

LEARNING AND SCHOLARSHIP: AN ANCIENT TRADITION

A Series of Short Papers Prepared for Associated Christian Schools

EDITED BY PASTOR RON WOOLLEY



ACS

Associated Christian Schools

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About The Author

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Introduction to the theme, Following an Ancient Tradition.

Section 2 in the first ACS eBook was entitled Christian Education: both truly Christian and truly an excellent education and composed five papers on that theme. Scholarship (academic excellence) is not always valued. Some are intimidated by it, others may have suffered from it. Christian schools should do it well, and for all, not just those considered talented academically.

This ACS eBook begins with a story, the Ancient Tradition of Academic Dress and Colours, followed by a powerful call to insist on the highest standard of education, written by an American Friend of ACS. It ends with two Biblical meditations for Christian school leaders.

Priorities for Professional Development: What Our Members Told Us

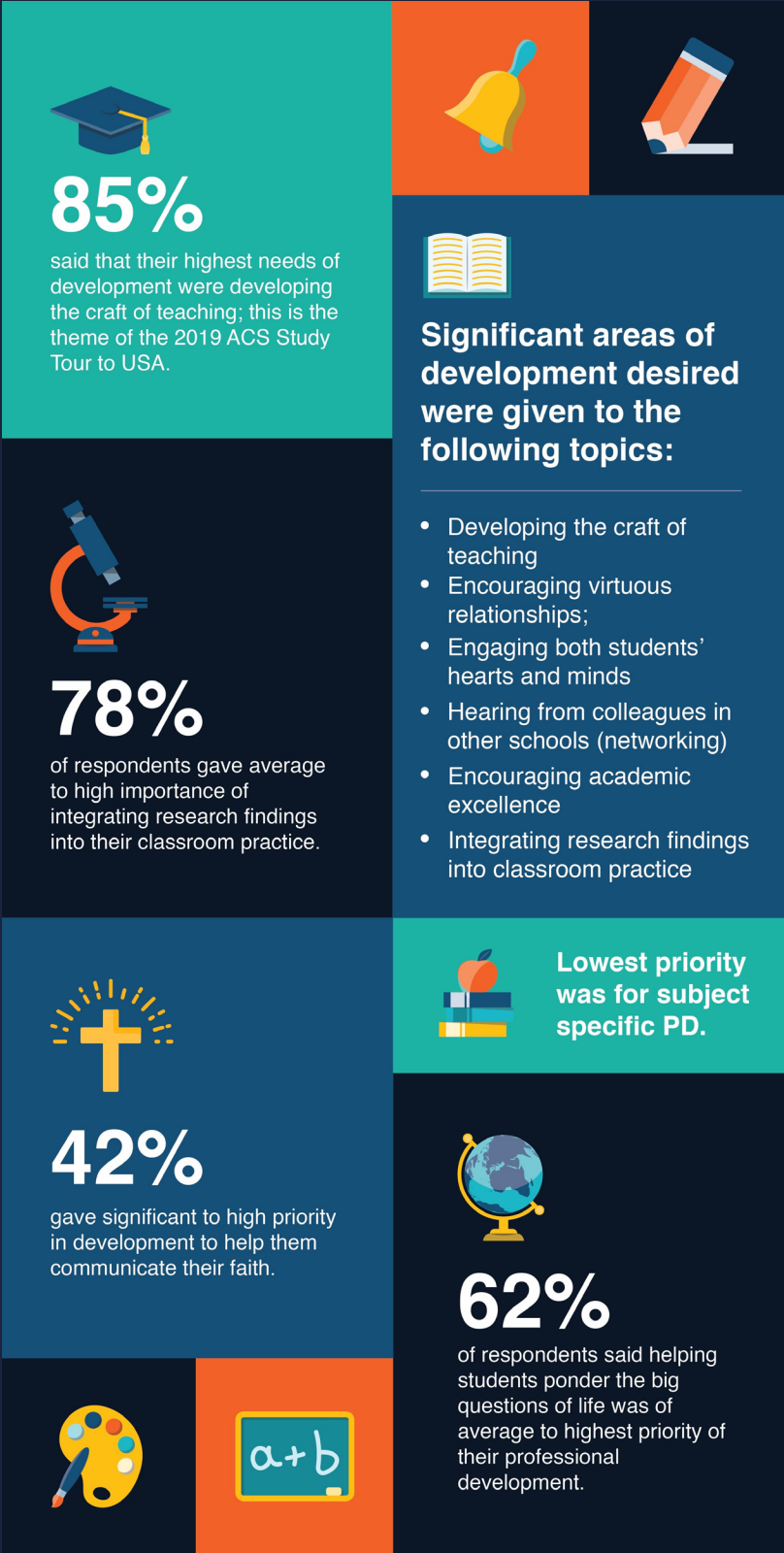


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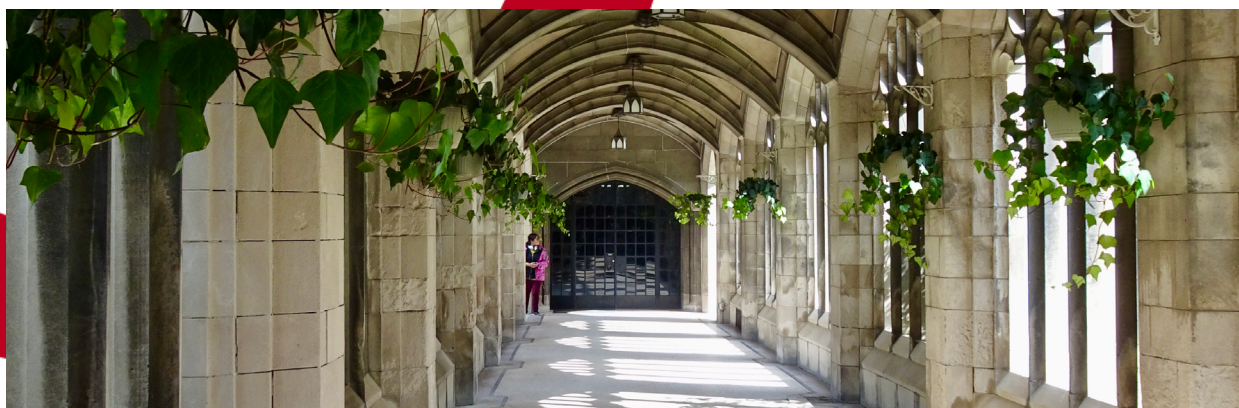
CHAPTER ONE

AN ANCIENT TRADITION:

Academic Dress and Colours

01

March 2020



Cloister, Knox College, University of Toronto, Canada

From the Introduction to 'Academic Dress A Brief Guide to its Origins and Development' KR Dutton

Published by Australian Federation of University Women (Hunter Valley Branch) & the Convocation of the University of Newcastle 1983 (out of print)

The tradition of academic dress began with the foundation of the European universities in the 12th and 13th centuries. Until that time, education had been carried out within the monasteries: at Oxford there was the study of Divinity, Philosophy and Arts as early as the 8th century in the convent presided over by the abbess, Frideswide. But it was not until the 12th century that groups of teachers and students gathered together for classes outside the monastery walls, and it was with this move that recognisable universities began¹.

There were two outstanding ones:



The University of Bologna² (alma mater studiorum³) was founded in 1088 by an organised guild of students. The university was later granted a charter by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa in 1158, but the development of the institution in Bologna into a university was a gradual process.



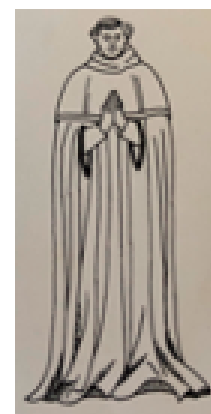
The University of Paris⁴ (universitas magistrorum et scholarium Parisiensis⁵) emerged around 1150 as a corporation associated with the cathedral school of Notre Dame de Paris. The university was later granted a royal charter by King Phillip II of France in 1200, and recognised by Pope Innocent III in 1215.

Recognition by the Holy See in Rome transformed them into what were called studia generalia, "general schools", which meant their teaching was recognised everywhere and not only within their own cathedral cities. This was an important step, not only for them, but for universities generally, for it meant autonomy, freedom from threat of royal or civic interference.

In the 13th century, the term stadium generale tended to die out, and was replaced by the Roman legal word for any kind of corporation, universitas. A university was in effect a universitas magistrorum et scholarium, a body of teachers and scholars.

