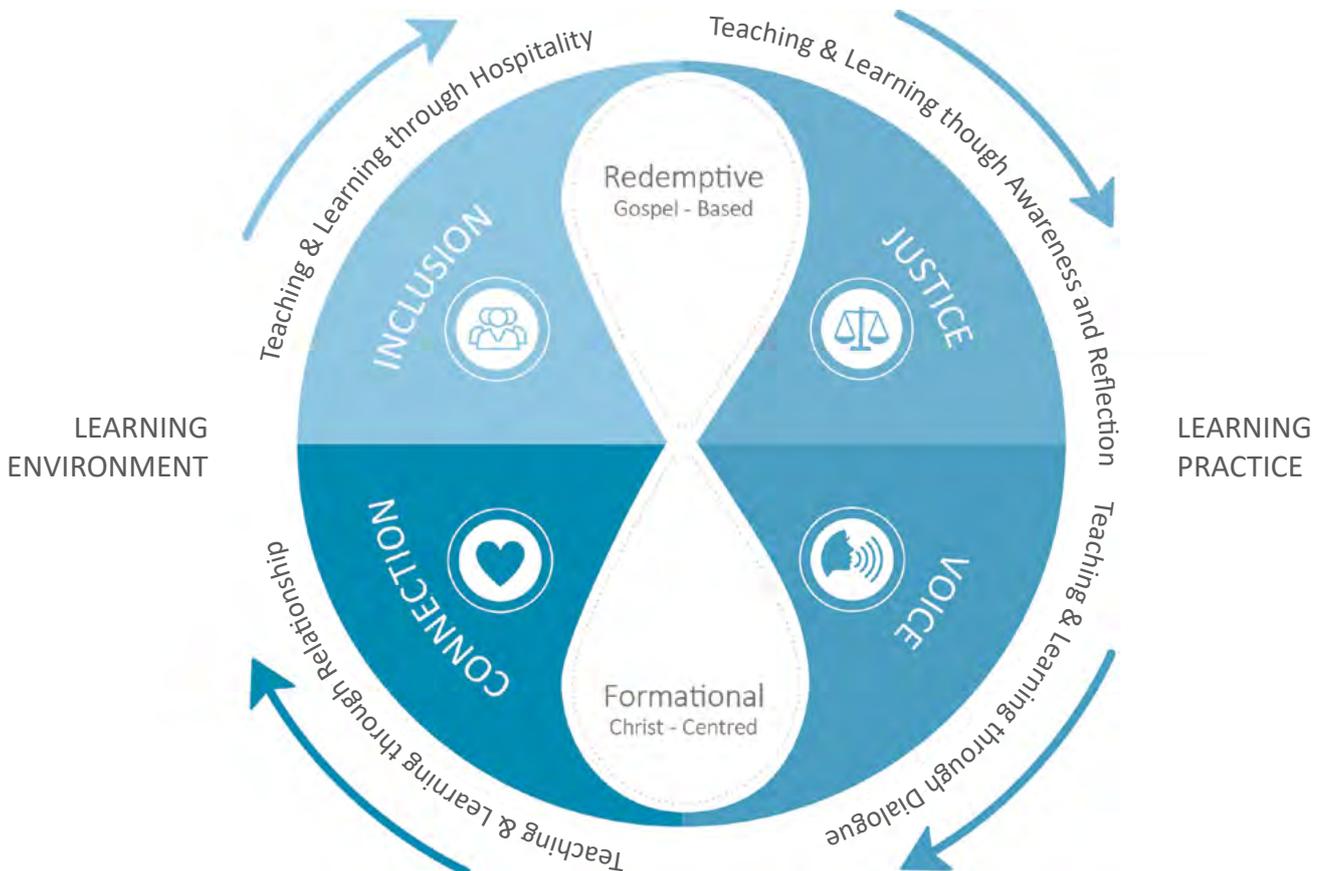
**What do I have to do with this?**

As we have said, your relationship with God, others, and the world, has a dramatic effect on the way you position yourself to students, and the experience they have in your classroom.

