



20th May 2005

Mrs Anne Corcoran MP
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Anne,

Re: NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO TEACHER TRAINING

Pursuant to our conversation on 16 May 2005, I make the following comments about my perception of some of the needs for change in our current Australian Teacher Education programs.

1. My first overall observation is that most teacher training institution graduates are not well prepared for their role in the classroom or in the broader context of the school. We find that most of our new teachers require a careful and intense supervision in the areas of curriculum writing and delivery, student management, and participation in operational aspects of the school. Employing a new graduate can therefore debilitate the effective operation of the educational environment and place a strain on supervisory resources.
2. My second concern is with the ostensible lack of a sense of professional responsibility among many teachers. In this context, I define "professional" as that sense of personal responsibility which leads a person to be prepared to consistently take personal initiative and make personal sacrifices to achieve the outcomes related to the profession. It is possible that a lack of training and experience in the real business of professional engagement in education is to some degree a cause of such a lack of professionalism in teachers.
3. I also observe that many teachers find teaching to be an unconscionably stressful occupation. The apparent significant causes of the stress include:

- A lack of skills and experience in student management and curriculum preparation and delivery such that these core tasks of teaching can become quite bewildering and time consuming in the early years of a teacher's career.
- Unworkable student management philosophies and practices. I observe that some trainee teachers are taught to regard students' unruly, disruptive or uncooperative behaviour as a normal part of the learning environment. This view constitutes for many teachers a situation where they simply cannot control their own exposure to stress factors within their working environment, nor can they effectively pursue the curriculum delivery which is, after all, the core function of their teaching.

With the above issues in mind I have a number of suggestions for adjustments that could be made to pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher professional development which could assist our addressing the above issues:

1. Increase the amount and extent of pre-service teacher training practicum experiences. My opinion is that teachers in training should be involved in regular practicum experiences throughout their entire teacher training time. I would like to see a strengthening the "mentor" relationships between the pre-service teacher and a currently practising and experienced teacher such that it operates on a longer term and on a more intimate basis.
2. A longer "internship" at the end of teacher training. Most of the competent first year teachers that I have worked with were involved in a one term "internship" program in which they have been involved in extended (7 – 10 week) teaching practicum which enables them to develop skills and deal with weaknesses in a real situation but under the close scrutiny of an experienced mentor teacher.
3. In-service teacher professional development programs: I applaud the Victorian Institute of Teachers' new program for the mentored development of first year-of-service teachers. It addresses the essential elements of carefully supervising the development of teacher skills within the context of a real school situation. It is unfortunate, however, that it needs to be

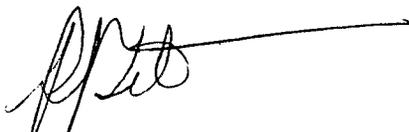
so expensive on supervisory resources in schools. I feel that this program would not be quite so necessary if teacher training included more extended practicum experiences.

Notwithstanding the struggles of the beginning years of service, the continuing development of teacher skills in dealing with weaknesses in teachers' professional skills and behaviour still remains one of the major challenges of the teaching profession. The Committee may be interested in perusing the attached introductory document to the "Avenues to Teaching Excellence" program. This program was designed as ongoing cyclical development program for teachers who are beyond their first year of teaching orientation. It is currently being implemented in the Lighthouse Christian College. I will be happy to forward further information to the Committee about the details of this program if it is of interest.

4. I recommend a re-examination of the prevailing pedagogical philosophies. It is my opinion that teachers and students should both have an expectation of orderly classrooms in which a teacher's authority is properly respected. I have found that in schools where teachers have an expectation of students generally being obedient and respectful that it is easy to create a good learning environment, a safe emotional environment for young people and a non-stressful and fulfilling professional environment for teachers.