Bologna and Paris became the great models for all other universities of Europe, Bologna being essentially a corporation of students (with a college of masters attached) and Paris a body of masters who constituted a university.

Bologna flourished for a time then declined as a seat of learning, though not before it became the model for the universities of southern Europe, Paris continued to flourish and was to become the model for northern Europe, particularly for the third great university of the middle ages, Oxford.



Cappa Clausa

GOWNS

In the earliest days of universities (13th century), the masters and scholars alike were generally clerks or members of the clergy. They were in fact secular clerks in minor orders; "secular" as opposed to "regular" clerks or members of religious orders, and in "minor" orders which meant holy orders below that of a priest. As secular clerks they dressed essentially the same way as did members of the laity: like the laity, they wore an outer garment which was a closed item of dress (vestimentum clausum). On their heads they wore a hood to protect them from bad weather. When not wearing their liturgical robes, priests might wear a closed cape (**cappa clausa**) with a hole for the head to pass through and two slits for the passage of the arms. As most Doctors and Masters of Theology were priests, they naturally tended to wear this cape, usually covered by a shoulder-piece with hood attached. In due course, the general clergy tended to neglect the rule that the full cape should be worn, and so it came to be regarded as exclusively worn by academic clergy.

It was not until the late 14th and early 15th centuries, as lay fashions began to change, that universities began to adopt a new policy, that of setting down particular requirements for the shape and cut of academic dress. From the 15th century onwards, this movement gained impetus, as everyday fashion moved towards a shorter, less cumbersome dress in keeping with an active age. Academic dress, while it had by now replaced the two slits of the cappa clausa by sleeves had generally made few changes to the earlier style.

In the course of the 15th century, the heavy, fully closed garment (which needed to be put on and taken off by passing the head through the neck opening) was replaced by the tunica, originally worn beneath the outer robes. The **tunica**, which was to develop into the cassock worn by the clergy, was open at the front, thus making it easier to slip on and off. However, it could be fastened all the way down the front, as is the cassock today.

In the doctoral robes of the University of Paris we see the most ancient style of academic dress still in existence today, for unlike the English robes it is still essentially a closed tunica. By 1500, the general tendency in England was for the academic tunica to be worn open in front. After 1490, it was not only open in front, but it was thrown widely open so that the lining (often of

fur) could be seen. To make the rich lining more visible, it was later placed in front in the form of two facing. This is the basis of the English Bachelor's and Master's gowns, though the facings are much more visible in the Doctoral gown.