Through the next four sessions we want to take you on a journey through four pedagogical approaches to education that will both empower you as educators, as well as cultivate a space of open and honest dialogue in your classrooms.



These four pedagogies are grounded in scripture and geared toward formation. Each session starts with a deep dive into one of the many stories of scripture, and uses it as a paradigm through which you can view your role as an educator.



By the end of the sessions, we hope that you will have captured a vision of the impact Christian schooling could have on the formation and cultivation of student lives. For a more detailed discussion on this, see pp.13-19 (PeRLdoc).

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## HOW TO USE THE PeRL RESOURCES

The three resources available to help navigate the PeRL project are:

**1. The PeRL document (PeRLdoc)**

This document provides deep and in-depth insights into the nature of each pedagogy, and how to specifically implement them into an educational context.

**2. The PeRL session videos (available via the CSA website)**

The videos provide you with an inspirational and aspirational overview of each pedagogy, grounding them in their biblical, theological and cultural context.

**3. The PeRL Playbook (which you are currently reading!)**

This playbook accompanies the videos and provides a compact guide to facilitating the PeRL resource in your school.

To begin, watch the first video, which gives a snapshot of what PeRL is about.



**WATCH: INTRODUCTION TO PeRL**

Once the video has finished, think about the following questions. If you are working through this resource in a group, or at a PD day, discuss your thoughts with those around you (or as directed by a facilitator).

It may be helpful to work in small groups with a common connection (year group, curriculum area).



WHAT DOES PEDAGOGY MEAN TO YOU?

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WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOUR WORLDVIEW SHAPES YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin dark blue border, intended for a written response to the question above.



BEFORE YOU LOOK ANY FURTHER, TAKE A MOMENT TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES HOW THESE 4 PEDAGOGIES MIGHT LOOK IN A CLASSROOM CONTEXT:

*Think about what connection looks like between a teacher and student.*

*Think about how inclusion might impact those who often feel excluded.*

*Think about how a posture of justice might animate young people toward change.*

*Think about how voice might empower students to find their place in the world.*



## CONNECTION

*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

John 17:22-23

# A PEDAGOGY OF CONNECTION



## WATCH: CONNECTION

For a fuller discussion on the pedagogy of connection, including examples of how to implement the approach in the classroom, see *p.20 and pp.36-45 (PeRLdoc)*.

In Acts 17, Paul is in Athens connecting with a Greek audience who don't understand his usual Jewish stories, his way of speaking or thinking. For Paul it was pretty confronting. He is surrounded by pagan worship, idols, and food he had been taught never to eat. Instead of running for cover, Paul looks for lines of connection, ways he can help this very different audience understand the transforming message of Jesus. One key path he explores is the universal human quest to find God, and from this shared quest, he finds other ways to open discussion and exploration.

The key principle is that Paul started where his audience was - not where he thought they should be or where he might well have wanted them to be, but where they actually were. Without finding a way to connect, no meaningful relationships will be built.

For educators this is key. The relationships we form with our students will shape their attitude to their learning journey. If they view us as distant, unapproachable and primarily motivated to spot their flaws and errors, relational threads will be thin and easily broken. Without a positive relationship with our students, our prime focus is likely to be on behaviour management and classroom control, for unconnected students are likely to challenge every requirement placed on them.

Connection and content are not in a competition. Focusing on relationships reminds us that our students are unlikely to engage with the content we present without connection. As the video says: 'Content may be king, but it's married to "connection," and the two have become one!' A pedagogical emphasis on connection reminds us that it is not simply about what we teach but **who we teach**, and that the two should not be parted. We teach and learn through relationship. Naturally these must be at an appropriate level and take into account the age and role difference between teachers and students.

Not that connection is limited to building supportive relationships. As the PeRLdoc notes (p40) part of connection includes our engagement with students' prior knowledge, and how we find ways to stimulate their interest in new areas through what they already know. We can help students pull the threads that draw different disciplines together, and in doing so, help them to engage more optimistically with new material being explored.