I commend the work of the committee and trust that we can all work together to see the teaching profession grow in its capacity to offer great education in Australian schools.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Tiller', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ray Tiller
Principal

Avenues to Teaching Excellence



**An Overview of
A Professional
Appraisal and
Development Program
for
Christian Teachers**



A Brief Overview of *Avenues to Teaching Excellence*

A Professional Appraisal and Development Program for Christian Teachers

Teaching excellence? As teachers, we live and work in a professional and social context that demands increasing accountability for how well we do our job. As our College grows from its “pioneering” stage to its “development” stage, we find that parents are increasingly expecting the best teaching practice and learning outcomes for their children. If they don’t see us performing professionally, they simply take their children out and put them in a school that appears to be performing better. Further, the new Victorian Institute of Teachers is now beginning to clarify and articulate standards of teachers’ professional practice, and has recently developed a mentoring program for beginning teachers.

And above all of these social and political considerations, is the sense of responsibility to our mission. If we sincerely wish to “teach and train ... children in a Godly environment, so that they will fulfill God’s purposes in their lives and bring an uncompromising Christian influence to our society”, we had better be good at what we do. If we fail to develop the best skills and obtain the best outcomes in our teaching, we will fall short of our mission and leave a generation of young people ill equipped for their service of God in the community of their generation.

In this context, how do we, the Lighthouse Christian College teaching staff, ensure that all of us continue to grow in our teaching skills and work towards correcting any flaws in our professional competence?

One method that we won’t be using is the “Inspectoral Model”. In that model we would undergo an inspection and appraisal process because our school governance body demanded it. Satisfactory appraisal outcomes would be required if we were to be secure in our employment. Predictably, we teachers usually hate this kind of appraisal process and have the tendency to “get it over with” so that we can get back to the real business of our teaching without the interference of being evaluated. Our appraisal documents would probably lay gathering dust until the next inspection and appraisal, maybe in two years’ time. This process does not lead us to “own” our problems as teachers or to actively do anything to develop or refine our professional skills - so it usually leaves us unchanged!

The other unsatisfactory extreme is the “self-development” model. This model has me as a teacher doing a self-appraisal and making up my own mind about what I want to change or develop, and then I take responsibility for doing the necessary work to develop and refine my professional skills. As a teacher, I “own” the process and I may feel really good about it. But will my heads of department, director, principal or parent body agree that I am dealing with the right faults and development? The evidence from our history of “do-it-yourself” appraisal and professional development programs tends to indicate that very few of us really see our own faults and development needs clearly enough to make a priority of doing the hard work of real development of our teaching skills. Years later, I may still be saying, “Yes, I should really do something about that issue when I get time!”.

The *Avenues to Teaching Excellence* program is designed to balance the accountability of an appraisal program driven by Supervisors with the “ownership” model of a self directed and peer assisted development program. *Avenues* aims to get the best of both worlds – attain objectivity by ensuring that teachers are accountable for the things that benefit the college and the educational program, and help teachers to identify with the development process giving them and their colleagues a hand in the ownership and action of what is appraised and what is developed.

The Avenues Program is built around a number of key operating concepts:

1. A Triangular Relationship.

The Avenues Program is based on a working relationship between three people – the teacher, an experienced teaching colleague called a “Colleague Coach”, and a Supervisor (a Head of Department or other senior staff member). The Supervisor – teacher relationship is the accountable one. The Supervisor’s role is to require teachers to complete tasks or require changes to aspects of teacher performance. The Supervisor has the final say on the judgements made in the appraisal and the priorities of the development program. The Colleague Coach, on the other hand, does not seek such accountability – rather, the Colleague Coach’s role is to be a mentor, an encourager, a resource, and a source of feedback.

2. A Set of “Domains” describing the Practice of Teaching.

When a teacher embarks on the Avenues program, a three-way discussion between teacher, Supervisor and Colleague Coach delineates the teacher’s development needs and the college’s requirements of change in the teacher’s performance. These needs and requirements are described with reference to a set of 6 “domains” of teaching practice. The domains of teaching practice are published in a document that identifies and describes 25 different components of professional teaching practice, and describes in detail what a specific aspect of distinguished, proficient, basic, or unsatisfactory teaching performance looks like.