(L) Undergraduate, and
(R) Bachelor's gowns

Bachelor's and Master's gowns are usually black. In some institutions following the Oxford tradition, the Doctoral gown is full coloured, whereas those following the Cambridge tradition are black with coloured facings, usually red.

¹ Academic Dress A Brief Guide to its Origins and Development KR Dutton published by Australian Federation of University Women (Hunter Valley Branch) & the Convocation of the University of Newcastle 1983 (out of print)

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Bologna

³ English: "nourishing mother of studies"

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Paris

⁵ English: "university of teachers and scholars of Paris"



Masters gown

SLEEVES

Sleeves are of two shapes, the bell sleeve, with the lower border hanging down as a point. The **closed or glove sleeve** is typical of Master's gowns and is a later development of Tudor origin. In most cases, the end of the sleeve has a cut-away section in front, known as the boot of the sleeve. There are variations of these. Doctoral gowns vary but typically is the bell sleeve.

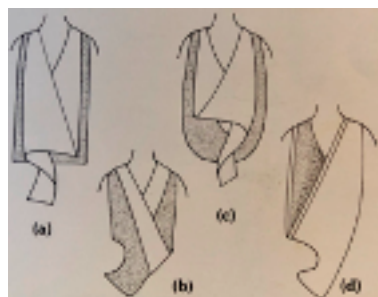


End of sleeve: (L) Oxford boot (R) Cambridge boot

HOODS

The **hood** was originally merely a useful head-covering, like the modern parka, so it could be pulled over the head if it happened to rain or snow. If not needed for this purpose, it could be pulled off the head and allowed to hang down behind on the tippet.

There are many variations both in length and shape. At Canterbury in the 13th century, the monks' hoods were lined with fur due to the cold. Silk was later introduced for the summer months.



Shapes: (a) full (b) Oxford (c) Doctoral (d) simple

As it is the hood which is the most individually distinctive sign of a particular degree, there are many variations possible in the combinations of colours and textures which make up its parts – the lining, the border, the edging of the cowl and the edging of the cape or tippet. There are two kinds of lining, full and part.

A hood does not always indicate a university degree, it merely stands for the achievement of scholarship in some branch of study.

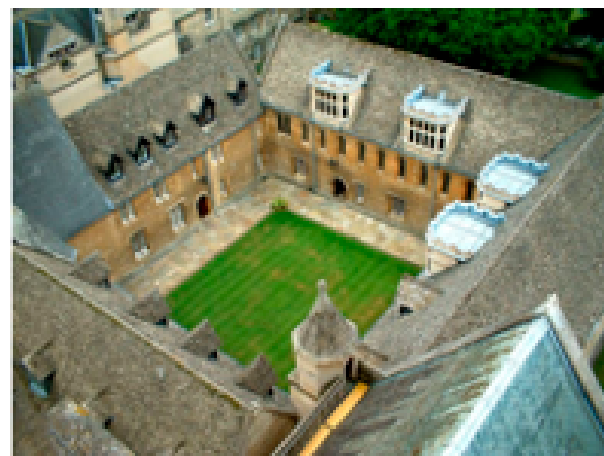
HATS

Trenchers, or mortar-boards, developed from a pileus or simple, soft hat. By the 17th century a tassel was unofficially added and given approval in 1770. The other form of hat commonly seen at graduations is the Doctor's bonnet, an item of Tudor origin.

COLOURS

One of the earliest forms of association within the universities was the **Faculty**, a gathering together of those who taught the same subject and show fond that a united effort could their common aim to be made known to the university at large. It also secured them against the unqualified, who might try to set themselves up as teachers of the university, so membership of the Faculty became an important sign of status.

The middle ages also witnessed the growth of the **Guild** movement, the movement towards association in every trade and professions which affected town life in Europe. It was natural to expect that members of Faculties should wear some particular form of dress of uniform shape and colour indicating to which group they belonged.



The oldest quadrangle of Oxford University, constructed in the years from 1288-1378. (Image Source: Wikipedia)

No exact code of colours was observed at all universities. At **Cambridge**, there was until quite recent years only one colour of hood for all Faculties; at **Oxford** various colours were in use from the 15th century onwards, though they were not codified for the various Faculties until 1675.

When we talk of **hood colours**, we are talking loosely, since the "colours" refer to the lining of the hoods.

Academic colours are now fully codified for all recognised universities and those universities within the **British tradition** follow the **Dictionary of Colour Standards produced by the British Colour Council**.

American universities (but not Harvard) follow the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume laid down in 1895.



Colours in Australia are typically distinguished based on discipline and courses undertaken. Every school or college has their own specifications⁶ in terms of colours, styles and accessories for graduation ceremony.



Graduates L>R: Millis Institute (Liberal Arts), School of Business, School of Education & Humanities

Christian Heritage College Brisbane

⁶ eg Australian National University Academic and Ceremonial Dress Rule can be found at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2018L00657>

CHAPTER TWO

ANSWERING THE CALL

To Know, Love & Challenge Students in a Christian School

02

*Introduction to a document written by Mr Frank Guerra, Headmaster,
Boston Trinity Academy, December 2010*



Visit to Boston Trinity Academy
Centre: Frank Guerra, Headmaster, with the members of the 2019 ACS Study Tour

Preparing To Do Something Great

What in the world are we doing by insisting on a rigorous curriculum and high academic achievement? Why do we teach school and demand high standards from our students? What are we trying to accomplish? Is the insistence on academic achievement Biblical? Isn't a liberal arts education a Greco-Roman, classical idea and not a Christian one? Do we want our students to do something great with their lives or should we simply shelter them from an increasingly godless society?