An interest in cricket might foster a love for statistics, as batting averages take on a new relevance, or for physics, as bowling techniques can be linked with theories of force. We live in the one world that God has made, and lines of connection are everywhere.



## SOME STRATEGIES

### **1** Appropriate & Authentic Relationships

Regardless of the age of their students, teachers can build relationships where students feel safe, valued and cared for; where they are seen and known. Investing in the development of appropriate, authentic relationships with every student in our classroom builds trust and creates a psychologically safe environment where students can flourish, engage confidently in learning and where redemptive pedagogies can be effectively implemented.

When teachers connect with each student as they enter the classroom, *making eye contact, greeting them by name and with a smile, the message given is simple yet powerful - “you are welcome, you belong, it matters to me that you’re here.”* This message is strengthened further when teachers look for opportunities to learn about their students interests and, where possible, use these as a focus or a gateway to designing learning experiences that invite students to more deeply connect with their learning.

### **2** Classroom Culture: Feedback, communication and unmet expectations!

A classroom culture that reflects the school's core values and the importance of relational trust and connection between teacher and student - and between students - will have clear and consistent expectations around behaviour.

*Giving students, even young ones, agency in determining those behavioural expectations encourages ownership and adherence to them, building trust, strengthening relational connection between peers and facilitating student engagement in classroom activities.*

While it is important to hold students accountable when expectations are not met, this should always be done in ways that uphold the dignity and worth of the student. Viewing these situations as opportunities to help a student grow, to take responsibility for their actions and make better choices, can help teachers to remain calm in the moment.

Engaging the student in a conversation where the teacher is modelling respect, deep listening and a posture of seeking to understand the “why” of the behaviour, reinforces the message “you are welcome, you belong, it matters to me that you’re here.”

*The way that teachers provide feedback for students about other aspects of their learning can also reinforce, or undermine, the message that each student matters and belongs.*

*Whether written or verbal, it is important to deliver feedback with encouragement and warmth, remembering that our comments are for the purpose of encouraging improvement, not devaluing individual worth. Even difficult, candid feedback can be given with kindness and become the catalyst for growth.*

### **3** Modelling

Dr Rob Loe (2018) in his relational teaching research highlights the “strong correlation between high quality relationships and high quality wellbeing and reiterates that Christian education must be a relational enterprise” (PeRLdoc p20).

Given the importance of the relational connections that develop between teachers and students, you may wish to *invite a trusted colleague into the classroom to observe your teaching practice and how you are building relational connections*. Select someone who will provide open and honest feedback – and deliver it with encouragement, warmth, candour and kindness!

## SOME QUESTIONS



CAN YOU RECALL A MOMENT OR ACTIVITY THAT FOSTERED CONNECTION IN YOUR CLASS? WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE 'KEY TO CONNECTION' IN THAT EXAMPLE?"



FOSTERING CONNECTION LOOKS DIFFERENT ACROSS DIFFERENT AGES - BREAK INTO GROUPS THAT TEACH A SIMILAR AGE GROUP AND DISCUSS WAYS THAT YOU MIGHT BUILD CONNECTION WITH YOUR STUDENTS. SHARE WITH THE WIDER GROUP.



WE OFTEN THINK THAT THE STUDENTS' JOB IS TO LISTEN, BUT WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR A TEACHER TO MODEL 'DEEP LISTENING' TO THEIR STUDENTS? WHAT WOULD THAT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR CONTEXT?



EVERY ADULT REMEMBERS THEIR FAVOURITE TEACHER. WHY? BECAUSE OF THE LEVEL OF CONNECTION THEY FELT. WHAT POSITIVE THINGS COULD YOU DO TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE A TEACHER YOUR STUDENTS WILL REMEMBER?



## INCLUSION

*There is neither Jew nor Gentile,  
neither slave nor free, nor is there  
male and female, for you are  
all one in Christ Jesus"*

Galatians 3:28

# A PEDAGOGY OF INCLUSION



## WATCH: INCLUSION

For a fuller discussion on the pedagogy of voice, including examples of how to implement the approach in the classroom, see p.21 and pp.46-55 (PeRLdoc).



