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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry

Optimising student learning is an important goal of Christian education. It is suggested the strongest contribution teachers can make to improving student learning is to adopt a research-evidence based teaching system (The Gonski 2.0 Review, cited in Ballantyne, 2018a). In particular:

Pedagogical practices must be contemporary and evidence-based, and teachers must have the resources and expertise to update their methods to those practices proven effective by current research. ... Crucially, schools need to help teachers seize any opportunity to work collaboratively and review their own teaching practices.

TEACH aims to facilitate collaborative exchange of evidence-based classroom understandings, innovative practice and researched findings.

Wooton (cited in Ballantyne, 2018b) asserts the 20% of students that are disengaged in schooling are performing at levels 1 to 2 years behind peers, “What’s more, our students are facing serious mental health issues, with one in seven primary aged students reporting mental health problems” (para. 5, 6)

Meta-analysis of research asserts a potential partial pedagogical solution for “mindfulness practice is associated with a 16 per cent increase in academic performance and mental health for practicing students relative to peers” (para. 8) and “strong improvements in attention, reduced stress, anxiety and depression” (para. 7).

Bree Hills in this issue (p. 4) asks, “Does mindfulness have a place in a Christian school?” Why does the question arise? Two issues emerge, firstly, “Is it an appropriate practice?” Ludvik (2017) sensitively addressed the potential perception of “pushing” specific wisdom traditions, yet formulated a neuroscience informed secular curriculum publishing *Positively Transforming Minds within Educational Systems* in 2018. The purpose was to address the second issue arising, “Is omitting mindfulness practices in schools a missed opportunity for enhancing wellbeing?” Hills also addresses this possibility, however locates ‘mindfulness’ within a focus “not on self or even on emptying the mind of self, but on God”. She describes her school’s program *Your Mind Matters*—describing observed positive outcomes. This

resolution to utilise mindfulness aligns with Rhodes’ discussion of Basil’s willingness to draw from the education system of antiquity, compared to Titian’s more conservative rejection of all non-Christian sources and their knowledge (p. 46).

Two additional articles draw on neuroscience to improve student engagement in classrooms. Kingston (p. 9) offers advice on gaining attention and also habit formation, with specific implications for practice. A ‘time in’ strategy for supporting challenged wellbeing in indigenous students, is recounted and recommended by Walsh and Christian (p. 14).

Enhancing wellbeing for students and staff through school restructuring that enables service learning, is explained by principal Charleson (p. 16), including impacts on happiness, intergenerational relationships and development of new (old) skills.

Evidence for effective learning from two contemporary resources—*Minecraft* as either ‘out of school’ or ‘in school’ reading support (Taylor & Hattingh, p. 29), and *The Fault in Our Stars* a cancer narrative example of young adult literature (Lounsbury et al., p. 37)—informs readers of their potential educational application and impact.

Aitchison’s invitation to reflect in *As Light Lingers* models attitudes of ‘mind maintenance’ spirituality, essential for Christian professional wellbeing. You see, optimising student learning, that important goal of Christian Education, is moderated by the level of care achieved for our welfare as well. **TEACH**

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[Photography: Glensy Perry]