Specific Christian leaders and groups throughout the centuries including believers in present day America have distrusted and even despised higher learning, but it is critical that we become convinced of the need for the best possible education for our children. Although the Bible does express distrust of worldly and human knowledge as evidenced by statements from the apostle Paul such as, *"...not according to worldly wisdom"* (II Corinthians 1:12b), and *"...knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"* (I Corinthians 8:1), and in these verses from King Solomon, *"Meaningless, meaningless says the Teacher, everything is meaningless....Of making books there is no end and much study wears the body"* (Ecclesiastes 12:8,12b).

The overall Biblical and historical evidence compels us to insist on the highest standards of education. It is important to remember that both Solomon and Paul are among the most learned men in the Bible who received the absolute best educations available in their respective times, and that there is a persuasive Christian and Biblical case supporting a rigorous education. The following three-fold argument supports the Biblical and historical reasons for providing a first-rate Christian education.

THE PRACTICAL

So much of what God has given and so much of what we enjoy in life is not expressly forbidden or enjoined in the Bible but simply allowed. Travel, sports, listening to music, performing drama, appreciating art, being an accountant, and countless other activities are all allowed by God and we enjoy these activities freely. Much as Adam and Eve had few restrictions (just one in their case) and numerous joys, pleasures, and meaningful work in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8 – 3:3), so we have been given great gifts and challenges to embrace with our whole hearts. *"So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the Glory of God."* (I Corinthians 10:31).

If we are called as teachers then we should work as diligently as we are able to be the best in our field and give our students the best education possible. *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."* (Ecclesiastes 9:10a).

THE AMELIORATIVE

Throughout the world, Christians have been called to make society better.

"You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5: 13a, 14–16).

In the last one thousand years, Christians have established hospitals and schools everywhere they

have gone even when some in their midst have argued against medicine and education. According to the naysayers, Jesus did not heal in that way and only an education in religion could be of any good to a person's soul.

Amazingly the world's great universities were started by Christians including Oxford, Cambridge, University of Paris, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. In contrast for centuries, the Jews emphasized a religious education only, and it was not until 1948 when they established their first great university, Brandeis in Waltham, Massachusetts. The sad fact lamented by rabbis throughout the world is that despite hundreds of years of religion-only schools, Jews have become increasingly secularized. A religion-only education is no safeguard against secularization.

In contrast, the Puritans who first came to America advocated for the most robust education possible. By 1647, the Puritans of Massachusetts had passed the Old Deluder Act so named because of their belief that ignorance and lack of quality education made Christians easy targets for Satan. The Old Deluder Act required every town to hire a schoolteacher when fifty families resided in the town and to build a schoolhouse when the population grew to one hundred families.

These Puritans, although small in number, had more than forty of their leaders educated at highly prestigious English Grammar Schools and then at Oxford or Cambridge University. They founded Boston Latin School, Roxbury Latin School, and Harvard University all within fifteen years of arriving in Boston with the expressed goal of training the next generation to lead a model society, which would transform England and the world.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

The third element in the argument of our need to educate young people to the absolute highest

standards possible is rooted in the importance of teaching them to think.

The facility to deduce, analyze, theorize, organize, conceptualize, and articulate, in short, the capacity to think is uniquely human. After the ability to love and to worship, humankind's ability to think is perhaps the best evidence of our being created in the image of God.

PREPARED FOR GREATNESS

Professor Alfred North Whitehead of Great Britain has written, *"Education is impossible without the habitual vision of greatness."*

As the Headmaster of Boston Trinity Academy, I am fond of saying to prospective students, *"Come to Boston Trinity if you want to do something great with your life."*

Some may say the above statement seems laced with pride and lacking in Christian humility, but it is Jesus who said that the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than the greatest man who ever lived, John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11). Jesus also said, *"...he who believes in Me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do."* (John 14:12b). False humility and failure to answer His call do not please God.

Our task as teachers is to prepare our students to lead society according to God's direction. Daniel and Joseph in the Bible are powerful illustrations of God's servants prospering, leading, and changing alien societies. The story of King David as a shepherd boy is perhaps the clearest example in the Bible of the confidence and ability that come through training and preparation.

In chapter 17 of the first book of Samuel, the armies of Israel are confronted and taunted by Goliath, the Philistine giant. When David offers to kill the giant, Saul and others think him too young, inexperienced, and small to have a chance, but David's answer is remarkable for its confidence and insight.



The Library, Roxbury Latin School, Boston (founded 1645)



"Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

(1 Samuel 17:34-37)

David's supreme confidence and exceptional abilities come from the training he has received years before his encounter with Goliath. Today's "philistines" are those who are uncultured, uneducated, and disdainful of intellectual or artistic values. If our youth are to be rescued from these forces and the moral decadence that goes with them, then they will need to receive the

preparation that comes with a first-rate education. If we have been called as teachers in a Christian school, then we must choose to love and challenge our students in such a way that they become educated, sophisticated young men and women who have been prepared to lead in the areas to which God has called them.