The following example is one of the 25 components of Teaching Practice presented in the Avenues program:

DOMAIN 2: PLANNING AND PREPARATION				
Component 2b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students				
Elements: Knowledge of characteristics (intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional) of age group • Knowledge of students' varied approaches to learning • Knowledge of students' skills and knowledge • Knowledge of students' interests and cultural heritage				
ELEMENT	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE			
	UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
Knowledge of intellectual, social, emotional & spiritual Characteristics of Age Group	Teacher displays minimal knowledge of development characteristics of age group and is ignorant and insensitive to student needs.	Teacher displays generally accurate knowledge of developmental characteristics of age group and shows some understanding and sensitivity to student needs.	Teacher displays thorough understanding of typical developmental characteristics of age group as well as exceptions to general patterns. Teacher is sensitive to student needs.	Teacher displays knowledge of typical developmental characteristics of age group, exceptions to the patterns, and the extent to which each student follows patterns. Teacher is exceptionally discerning of student needs.
Knowledge of Students' Varied Approaches to Learning	Teacher is unfamiliar with the different approaches to learning that students exhibit, such as learning styles, modalities, and different "intelligences".	Teacher displays general understanding of the different approaches to learning that students exhibit.	Teacher displays solid understanding of the different approaches to learning that different students exhibit.	Teacher uses, where appropriate, knowledge of students' varied approaches to learning in instructional planning.
Knowledge of Students' Skills and Knowledge	Teacher displays little knowledge of students' skills and knowledge and does not indicate that such knowledge is valuable.	Teacher recognizes the value of understanding students' skills and knowledge but displays this knowledge for the class only as a whole.	Teacher displays knowledge of students' skills and knowledge for groups of students and recognizes the value of this knowledge.	Teacher displays knowledge of students' skills and knowledge for each student, including those with special needs.
Understanding, within a Biblical Christian Perspective, of Students' Interests and Cultural Heritage	Teacher displays little knowledge of students' interests or cultural heritage and does not indicate that such knowledge is valuable. Teacher shows no capacity to graciously critique interests and cultural heritage from a Biblical Christian perspective.	Teacher recognizes the value of understanding students' interests or cultural heritage but displays this knowledge for the class only as a whole. Teacher can, in principle, critique student interests and cultural heritage from a Biblical Christian perspective.	Teacher displays good general knowledge of the interests or cultural heritage of groups of students. Teacher can, with some grace, critique student interests and cultural heritage from a Biblical Christian perspective.	Teacher displays a good depth of knowledge of the interests or cultural heritage of individual students and recognizes the value of this knowledge. Teacher can graciously critique interests and cultural heritage from a Biblical Christian perspective.

The teacher has opportunity to express his/her perceptions of how he/she is performing in the domains, and the Supervisor and Colleague Coach give their frank objective views from their observations. Together, Teacher, Supervisor, and Colleague Coach contribute to the creation of:

- a set of only 3 – 5 components which will act as appraisal criteria
- a timeframe for the appraisal and development process.

3. Appraisal by the Supervisor.

The Supervisor is responsible for carrying out a formal appraisal with respect to the 3 – 5 components of teaching practice that are set as appraisal criteria for the particular teacher. The appraisal process may involve a variety of data-gathering processes that are considered appropriate for the particular appraisal being used for that teacher. Such data collection processes could include:

- Observation of teacher's lessons, group management, etc.
- Interview of the teacher with view to ascertaining areas of knowledge, understanding, confidence, etc.

- A survey of the teacher's working documents; eg, long term curriculum programs, daily lesson planning, assessment programs and records,
- A Survey of the teacher's class learning outcomes; eg, assessment results and other measures of student performance.
- Observation of student and parent responses to the teacher and his/her teaching.

The appraisal is not designed to qualify or disqualify the teacher, but to identify and define the areas of the teacher's knowledge, skills, and practice that need some assistance and/or development.

