

## A New Direction: The Strategic Plan 2020 - Raising Expectations

Through the recent input from parents, students, staff and Old Boys, the College Board and Leadership Team have established a new direction for Aquinas. The College's new strategic plan introduces a series of initiatives in the next three years which will see significant development in:

- Student faith formation and well-being;
- Character education and leadership;
- Curriculum offering and academic performance;
- Teaching and learning;
- Formation and well-being of staff;
- Community relationships; and
- Resources and infrastructure

These changes are within the context of the Aquinas College Learning Journey, Edmund Rice Education Australia and the Bishop's Mandate.

With more than 70 actions, this first edition of "Aquinas College Learning Solutions" introduces some of the first wave of changes being implemented from the Strategic Plan. Below provides an overview of our first wave of changes in 2018.

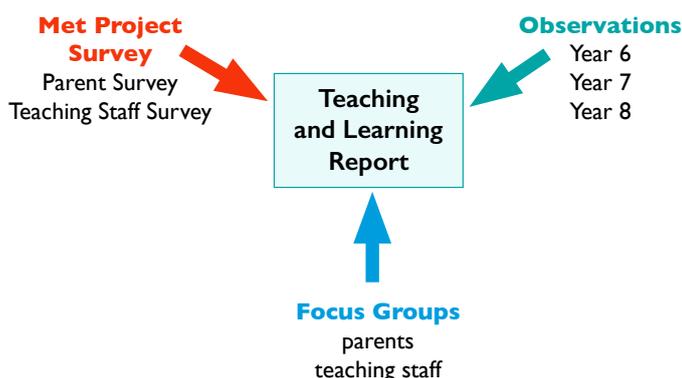
### Year 6 to 8 Teaching and Learning Review

A team from the University of Notre Dame Australia Education Faculty, led by Professor Michael O'Neill, are spending two weeks at Aquinas College this term reviewing the quality of our teaching and learning in Years 6 to 8.

The teaching staff at Aquinas College are interested in raising the standard of our teaching. The review will allow the staff to gain a better understanding of their teaching and student learning. It will identify the quality of practice by teachers and the affects their behaviours and strategies have on student learning.

The Review will focus upon what it is like to be a learner at the school and how teaching practices affect student learning and progress. The aim is to analyse the range of teaching and learning behaviours that are occurring. To identify and celebrate what is good and to focus on what is worth reflection and improvement.

A "Teaching Learning Committee" chaired by Mr Duncan Warlters has been established to ensure the implementation of recommendations derived from the report. Prof. O'Neill commented; "This is a progressive direction from the teaching staff at Aquinas College and shows a real intent to be the best they can be."



### Initial Actions

#### Raising Academic Expectation (What we teach)

##### 21st Global Education

- Review of Aquinas curriculum
- Respond to changing demands on boys' education and graduate needs

##### Arts Education

- Additional time for Middle School Arts programme; each student enrolled in one class of art, music and drama each week
- A new instrumental music program will be introduced to the Junior School

#### (How we teach)

##### Year 6 to Year 8 Review

- University of Notre Dame Australia led review
- Driven by teaching staff
- Seeking clarity and improvement of teaching and learning performance

#### Raising Parent Expectation (How we support you)

- Introduction of new Parent Son Goal Setting Report
- Parent and Friends focus move to Parenting and Fathering
- New communications strategy

#### Raising Student Expectation (How we relate)

##### Student Management Restructure

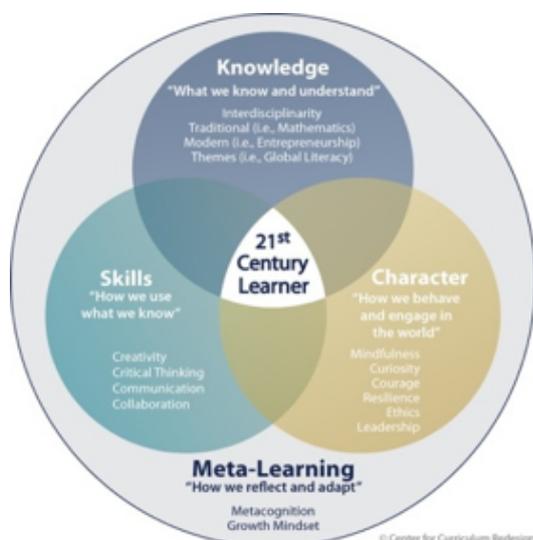
- Formation of Junior, Middle and Senior Schools
- A reformatted House System

##### Catholic Identity, Character Education and Leadership

- Integration of existing faith and new leadership programmes
- Introduction of Character Education program (Veritas) in the Middle School

## A New Curriculum: 21st Global Education

In addition to how we teach and learn there is also a need to review our curriculum concerning what we should teach. Our Heads of Learning Area will commence an audit of our current curriculum and timetable with a view to phase in required changes over the next two years. We will be using a curriculum model below devised by Charles Fadel to review and decide which areas of our curriculum require changing.