03

CHAPTER THREE

AUSTRALIA'S 2018 PISA RESULTS:

A Story That Just Won't Go Away

December 2019



University Church of St Mary the Great, Cambridge

Australia's 2018 PISA results: a story that just won't go away

The release of 2018 data from the Program for International Student Assessment has sent shock waves reverberating around Australian media.

Governments of OECD countries around the world pay attention to PISA reports, and any disappointment in national performance is likely to induce government intervention of some kind.

Complicating report comparisons, data tables include city-states like Singapore, and cities-within-countries such as Hong Kong, Macau, and Shanghai. As well, some smaller countries are often more ethnically uniform than countries with strong patterns of immigration. Australian data is reported as national, or by state, or by schooling sector (Independent/Catholic/State). The data can also be mined for language-background, socioeconomic status etc.

Most interesting are the longitudinal graphs, revealing how PISA results have varied from year-to-year. The Australian trend (downward, for each of reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy) tells *a story that just won't go away*.

How might Christian school leaders respond to the data?

1. PISA data should not be ignored, or the assessment itself complained about in the way that some in the community have responded to NAPLAN data. Each of these two assessments may have their problems, but

the data may reveal things otherwise not made known to parents, and indicate trends of interest to the nation as a whole.

2. The 2018 PISA report card for Australia is good, but *not* good when longitudinal data is considered. What the data reveals is not catastrophic or nation-threatening, but deserving of attention, consideration and perhaps, action.

3. Of most interest is the *longitudinal* sectoral data. Since Christian schooling is identified within Independent schooling (ie non-Catholic, non-State), Christian school leaders may take heart that of the three sectors, the independent sector outperforms the other sectors and *by a considerable margin* (the equivalent of one-year's schooling compared to Catholic, and a further three-quarters of a year compared to State). But for each sector the longitudinal trend is concerning, as each are heading south. This would indicate a trend that is societal, ie encompassing all students.

4. A Christian school can infer nothing about its individual performance from PISA data, unlike NAPLAN, since published results are aggregated. Almost all schools will have required students to participate, since participation is a government requirement of funding. However, there is no local control over who participates, and no local reporting of any consequence that an individual school could analyse or manipulate.

WHAT IMPACT MIGHT DATA-RELEASE LIKE THIS HAVE ON CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING?

NAPLAN data is now commonly used by media to construct leagues-tables of school rankings. These inform anyone who stumbles across them, how an individual school performs compared to others. This is not the intended purpose of NAPLAN, but it has proved irresistible to the media and the community-at-large. As well, some schools have even taken this into account in their own marketing. This can't be done with PISA data.

Christian school leaders should think deeply about their school's implementation of Australian curriculum, since all schools are obliged to implement it or an equivalent curriculum., and perhaps there are two basic questions to ponder:

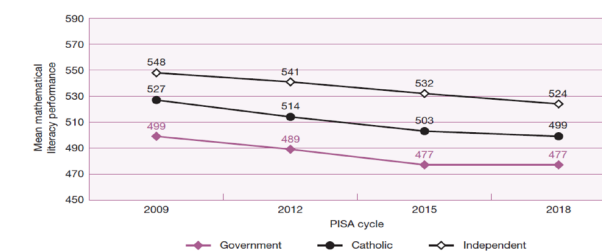
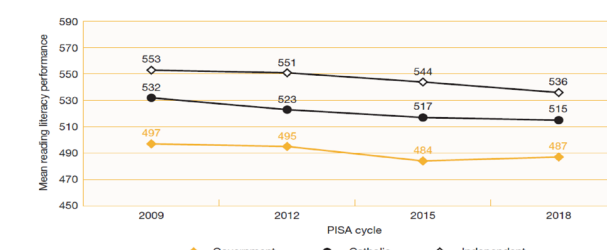
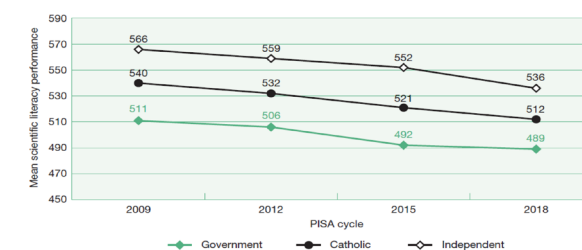
1. Is sound *teaching* occurring, is teaching practice monitored and is continual improvement fostered?

2. Is sound *learning* occurring, is the learning environment monitored and is continual improvement fostered?

A Christian school's value in contributing to the common good of society will be determined by the school's success in these two duties. Individual schools each determine the factors that contribute to both teaching and learning for the benefit of their school communities.

It is of national significance that Christian schools give thoughtful attention to fostering academic rigour, while as well, fostering Christian discipleship and formation.

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION IF WE BELIEVE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD.



AHISA Member Briefing 4th December 2019: PISA 2018 and Australia's independent schools

¹ <https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=ozpisa>

CHAPTER **FOUR**

EVIDENCE, A KEY IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Is there evidence of consistency of academic outcomes?

04

February 2020



Roxbury Latin School, precursor to Harvard University.
America's oldest continually functioning school founded 1645

Background

This paper follows on from papers in Chapter 2, Christian Education, of the ACS e-Book, **Think Deeply. Think Differently**. There it is suggested that for Christian schools to be effective in the marketplace the focus must be on an education that is both truly excellent (however judged) and truly Christian.

This paper takes that thought further by posing a question for school leaders reviewing their own school's data, *Is there evidence of consistency of academic outcomes?*

AN ANECDOTE...

