

EMMANUEL CATHOLIC COLLEGE

THEY ARE READY: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN A TRADITIONAL MAINSTREAM SCHOOL



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About Emmanuel Catholic College

Emmanuel is a low fee-paying mainstream co-educational college in Perth, Western Australia, with an approximate enrolment of 1,180 students from years 7-12. Recognising the imperative need for a substantial shift in pedagogical practice and the structure of the school day, the College has embarked on an exciting journey with a view to completely transform the educational experience of both staff and students.

Closely aligned to *FutureSchool's* (Hannon & Temperley, 2022) design principles, Emmanuel is focusing on introducing educational transformation on a large scale. Placing the acquisition of skills before content and the provision of a more personalised experience, the College's efforts in an incredibly short period of time are proving unprecedented, inspiring a community with a shared vision towards an engaging, future focused education.

Challenges

Emmanuel Catholic College is committed to the provision of engaging, holistic, and contemporary 21st Century education. It is guided by the philosophy espoused by the late Sir Ken Robinson with the belief, *education doesn't need to be reformed -- it needs to be transformed*. The College seeks to significantly shift away from the traditional education model present in schools for so long. Emmanuel College has identified that if it doesn't change, it will run the risk of becoming

irrelevant. It believes that in the competitive world of education such a change is imperative moving forward into the future.

Building a shared vision of transformation

With a new principal at the beginning of 2022, change management has been central to building a new vision for transformation. Enabling such a vision has started in the principal's office, with the aim of being collaborative and engaging. At Emmanuel this is supported by an executive who shares the same vision for the future of education. It is a leadership that acknowledges how a significant shift in pedagogical practice can be exceptionally challenging.

This has been offset by the adage espoused by the principal that staff are *encouraged to innovate and create but with permission to fail*. In order to be embraced by staff, the vision itself is supported through the opportunity for ongoing and relevant professional development. Opportunities are created to champion staff who excel in addition to valuing student voice across the process of a significant pedagogical shift.

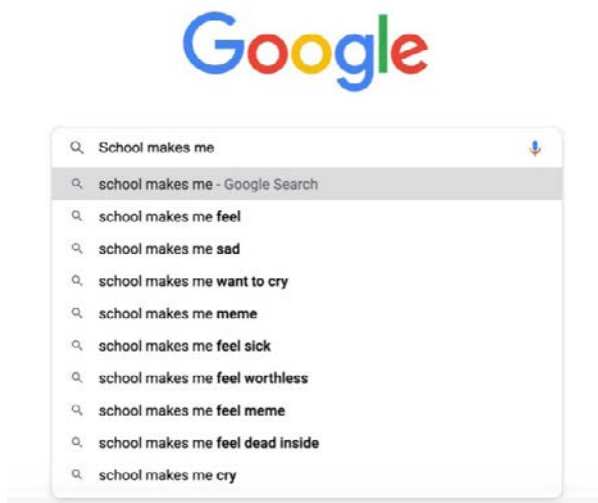
Teacher workload and engagement

The College has recognised that teacher workload is unsustainable if current practices are maintained. Teaching has been focused on assessment and filling a mark book, with planning for more than can possibly be achieved. The focus has been on teaching to the middle which has disengaged both staff and students and has not resulted in real or deep learning. The impact on staff has taken a huge personal toll, with many opting or planning to leave the profession. The teaching role needs to change from being the instructor to the guide.

Student engagement and learning

In thinking about how Emmanuel's students engage with school, the staff have looked at the Google search below, which reveals the most common responses to how school makes students feel.

Google Search
How schools make students feel



In analysing this more closely together with student feedback, the staff acknowledged that there is an enormous disconnect between what is said and what is actually done such as sitting in rows, lessons in short blocks, a one sized curriculum, one subject area focus, lack of real-world application, teacher controlled, an emphasis on grades and a lack of relevance. The traditional model is not working. Students do not see relevance in their educational experience. There is a huge challenge in how to address the mandated but outdated curriculum. Emmanuel is seeking to change this from the ground up.

Design principles

This case study has been guided by the work of Valerie Hannon and Julie Temperley in their book, *FutureSchool*, published in 2022. What follows is a presentation of three clusters of design principles, and a discussion of how Emmanuel College has addressed each of these principles as a means of meeting future needs to guide their evolution.

1. Design principles: Values cluster

The following are design principles that relate to the concept of values. Hannon and Temperley identify five key values that are listed below and summarised in Figure 1.

Purpose driven: *FutureSchools* are themselves focused on the purpose of both individual and collective thriving, and on helping their learners to acquire personal purpose: building their ‘why?’