4. Development Program Based on Appraisal Outcomes.

On the basis of the appraisal, the Supervisor, the Colleague Coach and the Teacher design a strategic development plan that is designed to specifically assist the teacher to develop in the areas that have been shown to be needy in the appraisal process. The strategic development plan will incorporate a variety of strategies, depending on the needs of the teacher. For example, a teacher needing to remedy a weakness in pedagogy might be involved in a clinical supervision program, while a teacher needing to broaden perspectives of teaching a particular subject might be released for some time to observe in another classroom or school, or to work under the supervision of an expert teacher in that field. Still other teachers' needs might be met by reading or study programs, or attendance at conferences dealing with the issues at hand.

The Supervisor, assisted by the Colleague Coach, oversees the development program for each teacher. The Supervisor will consult with both the Colleague Coach and the Teacher to evaluate progress towards development goals.

5. A Priority on Training Colleague Coaches and Supervisors.

The Avenues program involves the Supervisor and Colleague Coach in hands-on personal developmental interaction with other adult professionals. The performance of these functions requires a fairly demanding level of interpersonal skills and sensitivities that will need to be systematically developed. To develop these skills and sensitivities, we will pursue a Colleague Coach and Supervisor training and maintenance program that involves periodic input and discussion meetings.

6. A Priority on Provision of Adequate Resources.

Avenues is a rigorous program of professional development for teachers, and we anticipate that it will require the allocation of appropriate resources. A Colleague Coach will need to

spend some time observing or assisting a teacher, and, whereas some of these responsibilities can be achieved in the course of the normal professional life of a good experienced teacher, there will be some need for time release to manage aspects of this role. Similarly, if we decide that a teacher needs time out of the classroom to pursue development activities, we will need to make provision of adequate release time.

7. The “Roll-out” of Avenues in Lighthouse Christian College:

The priority for 2004 will be the piloting of the program with a small number of teachers.

By 2005, we hope that Avenues will have become recognised as a successful strategy for professional development and can be applied to all teaching staff.

In future, we plan to develop and implement the following additional phases of Avenues:

- A second phase of Avenues addressing the development needs of teachers who have completed Phase One in a previous year.
- With some adjustment to the Colleague Coaching process and skills domains, we hope to complete *Avenues to Management Excellence for Middle Managers* in the College.
- We plan to develop and implement an “Intensive Care” program to cater for the needs of teachers who are indicating signs of long-term critical professional dysfunction.
- Longer-term, we plan to apply the same principles of professional development to *Avenues* programs for Executive, Business, Clerical, and Grounds staff.



Some Comments from Teachers Previously Involved in the Avenues Program

A Supervisor: The *Avenues* program has been very helpful to me personally because it has provided a structure, a vocabulary, and a motivation to begin dealing with the professional development of the teachers in my department. The structure is flexible without being vague. The vocabulary is precise without being jargon. The motivation is empowering without being demanding or overpowering.

Ian Spence, Head of Maths Department

A Teacher: I have appreciated the heart of the *Avenues* program to develop myself personally and professionally as a teacher. I have benefited through opportunities to participate in professional development outside the school.

My involvement in *Avenues* has been a great opportunity to gather new ideas and network with other teachers. I have also enjoyed the times I have received feedback about my teaching from my Colleague Coach and Supervisor. This process enables me to grow and improve in my personal attitudes and goals, and to improve the quality of my teaching.

Caitlyn Taylor Lower Primary Teacher

A Colleague Coach: Being a Colleague Coach in the *Avenues* program has been a positive experience in my professional development.

I felt fully supported in my role as Colleague Coach because I could regularly draw from the Supervisor, regular discussion groups, structured guidelines, criteria and release time. The structure of the program allowed me to Colleague Coach a fellow colleague with confidence and without the colleague feeling threatened.

The *Avenues* program gave me an understanding of the importance of us all needing to work towards becoming teachers of excellence.

Wendy Chamberlin, Junior Primary Leading Teacherr