Some years ago, between PD sessions at an ACS Leaders' Retreat, a small group of principals discussed the question, What could Christian schools learn about academic standards from the nation's best schools? Discussion focused on Year 12 results. Someone suggested that in a typical grammar school environment, cohort differences were minimal. That is, final results were fairly consistent from year-to-year.

In developing schools, the composition of cohorts often varies considerably from year to year, and student academic outcomes frequently demonstrate variability.

Yet what was suggested was the composition of the cohort didn't matter much in those schools that were focused and experienced academically – the school's results (outcomes) were similar year to year. Monitoring variability is thus recommended for every Christian school as a key performance indicator.

WHY THIS MATTERS...

Measurement in education is universally conducted, including internationally. Media have become obsessed

with rankings schools, creating the so-termed "leagues tables", which to a certain extent the public like. Comparison of school results is now accomplished more readily than in former times. Brisbane's Courier Mail is now one of the most ardent creators of such comparisons¹.

The most significant of comparisons are those of PISA² conducted in member countries of the OECD³, because national governments pay great attention to PISA results. Within Australia, NAPLAN⁴ results are published and accessed by media to create "leagues tables" of school rankings⁵. States differ in the way they determine final assessments for Year 12 students, but results are publicly available, and subject to further "leagues table" creation.

While individual students' results are important to each student and their parents, individual school results are important for each school community, and because data is publicly available sometimes a factor in new parents making decisions whether to enrol.

For Christian schooling, these factors – important though they are – are not exactly the main thing; ensuring the school is doing the best possible job for its students and parents **as a service to God** is what is prime.

SOME ADVICE TO SCHOOL LEADERS...

It is now not uncommon for particular staff members to be assigned to monitor school results. Within each school community aggregated results (**evidence**) should be interrogated so that school leaders, executive or middle-managers, and governors, can be assured that the school's service to students, parents and to God is the best it can be.

It is important that those monitoring know exactly what is expected of them. Interrogation of the data is a first step. As trends are known and conclusions drawn, what is to be done with that knowledge?

A next step is evaluating whether adjustments need to be made, and if so, of what kind? Not always are these school-wide, but if they are, then they are critical to achieving school improvement. A school's reputation in significant part will be determined by the community's assessment of academic outcomes.

A further step evaluates the performance of each student. This is actually extraordinarily hard to do as it is time-consuming. The school's monitor of academic data needs an opportunity to share their general findings with each class teachers, and perhaps provide advice on how class teachers can interpret this at an individual student level. School leaders will make the value compromise between the amount of time spent developing improvement measures, and the academic benefit to be had. Essentially, this is about time and money. If the *telos* (greater purpose) is not kept in mind, the temptation will be to do nothing further with the findings.

A way forward may be first to look at the general trend for the cohort (or it could be for a class), and then to look for where individual students are departing from the group norm, both at the top and bottom end of performance.

Australian teachers usually pay the most attention to low-end students, and while proper, is not exactly equitable as every student deserves attention. The most equitable approach is when attention is given to school-wide **and** individual students.

Central to the monitoring task is the classroom teacher, the person who holds most of the school's knowledge about each individual student.

As previously mentioned, at some point the data analysis of the person appointed to monitor the school's academic results has to be shared, and shared meaningfully. Classroom teachers are incredibly busy people. Too much data, and trends cannot be easily discerned; too little data and attempts at a response may be feeble and prove ineffective. A general adjustment should lead to improvement for many students (and this is legitimate, if a change is warranted) but individual student responses are much harder to identify and respond to. Each school will at this point make compromise decisions based on time and resources available, let alone staff willingness to be supportive and to implement any change.

IN CONCLUSION....

Attention to analysis of school data leading to school-wide reflection on academic performance, support for high academic outcomes, and adjustments to group or individual programs, should ensure as far as possible, the school's academic outcomes are as good as they can be.

If staff, parents, or governors are *unsupportive*, a decline to *mediocrity* may well be assured. Such an outcome is eminently undesirable in our Christian schools. While parental background (socio-educational) may remain the dominant factor in determining student outcomes, it behoves the school – where it can – to make a difference to the long-term futures of its alumni.

¹ <https://www.couriermail.com.au/education/schools-hub/top-50-op-schools-revealed/news-story/68bbb6b75d59798cf6ad297bd8b5a75c>
<https://www.couriermail.com.au/education/schools-hub/op-results-improve-for-nearly-60-per-cent-of-schools-in-10-years/news-story/686773aae5c788a06467a0f80deeac46>

² Program of International Student Assessment

³ Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

⁴ National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy

⁵ <https://www.couriermail.com.au/education/schools-hub/naplan-2019-how-every-queensland-school-performed/news-story/a1b99441ecadb063ed7d87374b8c9165>

CHAPTER **FIVE**

LESSONS IN EXCELLENCE

From Deuteronomy and Daniel

*An Edited Awards Night Address by Pastor Brian Mulheran,
Principal, Citipointe Christian College Brisbane*

*Originator of thoughts contrasting Deuteronomy and Daniel:
Mr Joshua Crane, Headmaster, Stony Brook School, NY*

05



Princeton University Founded 1746

Lessons In Excellence

On their Awards Nights, Christian College communities gather to honour and reward the excellence of their students.

Students are honoured who throughout the year have *"pressed toward the goal"*, their goal, *"for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"*. (Phil 3:14)

Staff, parents and guardians exhibit excellence when they educate, support and journey with the students toward their goals.