An Inclusion pedagogical approach creates educational space for students to be welcomed and thus lies at the heart of the Gospel. Such hospitality is not only found in many specific incidents throughout Scripture, but more broadly characterises the Christian narrative. God as host stretches out his arms of welcome in the crucified Christ so that we might no longer be ‘foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household’ (Eph.2:19) p.47 (PeRLdoc).



In one form or another, educational authorities around the world have put into place strategies to ensure “no child [is] left behind”<sup>[1]</sup> or that “every student [is] succeeding”.<sup>[2]</sup> The goals are noble, and reflect the heart of the vast majority of educators who long for schools to be places where each child is valued, matters and feels part of the community. But this is easier said than done.

Some students are easy to include. Likeable, confident and with many natural abilities, they fit in and enjoy the challenge, camaraderie and stretch of school. We might sometimes long for all students to be like them, and be frustrated with those who aren’t and assume it is their fault.

The reality is that some students struggle far more than others. Life is not a level playing field, and for many, the barriers to inclusion are real. Students find themselves with different accents, ethnicities, academic abilities, friendship groups, orientations, hobbies – the list goes on. The challenge for educators is helping young people transform these differences from things that divide them into things worthy of curiosity and respect.

While it is easy to say that the differences between people should enrich them, often they become an excuse to passively ignore or more actively to exclude.

In the video we ask “What’s it like to be in a class where your skin colour is different from everyone else?... to struggle to decode your teacher’s accent?... to live in terror of being called upon to read aloud?” These, and the other scenarios contemplated are important to think about, as they reflect the real life situation of many of our students. If we have never felt like the outsider, we may have little understanding of the crippling dynamics that can be at play, but we should be willing to imagine and to think our way into our student’s situation. Often small adjustments to our teaching practice can make an enormous difference.



The video also explores some more confronting settings. A student who is a militant atheist or is struggling with their sexuality or enthusiastically embraces another faith. We are usually more open to some differences than others, but in education every student matters and no child should be overlooked or left feeling isolated. This is part of the confronting nature of Scripture, and perhaps the Christian faith as a whole: that there is no one outside the story of God.

This is the terrain pointed to in the reflection on the Jonah story. Jonah sets a high bar, because Jonah had to reach out to people who were his enemies, a nation which would eventually destroy his own people. Truth to tell, Jonah and God never agreed on this one, and the book finishes with Jonah frustrated at the depth and breadth of God’s love. Simply put, God loves the Ninevites more than Jonah does... and God loves our students more than we do. Developing a Christlike model of inclusion might lead us to some challenging places, but this is what following Jesus has always done.

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[1] For example, the US Congress “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

[2] For example, The Queensland Education Department 2021–2025 State School Improvement Strategy, Every Student Succeeding.

## SOME STRATEGIES

“ Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host [teacher], but the gift of a chance for the guest [learner] to find his or her own.

Henri Nouwen (quoted in p47, PeRLdoc).

”

### **1** Classrooms – spaces of safety, flourishing.

If all students are to feel included, our classrooms must be welcoming spaces that are warm and welcoming, friendly and inviting. They must be *physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually safe spaces* that enable all students to feel that they belong.

Creating physical spaces that are warm and welcoming for students can be challenging. Traditionally, the design of schools centred more around functional spaces that would facilitate a teacher in front of a group of students sitting at desks, rather than innovative spaces that would enable movement, collaboration and creative expression. *Engaging students in the process of creatively reimagining their classrooms (perhaps with some guidelines!) can have surprising results, creating a physical space that is aesthetically appealing, fun and inviting.* This process also challenges students to think critically about different ways of learning and to identify the types of spaces that are needed – eg a quiet space for those who need distractions minimized, or group spaces for collaboration.

### **2** Courageous Conversations

However, regardless of the physical aesthetics, all teaching and learning spaces can be warm and welcoming. Where teachers understand and implement a pedagogy of inclusion, they can create psychologically safe spaces where students feel valued, respected and included. It is in these spaces that courageous conversations can take place.