Research has indicated that young people today are likely to have 17 jobs over five different careers in their lifetime. So, what kind of skills will they need in order to thrive in that environment?

It seems to be very natural they would have **versatility**. That is the ability to go from one to the other - to the next job and/or career. That versatility implies, in a sense, a **broad and deep education**. Deep in the sense of deeper learning of the existing disciplines, whether it is for example mathematics or humanities. In addition, more **relevant knowledge** [in areas] such as entrepreneurship, robotics and wellness - which all matter in today's world and certainly for tomorrow's world as well.

A further important aspect is the question of how we use that knowledge. Therefore, our boys will need their **creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills** developed.

Above and beyond that, if you reflect about what makes people successful in life it is also how they behave and engage with the world? So, their **mindfulness**, their **curiosity**, their **courage**, their **resilience**, their **ethics** and their **leadership** are also vital.

Lastly, and quite importantly in a world that is constantly changing, the ability to reflect and adapt and continuing to learn how to learn comes at a premium. Therefore, the students' **metacognition and growth mindset** would need to be developed.

Overall, there are four dimensions which contribute to a deeper more robust and versatile education, which is about **knowledge, skills, character and meta learning**.

**Charles Fadel** is a global education leader from Harvard University who presented The Australian Learning Lecture in Melbourne in May 2017. He is known as the pioneer of the idea of 21st Century Skills. He presents strong arguments for change. I recommend his brief presentation at:

<http://www.all-learning.org.au/lecture/new-success-2017/new-success-highlights>

## A New Structure:

### Aquinas College Becomes Three in One

With our new curriculum, we will be introducing a formal Middle School structure from the start of 2018.

Each School will have its own separate House System replacing the current Heads of Year and House Coordinators in the secondary school. Four new Houses will be established in the Senior School. Further detail of the change will follow later this term with any associated forthcoming changes to uniform, phased in over an extended period.

#### Junior School

**Head of Junior School**

*Dr Steven Males*

**Clune House**

**Egan House**

**Quinlan House**

**Redmond House**

#### Middle School

**Head of Middle School**

*Mr Michael Dempsey*

**Bryan House**

**Edmund House**

**Glowrey House**

**Treacy House**

#### Senior School

**Head of Senior School**

*Mr Nick Ognenis*

**Chaney House**

**Cullity House**

**Durack House**

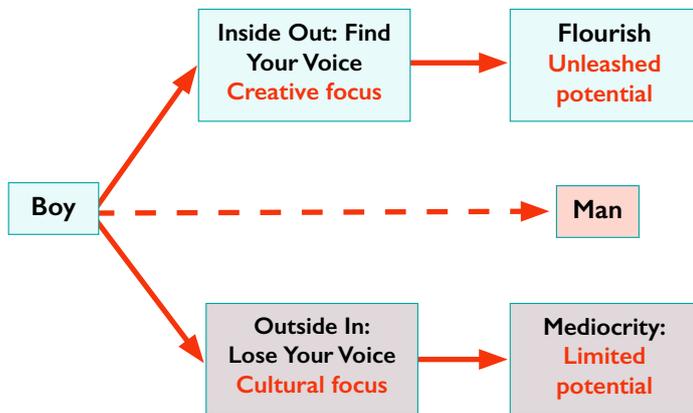
**Prendville House**

Accompanying the introduction of the three school House organisation, will be the introduction of **House Councils, new student leadership format, Middle School Prefects**, and a **new Middle School reporting format**.

As boys transition from one school to the next they will change Houses. Change is a constant and giving the boys the opportunity to experience this in a safe environment will stand them in good stead for the future.

## Our Challenge: Mediocrity

In today's society, everything seems to rise and fall on leadership and deep within each one of us there is an inner longing to live a life of meaningfulness and contribution – to really matter; to make a difference. Stephen Covey argues the path to reaching potential is often restricted by youth being limited by cultural influences.



*“Travellers on the lower path to mediocrity live out the cultural ‘software’ of ego, indulgence, scarcity, comparison, competitiveness and victimism. Travellers on the upper path to greatness rise above negative cultural influences and choose to become the creative force of their lives. One word expresses the pathway. Voice. Those on this path find their voice and inspire others to find theirs.” (Stephen Covey)*

The danger here for boys, is a life increasingly lived on the surface rather than in the interior, a life characterised more by cultural influences allowing mediocrity and loss of direction, than meaningfulness and vocation. The absence of interiority puts both an enormous pressure on the sense of self, with an emphasis upon performance rather than character; on how you are regarded rather than who you are becoming. This can eventually create a “flatness” to life and generate a banality with a preference for “seems” rather than “is”.

