St Luke’s Grammar School is an Anglican school with a focus on effective teaching and learning.

Our desire to see young people equipped to make a difference in the world emerges from our Christian worldview and our practice as educators is shaped by the teaching and personal example of Christ our Light.

As an Anglican school, St Luke’s embraces its Anglican heritage that values scholarship, collaborative inquiry and the quest for greater understanding of God’s world. In recent years, our students have exhibited high levels of academic scholarship and inquiry, achieving excellent results in the Higher School Certificate Examinations. Such results have enabled the students to further their education at the tertiary level. However, the vision for the students evident in our mission statement reflects a broader concern for the learning and education of our students.

In the future, young people will require a broader range of learning capacities than those assessed in end-of-year examinations. We need to be sure that our students are ready to face an uncertain future equipped for the challenges they have inherited from previous generations and the challenges they will set for themselves. Above all else, we strive to promote amongst our students, the values of the Kingdom of God that can bring restoration to a broken world.

The Case for Change

New challenges and opportunities... The increasing interconnectedness across the globe and the associated rapid changes in technology, industry and global economies, present new challenges and opportunities for young people. More and more, we are seeing the outsourcing of different jobs and the globalisation of different industries. Young people in the future will need to be innovators, constructing new ways of knowing and doing which will continue to replace existing ways at a rapidly accelerating rate. Expertise limited to one device, technology or way of thinking and doing will no longer serve individuals over the course of their working life. Young people will need to be flexible, constantly learning new ways to function in a global workforce and networked society. This capacity to appropriate new ways of thinking and doing remains a fundamental outcome of any approach to 21st Century learning.

Five minds of the future... Instead of concentrating on specific skills, Howard Gardner¹ argues for the focus of education to be on the development of specific ‘minds’ or ways of thinking about the world. These are the Disciplined Mind, the Synthesising Mind, the Creative Mind, the Respectful Mind and the Ethical Mind. He argues that such frames of thinking can be learnt through the traditional curriculum and then applied to new problems outside school. Students with the ‘five minds for the future’ will be able to look beyond the immediate to the complex, be responsive to change and be active citizens who contribute to the greater good, acting in accord with their ethical principles.

How to learn... Gardner and many others propose that schools should concentrate on how to learn as well as what to learn. The workforce of the future will require today’s students to be constantly learning new ways of thinking and doing. This will require flexibility, adaptability and resilience to meet the challenges of the future workplace in which many traditional roles will have disappeared, outsourced to cheaper labour markets or replaced entirely by new technologies.
Learning@ST LUKE’S therefore, will need to be fundamentally different to the learning that we as teachers and parents encountered during our time at school. It will need to provide students with opportunities to grow in their understanding of how to learn as well as what to learn. Learning@ST LUKE’S will need to engage students in learning conversations, and in challenging and extended learning tasks which will give them opportunities to experience learning as a cognitive, emotional and relational activity that requires resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity (the capacity to manage interpersonal relationships).

The task ahead ... We know that we have a significant task ahead of us to re-engage those students who have decided that learning is not worth their effort. Yet learning is an activity that can bring individuals great joy and satisfaction and we hope that our students can experience this joy for themselves. We know that not all students learn at the same rate, and yet all children have the capacity to learn, develop and grow. Human beings are naturally inclined to learn so our learning activities need to build on this propensity to make sense of the world and seek clarity and greater understanding. New learning technologies enable us to build in greater flexibility and individualised learning programs, and provide ongoing feedback to students about their learning. Furthermore, our approach to assessment needs to mirror our belief that all students can learn and grow in their understanding and skill development, and it is this growth which is of greater interest than their current level of understanding. We must set ourselves the challenge of assessing what matters in classrooms rather than what is simply easiest to measure.

The establishment of a model for Learning@ST LUKE’S has begun by drawing on the research of Guy Claxton, Carol Dweck, Howard Gardner, John Hattie, Dylan William and many other educational researchers. Much of this research has already been synthesised into a single model of learning titled ‘Building Learning Power’. Our intention is to draw on this foundational model and shape a new approach to Learning@ST LUKE’S that will meet the challenges we face in our current context.

Challenges... Some of these challenges arise from the cultural context in which we find ourselves on the northern beaches of Sydney. Our surrounding culture has many diverse elements, some of which discourage the pursuit of academic and learning goals. Casual attitudes regarding the future and the recreational lifestyle associated with the northern beaches can present students with stark choices about how they choose to spend their time and energy. Some young people on the northern beaches are also passive beneficiaries of wealth accumulated by previous generations. The associated sense of entitlement and attitudes surrounding learning and school activity in general can promote mindsets that are barriers to genuine learning and development.