For many students, simply stepping into a classroom can engender feelings of anxiety, frustration, insecurity, isolation. *Allowing time and space for class conversations about “inclusion” brings into focus themes such as loneliness, isolation, disconnection, feeling different.* The Bible, age-appropriate literature, news articles or personal stories, can be a catalyst for these discussions and an opportunity for students to develop empathy as they become more aware that while individual differences should be accepted and celebrated, they are often the cause of hidden loneliness and pain.

### 3 Modelling

Parker (2017) describes how a classroom can be a “community of truth,” a place where teachers are humble and vulnerable enough to offer real hospitality to their students. Teachers who model inclusion for each of their students, openly accepting and celebrating differences, *showing empathy, treating all students with kindness, respect and care, significantly influence the way students view one another.*

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## SOME QUESTIONS



THINK ABOUT YOUR CLASSROOM SPACE. WHAT FEELINGS DOES THE SPACE ELICIT? HOW COULD YOU INVOLVE YOUR STUDENTS IN A PROCESS OF RE-IMAGINING THEIR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT? (There may be obstacles to this task, but if there is an obstacle that stands out, spend a bit of time thinking about how you might overcome it)



HOW CAN YOU FOSTER UNITY IN YOUR CLASSROOM AMONG STUDENT PEERS? WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO FEEL ‘AT HOME’?



**THERE WILL ALWAYS BE EXPERIENCES THAT WE ARE UNABLE TO RELATE TO IN OUR STUDENTS. HOW DO YOU EMPATHISE WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE VERY DIFFERENT TO YOU?**

**Consider:**

*Siblings who are political refugees and have witnessed horrible things, and are now trying to build a new life in a very different country.*

*A boy who is aggressive and hostile, but whom you suspect is being treated poorly at home.*

*A muslim boy, trying to be faithful to his religion in the midst of a school where he is ridiculed.*



**WHAT DO YOU THINK IT LOOKS LIKE FOR A TEACHER TO BE HOSPITABLE? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?**



## JUSTICE

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.*

*And what does the Lord require of you?*

*To act justly and to love mercy*

*and to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8



# A PEDAGOGY OF JUSTICE



WATCH: JUSTICE

From beginning to end the Bible contains a powerful message about justice.

From the patriarchs to the prophets; from the reign of the kings to the pronouncements of the kingdom of God on earth, the resounding message is one of justice, of hope for the future, and of a world that reflects the heart of God.

In Jesus' first reading at the synagogue we hear him reciting the words of Isaiah 61:

“ The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19). ”

This, it seems, is the calling of those who would follow him; that they would be committed to acting justly - and to participating with God in the healing of the world. It's certainly a lofty goal, and not an easy challenge.

When it comes to education from a Christian perspective, we must consider what it looks like to reflect God's passion for justice in everything that we do.

If one of the tasks of Christian schooling is to equip students to be citizens of a new world - of God's world - then empowering them to be people of justice becomes an essential goal.

Slavery, racism, social injustices and inequities, environmental degradation. These are issues facing all people, everywhere. Young people, however, are stepping into a world that has been handed down to them by previous generations. Part of the role of education is to equip them to face these injustices with courage, empathy and compassion. We need students who do not run from the difficult challenges, as well as those who take time to appreciate the beauty of the world in which they live.

Justice isn't just about global issues. A pedagogy of justice is about cultivating a posture toward the world that sees the humanity in each person. It is about hearing the stories that make up our world, and taking time to truly listen to those around us. This doesn't happen in a single moment, but over many small interactions.

It is learned in the midst of tensions with rival students, in the stress before a school production, in the way a student engages with the schools recycling policy or where the fabric for the uniform is sourced. It's about everyday relationships as much as it is about systemic injustice and oppression.



A pedagogy of justice is about the whole person, and the whole of life.