Equity-focused: such schools should work to address inequities and social justice and help young people to do so.

Promoting identity: this principle suggests that each learner’s social and culture identity must be nurtured, cultivating a sense of belonging and value.

Strength-based: this principle asserts that the school recognises, celebrates and builds from each (and every) individual’s existing assets.

Relevant: this proposes that learning be relevant to the local and global community. ‘Work that matters’ should be an important feature. (Hannon & Temperley, 2022, p. 30).

Figure 1: Values



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 31) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Purpose driven

The College seeks to develop a culture where the health and wellbeing of its students is strongly interlinked with the school’s teaching and learning program. The school is guided by its values and called upon to action them on a daily basis, strengthening both school and individual identity. The values are purpose driven at a systemic level, school, and personal level. The College *Vision for Learning* seeks to strengthen a common vision where students are at the heart of all decisions. The transformational aspect is to ensure their practice is relevant, engaging, and based on real life world experiences.

Equity-focused

As a Catholic College the school's overarching vision espouses *God is with us and calls us to be men and women of service to others*. Combined with the College values of demonstrating respect and compassion for others, striving for excellence, being consistent and fair and modelling Christ in their behaviour, the College seeks to instil an equity focus in all members of the school community, evidenced by daily actions. This is complemented by numerous educational programs and activities that focus on social injustice and are inclusive of environmental sustainability. They seek not only to enhance student awareness of a multitude of issues but also assist them in developing the skills to analyse and utilise problem solving and creative thinking in enriching an equity-focused school.

Promoting identity

The goal is to create and enable a variety of learning opportunities for students that provide the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to prosper as global citizens in the world. In doing so the College seeks to inspire a passion for life-long learning in meeting the individual needs of all students so that they may achieve their true potential.

Strength-based

The College seeks to ensure professional growth in all staff but at the same time instils the importance in staff to also take personal responsibility for their own growth and harness their interests, passions, and unique skills. As such the College benefits from celebrating the talents of staff in a highly collaborative environment where staff can learn from one another in enhancing their professional practice.

Similarly, Emmanuel is a school that places a great deal of importance on student voice. Throughout 2022 the importance of student voice was a priority, highlighted by a strong student presence in the *Think Next Community Forum* on the future of education. Many of the changes moving forward in 2023 have been guided by the thoughts and opinions of the students.

Relevant

In acknowledging parents and caregivers as the first and most influential educators and with strong links to the local community and industry, the College strives to provide students with opportunities to immerse themselves in an education centred around real life, informed by contemporary research and best practice.

2. Design principles: Operational philosophy

The following are design principles that relate to the concept of operational philosophy. Hannon and Temperley identify four key philosophies that are listed below and summarised in Figure 2.

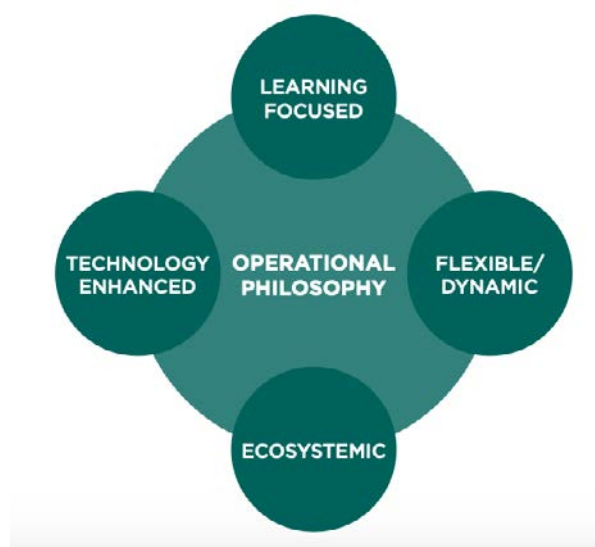
Learning focused: learning is at the heart. Understanding how learning happens, the very best in research on learning sciences, underpin developments. This applies to the adult learning (of all staff) too. This is a critically important principle – and it is not axiomatic by any means in all schools.

Flexible/dynamic: the school should flexibly iterate different modes of teaching and learning to meet the evolving needs of learners and the wider world. In an age of disruption this is an imperative – as schools found out in 2020.

Technology enhanced: *FutureSchools* use technology extensively and responsibly to liberate learning, amplify effective and diverse modalities, and to enable both personalization and collaboration.

Ecosystemic: this principle asserts the school should be seriously porous with many active partners in organizing learning. It will be deeply connected to its local community, and to the global community through technology, to provide richer learning experiences and diverse pathways for learners. (Hannon & Timplerley, 2022, p. 31).