Today's society tends to promote a life on the surface rather than in the interior. With a loss of potential of the interior, our boys are at risk of becoming characterised more by mediocrity than excellence. This is at its greatest during the early teenage phase of life when a young boy begins to seek independence; it is here that he is most vulnerable to external influences.

## Our Solution: Catholic Leadership

Given our Catholic faith, our aim is to develop a Christian man of character and leadership. Our focus will be on enhancing our Catholic culture and introducing a raft of programmes in character education, mental health and faith development. A new leadership paradigm will be introduced, open to all boys rather than a select few.

### Introduction of Character Education

Since its inception in 2012, The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues in the United Kingdom (<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/>) has pioneered interdisciplinary research focussing on character, virtues and values. Its impact in UK schools has been significant, with more than 7,000 engaged with the centre and 500 schools now registered as Schools of Character.

### Why Introduce Character Education?

The link below provides a great insight into why character education is relevant.

<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/Framework%20for%20Character%20Education.pdf>

Based on the work of The Jubilee Centre, in 2018 Aquinas College will introduce a pastoral programme “VERITAS” (truth) into the Middle School. This programme will bring together existing and new areas of curriculum.

### The Veritas Programme

- Character education
- Thinking skills
- Mind Matters
- Leadership training
- Team challenge
- Study skills
- My report/ goal setting
- Prayer/ stillness
- Reading programme
- Service/ advocacy/ retreat
- Rite of passage

**“A new leadership / prefect structure will be established in the Middle School, with emphasis on attainment through challenge; open to all boys rather than a few”**

# AQUINAS COLLEGE LEARNING SOLUTIONS

## 2018 Aquinas Year of the Arts

### Middle School

The College will be looking to **add an additional period of Arts into the Years 7 and 8** curriculum to ensure all students are taught Visual Art, Music and Drama as separate subjects each week.

### Junior School

The College will be introducing a new **Junior School Instrumental Programme** which will provide all students in Year 3 and 4 with the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and explore the fundamental concepts of music in a practical and dynamic environment.

Learning a musical instrument at Aquinas College will support and educate each individual student intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally through creative and active music-making. In addition, the programme will aid in further developing students' numeracy, literacy and fine motor skills.

In Year 4, all students will learn either the violin or cello for the duration of the year. Lessons will be facilitated by a qualified Music Tutor for 30 minutes per week.

A strong focus on singing and listening skills in Music classes will help to fully support students on their musical journey.



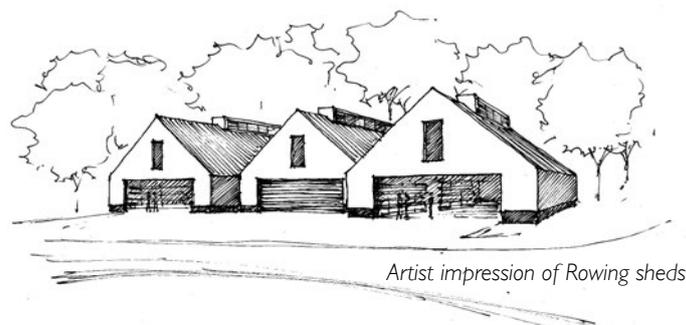
## 2018 Capital Developments

The following projects are to be completed in the next 18 months:

- An **extension of the Chapel of St Thomas Aquinas** to accommodate an increased capacity - from 340 to 600. This will bring the Chapel back into the central life of the College, enabling the three new schools to attend Chapel and accommodate key community events such as Graduation;



- **The establishment and integration of staffroom, pastoral and school offices** into the centre of College, with the student body;
- Introduction of **air conditioning** to remaining classrooms;
- New student **toilet** block and **water** fountains;
- Construction of the new **Rowing and River Centre**.



## Your College Needs You!

We are seeking a small sample of parents from Years 6 to 8 to be part of the Review of Teaching and Learning.

A Focus Group of parents is sought to meet with the Review team to discuss their son's learning experiences. If interested, please email [Peter.Robertson@aquinas.wa.edu.au](mailto:Peter.Robertson@aquinas.wa.edu.au) with times and days you are available during the week.

## UNDA Review Team

**Professor Michael O'Neill** - Dean of the School of Education.

**Dr Anne Coffey** - Coordinator of the Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Secondary Degree Programs at UNDA.

**Dr Patrick Hampton** - Coordinator of Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Primary Degrees at UNDA.