When we recall those students have excelled in a world where anxiety, depression, and digital disruption abound it is even more noteworthy.

The extraordinary pressures our young people face on a day daily basis must not be underestimated – pressures we need them to overcome: social pressures, moral pressures, emotional pressures, spiritual pressures and peer pressures. Our students live in a different time and a different generation to earlier generations. They face different challenges and pressures. Nevertheless, each generation must face and overcome their own challenges.

Where may we look for surety and hope for **continued excellence for this generation** amid these diverse challenges?

Two Biblical generations bookend the spectrum of possibilities – the Israelites in the time of Deuteronomy and the Israelites in the time of Daniel.

During the early days of Deuteronomy, the Israelites lived in a bubble.

Delivered from the tangible influences and pressures of the world, God protected them, provided for them and sustained them. **The Deuteronomy Generation** lived under God's law, God's provision and God's teaching. Note Moses' foresight into God's intended outcome for that generation of Israelites (Deuteronomy 4:1-9 (NKJV):

¹ Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. ² You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. ³ Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. ⁴ But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.

⁵ "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. ⁶ Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

⁷ "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? ⁸ And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? ⁹ Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life."

The Children of Israel, as they held fast to God, were on the cutting edge of creativity, innovation, wisdom and knowledge; they were to be the "excellent" ones, the influential ones, the model society.

The Deuteronomy Israelites had the promise that they would be a great nation, wise and full of understanding, having great statutes and righteous judgments, and God so close that they could call upon Him for whatever reason.

They existed in the best possible society; God was so close to them and they could be so close to God.

They had unimpeded access to God, without restraint or reserve. There were no limits to their potential success, impact and influence on the world – they were to be a people whose excellence would shape the world and contribute to the common good and to human flourishing.

Sadly, some succumbed to the surrounding influences to pursue worldly vices, to break God's laws, to leave God's great and wise statutes and become like those they were meant to influence.

Gradually more and more of that generation, being overcome by the external influences, departed from God, and that ultimately led to another generation which was altogether taken captive to the things they were influenced by in Babylon: the Daniel generation.

The Daniel Israelites were captives in the Babylonian world where the prevailing influences were completely opposite to the godly influences upon the Deuteronomy generation. Yet their mission remained the same, to seek the peace and prosperity of the city.

In this adverse environment, *"Daniel [however] distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him"* (Daniel 6:3)

Partaking only of that which would strengthen him and resisting the things that would defile him, he was found in all matters of wisdom and understanding ten times better than those who defiled themselves.

When God wrote with His finger on the wall during the feast where Belshazzar king of Babylon had defiled himself and the vessels from God's temple, there was no one to interpret the writing. The queen said to him,

"There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him.... an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas are also within him".

(Daniel 5:10-12)

Daniel having God so near was full of His wisdom and understanding and was able to interpret the writing on the wall.

Deuteronomy and Daniel – two generations – two contrasting cultural environments – yet, the same expected objective – **excellence**.

No matter what generational factors we find ourselves within, no matter what challenges oppose us, no matter

what influences are brought to bear upon us, it is up to each of us as individuals within our generation:

- to only partake of that which will strengthen us,
- to resist the things that would defile us and
- to avail ourselves of that which beckons us all
- to possess an excellent spirit – God's Spirit.

Each of the lives in Deuteronomy and Daniel had the same opportunity for excellence under completely

different circumstances.

God desires us to be great, God desires us to be wise,
God desires that we should be full of understanding
and following His statutes and righteous judgments,
and to have Him so near to us.

To be great, be near God who is great.
To be wise, be near God who is wise.
To be full of understanding, be near God who is the
God of all understanding.
To have God so near, draw near to Him.
To have an excellent spirit, have His Holy Spirit residing
within you.

Hunger after these things, possess these things, and
have God so near, in order for us and our students to be
strengthened for continued excellence.

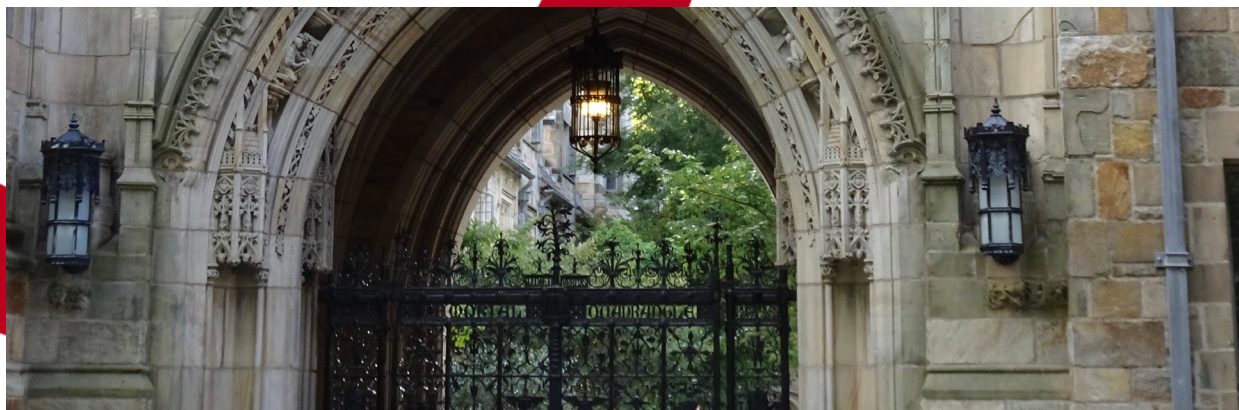


A TASTE OF OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM FROM THE COMMONWEALTH CHIEF RABBI

From "Lessons in Leadership" by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

An extract edited for Associated Christian Schools by Pastor Ron Woolley

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Quad Gate Yale University New Hampshire

A Taste of Old Testament Wisdom from the Commonwealth Chief Rabbi

From *Lessons in Leadership*¹ by Rabbi Jonathan

I often ask an audience to perform a thought experiment.