Figure 2: Operational Philosophy



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 32) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Learning focused

The power of WHY is considered, asking if the purpose of student work is:

- because the teacher said to do it,
- to earn a mark / grade,
- because it'll be on a test,
- because you'll need this in the future?

One of the more significant focuses in transforming learning at Emmanuel Catholic College is a pedagogical shift that places the acquisition of skills above that of content. The College strives to continually create and enable a variety of learning opportunities for students that provide the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to prosper as global citizens in the world. In doing so, the school seeks to inspire a passion for life-long learning in meeting the individual needs of all students so that they may achieve their true potential.

Informed by contemporary research and best practice, the school's *Vision for Learning* is centred around hands-on, practical experiences that focus first and foremost on the acquisition of skills, particularly in the areas of: character, communication, creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, collaboration, resilience, and independence.

The new College Educational Philosophy launched at the conclusion of 2022, is a pedagogical resource guiding staff practice, centred around and providing opportunity for student to EXPLORE, CONNECT, and CREATE as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Emmanuel Catholic College Educational Philosophy



Developed by staff at Emmanuel Catholic College, <https://www.emmanuel.wa.edu.au/vision-for-learning-2/>, 2022.

Explore – Students are provided ample opportunity to discover and follow their interests and develop a passion for life-long learning through personal growth. An engaging education encourages and embraces innovation and ingenuity through high quality and contemporary pedagogical practice that caters for the individual needs of each student.

Connect - Students are guided in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment in gaining a sense of belonging and connection to their own learning journey. Students are challenged and independence and resilience are cultivated in students taking ownership and responsibility for their progress, achievement, and future pathways, allowing them to flourish and reach their true potential.

Create – Students embrace their creativity and develop a willingness to take risks, overcome obstacles and challenge themselves in continually seeking to improve and maximise their interests, abilities, and achievement.

Flexible/dynamic

Emmanuel offers an education that inspires, engages, and allows real learning to happen through real life experiences and real-world application.

Technology enhanced

Whilst varying models of delivery are utilised, in 2023 the College will move more towards a blended, on demand model that is agile and technologically enhanced supported through a significant shift away from the traditional six period a day timetable model.

Ecosystemic

All elements of the school are strongly interlinked in the provision of a faith filled, engaging, holistic, and contemporary 21st Century education. The College recognises the need to be agile and responsive to the needs of each student. It seeks to optimise the use of contemporary facilities and application of technology throughout the school to employ a wide range of strategies to maximise the overall experience of students during their time at the College.

Emmanuel leverages a variety of external partnerships through careers and two Uni Ready programs. The College enjoys a strong relationship with industry, environmentally through the Bushranger Cadets, and a variety of top tier organisations in netball, AFL, and AFLW Academies. A similar model is expected to develop with the introduction of a Basketball and Performing Arts Collective commencing in 2023.

3. Design principles: Learner experience cluster

The following are design principles that relate to the learning experience cluster. Hannon and Temperley identify five key learning experiences that are listed below and summarised in Figure 4.

Personalised: the learner’s experience relates to her personal needs, passions and development. These are at the centre: not the institution, the teacher or external bodies of knowledge.

Integrated: the learner experiences meaning through learning that transcends siloes, building relevant connections both within and between disciplines.

Inclusive: the culture is experienced as respectful and welcoming.

Relational: individuals are known, good relationships are the basis for deep learning. Collaboration is the norm.

Empowering: *FutureSchools* build and leverage learner agency, providing opportunities for learners to take increasing responsibility and ownership over their learning. (Hannon & Temperley, 2022, p. 32)

Figure 4: Learner Experience



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 33) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Personalised

Students are provided ample opportunity to discover and follow their interests and develop a passion for life-long learning through personal growth. An engaging education encourages and embraces innovation and ingenuity through high

quality and contemporary pedagogical practice that caters for the individual needs of each student.

Integrated

The College is striving towards a more personalised learning model that integrates and builds relevant connections through the cross curricular capabilities. The school is working to equally value and strongly interlink the health and wellbeing initiatives with the teaching and learning program.

Inclusive

Emmanuel highly values community and student voice and is currently leveraging this in the next step of a new strategic plan where all elements are focused on transforming education at the College.

Relational

Students are guided in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in gaining a sense of belonging and connection to their own learning journey.