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## SOME STRATEGIES

“ ... and so learning should prompt the learner to be willing and able to act to enable change (PeRLdoc p 22). ”

### **1 Let the little children come to me ... so strong foundations can be laid**

By the time students enter our schools they generally have a well-developed sense of what is fair and just – at least in their own eyes. It takes enormous time, wisdom and patience from teachers of our youngest learners as they help them to understand the importance of sharing, including, taking turns and forgiving others. Every day, countless childish conflicts are brought with great passion to the teacher to solve, pass judgement on the offender, and make things right.

Wise teachers recognise that these childish conflicts provide an important opportunity to teach children about restorative justice; how to see the world through the eyes of another, how to forgive and to restore relationships.

*The time taken to help students resolve these problems throughout their primary school years is a worthwhile investment for it is in these formative years that teachers create the foundations for students to understand the practice and learn the skills of restorative justice; to recognise injustice around them - in the classroom, in the playground, and be able to take action to enable change.*

## **2** An integrated approach

As students grow in their understanding of the world and their view of injustice expands beyond the boundaries of school and home, so too expands the opportunity teachers have to help shape their student's view of social justice and their capacity to make a difference. While these opportunities naturally present themselves within various curriculum areas, in the same way that "justice" is a powerful theme running throughout the Bible, so too it should be a powerful theme that permeates every part of school-life. Many of our students experience injustice, real or perceived, at home and school. Left unspoken, unresolved or unchallenged, the cumulative effect of injustice can be significant and can play out in negative ways - behaviourally and academically.

Where teachers practice redemptive pedagogies of connection and inclusion, *create classroom cultures of trust and vulnerability, deep listening and curiosity, the door is open for richer conversations that can help students to navigate and question their own perceptions and responses; to look beyond themselves and to find the courage to be an advocate for justice for all.*

## **3** Modelling

“ Loving, merciful, humble and just teachers may enable learning outcomes that are loving and just (PeRLdoc p22). ”

When teachers deeply value justice it permeates their teaching, finding its way seamlessly into class discussions; it's reflected in the way they manage student behaviour and student conflict; it's apparent in the inclusive and hospitable way they treat each and every student - and colleague; and it's evident in their *passionate advocacy against injustice in all its guises.*

However, when teachers deeply value justice perhaps it is most evident in the level of trust and respect that their students have for them.

# SOME QUESTIONS



HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO YOUR STUDENTS?

Consider the different age groups.



HOW CAN YOU CONNECT STUDENTS TO THE MOST IMPORTANT GLOBAL ISSUES, WITHOUT MAKING THEM FEEL OVERWHELMED?



STUDENTS ARE ENERGISED BY THE PASSION OF THEIR TEACHERS. WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO JUSTICE? HOW MIGHT YOU BRING THIS INTO YOUR SUBJECT AREA / CLASSROOM?



VOICE

*"You are the God who sees me..."*

*I have now seen the One who sees me."*

Genesis 16:13

# A PEDAGOGY OF VOICE



## WATCH: VOICE

Voice can be understood at two levels.

It can be seen as our response to the “Where have you come from? And where are you going to?” questions of Genesis 16:8. They probe deeply into our story. Without a reasonable awareness of the likely answer of each learner, educators run the risk of teaching content divorced from the lived experience of their students. What is seen as relevant is deeply impacted by where you have come from and where you see yourself going to. For some students these are haunting questions. Creative interaction with them could open windows of healing, opportunity and growth. Ignored, they often see disengagement from the classroom as one topic after another is dismissed as “irrelevant to my life.”

Voice also refers to the role of students in driving their own learning, and of being active participants in the learning process. While content driven models of education focus on ensuring that learning objectives for each lesson are met, voice driven models work at ensuring student agency in the process, and encourage active participation in the learning cycle. While certain goals must be met, others are viewed as open. When discussing a poem or deciding which science experiment to fit into the limited time, the concerns and interests of the class are taken seriously. Student voices shape the direction of the lesson. The PeRLdoc notes that:

“ The traditional mode of teaching is through transmission, which usually takes the form of initiation – response – feedback (IRF) and is essentially monologic (the voice of the teacher is the first and the last spoken). Developing students’ voice and agency is more about asking students to think and giving them time to reflect and then to respond in ways that allow them to discover their ideas, thinking processes and venture forth ideas in progress (PeRLdoc p68). ”

Most educators would like their students to continue discussing material covered in class long after the lesson has ended. For that to happen, we must capture the imaginations of our learners, and empower them to shape classroom discussion.

