A Response to – A decade of Encounter

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This study—*A Decade of Encounter*—research commissioned by Adventist Schools Australia, offers valuable data worthy of reflection as we enter a new decade of Encounter's implementation within Australia. The time and effort invested in the collection of these voices from the field is valued and appreciated. Recent engagement with the researchers has brought rich discussion and a commitment to make the Adventist Encounter curriculum even stronger as we embark on a revision of the curriculum in 2020. This dialogue will continue as time goes on.

Even prior to the release of this helpful data, ASA had been an aware that training had not been as rigorous as it might have been and had begun to offer a far more comprehensive training schedule for schools in each Conference. By June 2020, all Adventist schools in Australia will have undertaken Level 1 training. Since the time of these research interviews, ASA has also invested in developing Encounter Coaches including representatives from each Conference, who can further support the local context.

Level 1 Encounter training has brought clarity to: the big-picture objective of Encounter; an understanding of the purpose and philosophy behind the Transformational Planning Framework as a foundational structure; the value of each phase within it; the reality of implementation flexibility; the online availability of units and non-kit resources; differentiation for mixed faith learning; core Adventist beliefs as a basis of units; an appreciation for the slower pace of units; increased Bible use in Version 2 units; the inclusion of a range of other pedagogical emphases in Version 2 units now available to teachers; the Scope and Sequence rationale, highlighting themes and flow; redemptive assessment practices; and strategies to mitigate a siloed curriculum focus. We believe the clarity achieved in the delineation of these details is reflected in the comments of lead teachers whose schools experienced the most recent round of training,

The day was inspirational and beneficial to all staff. Feedback from staff included a new enthusiasm for using Encounter, definitely a clearer understanding of how best to use the program and resources.[1]

The training brought clarity to teachers as there were misconceptions regarding the pedagogy and implementation of the curriculum. The staff felt inspired and enabled to teach Encounter.[2]

It is gratifying to observe the researchers' note that "In schools where Encounter is perceived to be an essential and integrated core of the religious program and spiritual ethos, it takes on a more vibrant feel … and a deeper spiritual engagement by the whole school community."[3]

Now, as we stand at the door of 2020 and commence a new decade of Encounter, we also welcome a re-invigorated opportunity to move forward together with even greater intentionality and purpose; with the preeminent goal of inviting our students to meaningfully encounter God. **TEACH**

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References

[1] Reported by Joanne Andrews, Director of Teaching and Learning, Central Coast Adventist School.
[2] Primary Teaching and Learning Coordinators, Macquarie College, Newcastle.
[3] Encounter Bible Evaluation Report, Fitzsimmons, P., Hill, B. (2019) p 19.

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Daryl Murdoch is the National Director of Australian Schools Australia, and Chair of the Australia and New Zealand Encounter Curriculum Committee.

Editorial Note:
TEACH shares this response to—*A Decade of Encounter*—with the intention of supporting interaction between teachers as the classroom implementors of Encounter, their regional education directors and Encounter developers so as to further encourage engagement in developing learning concepts and strategies of implementation.