Empowering

Independence is cultivated in students taking ownership and responsibility for their progress, achievement and future pathways, allowing them to flourish and reach their true potential. Students embrace their creativity and develop a willingness to take risks, overcome obstacles and challenge themselves in continually seeking to improve and maximise their interests, abilities, and achievement. At present this is most notable in Science and Humanities and Social Sciences through a project-based learning model.

The next part of this case study considers archetypes, which are examples or models of practice.

Archetypes

FutureSchool outlines six areas where schools have explicitly and intentionally determined to make a difference to the future - and are employing the design principles to help them do it. According to Hannon and Temperley (2022), there are six archetypes. These are presented in Figure 5. It is important to realise that not all schools will fit into these archetypes, nor is it expected.

The College fits into many of the archetypes, however this was not intentional.

Figure 5: Archetypes



From *FutureSchool* by V. Hannon and J. Temperley (p. 69), 2022, Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

Growing ethical leadership

Trust is placed in staff to not only enhance their own learning but leadership of staff and students throughout their faculty and cross curricular collaboration across learning areas with executive leadership support.

Promoting environmental thriving

The College has a strong environment program both through the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Its focus allows student to build knowledge and capability through hands-on real-life experiences and contributions to the local and wider community.

Our human identity

Under a new educational philosophy, the school seeks to inspire a passion for life-long learning in meeting the individual needs of all students so that they may achieve their true potential. As such both academically and through their pastoral program, they develop a sense of self identity, self-respect, and future aspirations are catered for through a growing number of relevant pathways. This is enhanced through a strong careers program.

Celebrations

The College believes that the teaching and learning program of the school must be strongly interlinked to the health and wellbeing of both staff and students to the point where they must be one. This was the focus of a *Think Next Community Forum* held in October 2022, bringing staff, students, parents, and industry across the community together to discuss the future of education. The success of this event cemented

the need for change to the College and although only a snapshot, combined with the vast amount of work done in this area throughout 2022. The sentiments expressed by all factions was very clear and sent a clear message that schools need to change how they do things.

A new timetable model

The College is trialling a new timetable model in 2023. The traditional six-period day of 50/55 minutes each will be replaced with a combination of 100 minute and 50-minute learning blocks.

This change is required for staff to be able to change their pedagogical practice. Teaching staff will transition their practice away from the traditional holder of all knowledge and the *stand and deliver model* to more of a guide, facilitator, and curriculum designer. The blocked time will alleviate the constant rush of the school day where students are often assessed multiple times on a day, to a model that provides adequate time to learn, receive one on one assistance, undertake a more practical education with real world application and the ability to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills.

Year 12 optional 4 day school week

This is not a four-day week with a day off. Commencing in Week 6 of Term 1, Year 12 students will be able to come and go from school on a *buy in/needs basis* one day a week. This will be on a Thursday and will coincide with the day most VET students are in the workplace or at TAFE. For all Year 12 students, the College will offer a hybrid model of education on this day where students can come to school or work from home.

The day could include a variety of options:

- Participate in a range of physical activity classes organised through the College i.e. Zumba, swimming, etc.;
- Work from home;
- ATAR students may take the opportunity to access a college work placement;
- Study quietly and independently at school;
- Collaborate with classmates either online or at home;
- Seek one on one assistance from staff through Teams or face-to-face;
- Prioritise the next assessment due; and
- Attend a tutorial / lecture on an upcoming assessment.

Such an opportunity is designed to ease the transition between school and life. It will allow students further opportunity to develop independence and set priorities relevant to them as an individual.

Reflections from the school – 3 actions that are making the biggest difference!

1. Asking staff to be creative and innovative but giving them permission to fail at the same time has proven invaluable. Staff have felt empowered to step out of their comfort zone and try new things. This has already led to increased engagement and a significant pedagogical shift.
2. Never underestimate the power of student voice and treat it with the sincerest authenticity. Our students have so much to offer and their appreciation for being included in the journey and resulting change have been somewhat surprising and pleasantly overwhelming.

3. Be brave and act. Do not engage in the conversation without the intent of actually implementing change. The College did not intend to introduce such significant change so swiftly, however due to strong the buy-in and support from all sectors of the school community, the executive of the College felt the need to action the change as a priority. Such a substantial shift is being done despite some of the fears and knowledge that it will be challenging.

With sincere thanks to Paul Watson, Principal (named in The Educator's 2022 Hot List); James Silver, Head of Humanities and Social Sciences; Kerry Randall, Head of Science, Emmanuel Catholic College, Perth, Western Australia.

References

Hannon, V., & Temperley, J. (2022). *FutureSchool*. Routledge.

Emmanuel College. (2023). Emmanuel College. <https://www.emmanuel.wa.edu.au3690>