Imagine you are the leader of a people that has suffered exile for more than two centuries, one that has been enslaved and oppressed. Now, after a series of miracles, it is about to go free. You assemble them and rise to address them. They are waiting expectantly for your words. This is a defining moment they will never forget. What will you speak about? Most people answer: freedom. That was Abraham Lincoln's decision in the Gettysburg Address when he invoked the memory of *"a new nation, conceived in liberty,"* and looked forward to *"a new birth of freedom."*² Some suggest that they would inspire the people by talking about the destination that lay ahead, the *"land flowing with milk and honey."* Yet others say they would warn the people of the dangers and challenges that they would encounter on what Nelson Mandela called *"the long walk to freedom."*³ Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader.

Guided by God, Moses does none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text you will see that three times he reverts to the same theme:

children, education, and the distant future.

And when your children ask you, *"What do you mean by this rite?"* you shall say, *"It is the Passover sacrifice*

to the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses." (Ex. 12:26–27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, *"It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt."* (Ex. 13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, *"What does this mean?"* you shall say to him, *"It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage."* (Ex. 13:14)

It is one of the most counterintuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses does not speak about today or tomorrow. He speaks about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hints – and this is engrained in Jewish tradition – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

So Jews became the only people in history to predicate their very survival on education. The most sacred duty of parents was to teach their children. Passover itself became an ongoing seminar in the handing on of memory.

Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilisations of the ancient world, are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors' vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished.

Moses' insight was profound. He knew that you cannot change the world by externalities alone – by monumental architecture, or armies and empires, or the use of force and power. How many empires have come and gone while the human condition remains untransformed and unredeemed?

There is only one way to change the world, and that is through education.

Children must be taught the importance of justice, righteousness, kindness, and compassion. They must learn that freedom can only be sustained by the laws and habits of self-restraint. They must be continually reminded of the lessons of history, *"We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt,"* because those who forget the bitterness of slavery eventually lose the commitment and courage to fight for freedom. And they must be empowered to ask, challenge, and argue.

Children must be respected if they are to respect the values we wish them to embrace. This is a lesson most cultures still have not learned after more than three thousand years. Revolutions, protests, and civil wars still take place, encouraging people to think that removing a tyrant or having a democratic election will end corruption, create freedom, and lead to justice and the rule of law – and still people are surprised and disappointed when it does not happen.

All that happens is a change of faces in the corridors of power. In one of the great speeches of the twentieth century, a distinguished American justice, Judge Learned Hand, said: I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.⁴

What God taught Moses was that the real challenge does not lie in gaining freedom; it lies in sustaining it, keeping the spirit of liberty alive in the hearts of successive generations. That can only be done through a sustained process of education. Nor is this something that can be delegated to teachers and schools. Some of it has to take place within the family, at home, and with the sacred obligation that comes from religious duty.

No one ever saw this more clearly than Moses, and only because of his teachings have Jews and Judaism survived. What makes leaders great is that they think ahead, worrying not about tomorrow but about the next year, or the next decade, or the next generation.

In one of his finest speeches, Robert F. Kennedy spoke of the power of leaders to transform the world when they have a clear vision of a possible future: Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills – against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and the thirty-two-year-old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. *"Give me a place to stand,"* said Archimedes, *"and I will move the world."* These men moved the world, and so can we all.⁵

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, *"Without a vision the people perish"* (29:18). That vision, in the minds of the prophets, was always of a long-term future. God told Ezekiel that a prophet is a watchman, one who climbs to a high vantage point and so can see the danger in the distance, before anyone at ground level is aware of it (Ezek. 33:1–6).

The sages said, *"Who is wise? One who sees the long-term consequences"*. Two of the greatest leaders

of the twentieth century, Churchill and Ben-Gurion, were also distinguished historians. Knowing the past, they could anticipate the future. They were like chess masters who, because they have studied thousands of

¹ Sacks, Jonathan. *Lessons in Leadership: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible*. The Toby Press.

² Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address" (Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Penn., Nov. 19, 1863).

³ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Back Bay Books, 1995).

⁴ Learned Hand, "The Spirit of Liberty," "'I Am an American' Day" ceremony (Central Park, New York City, May 21, 1944).

⁵ The Poynter Institute, *The Kennedys: America's Front Page Family* (Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews McMeel, 2010), 112.

games, recognise almost immediately the dangers and possibilities in any configuration of the pieces on the board. They know what will happen if you make this move or that.

If you want to be a great leader in any field, from prime minister to parent, it is essential to think long-term. Never choose the easy option because it is simple or fast or yields immediate satisfaction. You will pay a high price in the end. Moses was the greatest leader because he thought further ahead than anyone else. He knew that real change in human behaviour is the work of many generations.

Therefore, we must place as our highest priority educating our children in our ideals so that what we begin they will continue until the world changes because we have changed. He knew: If you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for posterity, educate a child.⁶

Moses' lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today.

⁶ A statement attributed to Confucius.