Other challenges are internal challenges that we have identified within our School Community. There is some concern about the passive nature of learning evident in the Senior years, as students become focused on maximising their ATAR and achieving a place in a culturally-valued university course. Will students who have been motivated by a desire to please the examiner be ready to face the changing learning environment at university or creatively solve the problems presented in the workplace of the future? We hope that using a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes learning will enable our students to approach their learning with greater confidence, independence, resilience and purpose.

Some of our students display evidence of disengagement during the middle years of school and fail to engage at a later point. Some of these students report that they feel that St Luke’s Grammar School is too academic for them and they lose interest in learning. There is a risk that with these particular students, they will remain disengaged when they leave school and struggle to remain employed as productive members of society.

We know that not all students learn at the same rate, and yet all children have the capacity to learn, develop and grow.
Finally, we face challenges common to schools working with adolescents and young children. Increasingly, young people experience bouts of depression during their time at school and lack resilience in the face of challenges at school and setbacks later on in life. Young people seeking meaning for their lives beyond the production and consumption of material goods often fail to find satisfactory answers. Their lives are busier than ever before, as are their parents’ who are working longer hours to achieve their financial goals. Young people are more engaged with technology and have access to greater amounts of information and mediated social interactions, yet they are also more easily distracted and struggle with boredom and ennui brought on by their constant desire to be entertained. They live in a world with shifting attitudes and value frameworks. Within this confusing and challenging environment, there remains a role for the School to remind our students and community of the meaning and purpose that is inherent in the Christian worldview which gives young people hope for the future.

We need to building resilience in young people; resilience that promotes perseverance in the face of challenges. We need to be encouraging students to develop their capacity for collaboration with other people so that they can learn from one another, develop respect for other points of view and engage in respectful discussion. Given the amount of information all students have at their fingertips, young people need to know how to analyse and handle information, how they might synthesise multiple perspectives to make meaning and develop new ways of understanding the world around them. We need to be giving students the space to learn together, to make choices about their own learning, to experience failure in a safe environment and to learn from these failures, to ask questions and engage in learning conversations within and beyond the classroom.


Parent Testimonials

Sincerest thanks to Mrs Robinson, the presenter Mr Simon Breakspear, Ms Pollock and Dr Pietsch for last night. I found the information both illuminating and thought-provoking and appreciate the effort in both keeping parents informed and the broader task of researching and responding to what learning will really help our students in the future. I'm looking forward to the journey! St Luke's Parent

I wanted to thank you for tonight’s session “Learning at St Lukes”. I have come away feeling very pleased that my son is attending your School and that my daughter, is starting next year. My belief has always been that school should prepare you for life, and it looks like your philosophy is exactly that. Thank you for sharing your vision. St Luke’s Parent

Thank you to Mrs Robinson and the Executive team for organising such a valuable learning session last night. It is so true that academic results only get you so far in life and it is a host of other attributes that ensure your success. I feel so lucky that my children are at St Luke’s and have the privilege to learn these skills in such a wonderful school. My children, joined St Luke’s this year. On his first day, my son said, “You’ve made the right decision Mum.” Fast track to Term 2, day 1 and unprompted he said “I think I am a better person now that I am at St Luke’s.” Values we try to instill at home of being kind and helping others, of being part of the team and rejoicing in other’s successes, which may be as small as shooting a goal for the first time, are being reinforced at St Luke’s, and I thank you for that. St Luke’s Parent

Our Goal

As stated in our mission, we wish to equip students to make a difference in the world. We want to encourage in our students, learning. We hope that they might become resilient people able to face setbacks and see challenges as opportunities to be grasped rather than avoided. We hope graduates from St Luke’s might be resourceful learners, able to critically analyse and use information wisely, pose questions, make links, solve problems, argue for the good and imagine new possibilities. We look forward to seeing our students reflect on their learning and equipped to engage in the give and take of collaborative dialogue.

Our aim is that St Luke’s students will be part of the restorative work that God calls His people to in the world, being people of grace, humility, compassion and justice. We hope they might be strengthened and empowered to enrich their communities through their work and through their wider engagement with the world. In setting forth such goals we are conscious of the need to call on God to give us the same perseverance and learning dispositions that we long to see in our students. May God enable us to be people who are resilient, resourceful, reflective and reciprocal, able to work together to achieve this goal. In the end we too are lifelong learners, modelling these dispositions at St Luke’s Grammar School and seeking to be partners in God’s work of restoration.