Our posture towards learning is all important. Rather than attempting to answer all questions, we can point to the further questions that most answers lead to. The PeRLdoc explores features of “dialogic talk” and “dialogic indicators” (p72) some of which include the increase in the number of questions flowing from students and the level of participation of students in answering the questions raised by class members. If there are few questions or little interaction, the imagination of the class has not yet been captured. Educators might then approach the topic from a different angle (if this is content that must be covered) or might switch to another topic altogether.

Taking our students’ voices seriously reflects our belief that they matter, and that their opinions count. At a deeper level, it shows we see them as bearers of God’s image - beings who are capable and accountable. It reminds them that they have agency, and are not simply passive recipients in the learning process, but that their voice matters and helps shape the outcome.



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## SOME STRATEGIES

Student voices are honoured as image bearers and are inspired and encouraged to develop in confidence, as they are included and affirmed in their growth (PeRL p24).

### **1** Made in the image of God

Teachers who deeply believe that every student is made in the image of God *intentionally create time, space and opportunity for students to express their voice and agency*. For many students, time, space and opportunity is all that is needed - their agency is discovered as they grow in confidence and their expression of voice matures. These students engage confidently and successfully, often revealing themselves as leaders amongst their peers.

But what of those students who struggle socially, emotionally or intellectually; who feel inadequate, disempowered and unworthy; who do not see the agency they have, or understand that they too have a voice worthy of expression. Where students are denied the opportunity to learn how to express themselves in ways that engender wholeness and flourishing, they will learn to hide behind their wall of inadequacy, relationally disconnecting from their teachers and peers, or find other disruptive ways to be seen and heard. This, in itself, is an injustice.

## 2 Skills that enable voice and agency

As teachers build trust and connection with students, creating welcoming, inclusive classroom cultures where all students are seen and known, the environment is established for intentionally teaching the skills that will empower and enable these students to find their voice – and to use it generously and respectfully.

These skills, which support relational and communication competency, include:

*appropriately expressing feelings and emotions; dealing with conflict using restorative language and actions; active listening; being assertive; making and maintaining healthy friendships; identifying actions that show compassion, kindness, respect, courage etc.*

Where teachers create time and opportunity to purposefully teach these skills, students are able to grow in their understanding of self and others. Confidence is gained as students begin to discover that they do have agency and a voice that is worthy of expression.

## 3 Modelling

“ Honouring voices occurs between teachers and students and among students as they honour each other (PeRLdoc p24). ”

Teachers, too, have voice and agency in their classrooms – coupled with significant power and influence in the way they are used. *Where agency is used to serve, equip and motivate, and voice is used to encourage, care for and inspire, teachers create relationships of trust and spaces of safety, hope and justice where students’ voices are honoured.*

# SOME QUESTIONS



IT'S EASY TO SEE THE IMAGE OF GOD IN SOME STUDENTS. WHAT IS YOUR FIRST RESPONSE TO A STUDENT WHO STARTS EXHIBITING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN YOUR CLASSROOM? HOW CAN WE TRAIN OURSELVES TO SEE THE IMAGE OF GOD IN ALL OF OUR STUDENTS?



FOSTERING AGENCY LOOKS DIFFERENT AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF EDUCATION. SPLIT INTO TEACHING GROUPS AND DISCUSS HOW MIGHT YOU FOSTER AGENCY AMONG YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC OF STUDENTS?

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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[csa.edu.au](http://csa.edu.au)

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An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green mountain valley. The terrain is rugged and covered in dense forest. A winding river flows through the center of the valley, surrounded by terraced fields and small settlements. The overall scene is one of natural beauty and agricultural activity.

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