



SRE Update

Creative SRE Conference

Gone are the days of just reading a Bible story to a classroom of children to teach them about God. Churches in the Hunter region realise that the teaching environment needs to cater to children who have many different learning styles.

The CCRESST group (Committee for Christian Religious Education in Schools) has been working together for many years to support Religious Education in schools and recently hosted its third Creative SRE Conference to resource volunteers with up-to-date teaching strategies.

"This event was an exciting opportunity for local SRE teachers to get together and be stimulated by sharing resources. More than a hundred people gathered and learnt from each other as well as being inspired by the guest presenters," said Mary Smith, Director of SRE for the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and one of the event organisers.



The day was stacked with creative ideas for ways to freshen up lessons, and covered a wide range of workshops such as Classroom Tips, Puppetry, and Behaviour Management, with a particular emphasis on Music and Craft. This year a hands-on workshop on Smartboards, the new interactive 'blackboard' technology being rolled out into NSW government schools, was featured for the first time.

Highly regarded keynote speaker, Andrew Chinn, presented sessions on how to use music in the classroom to help enhance students' understanding of Bible stories and prayer. In a fun-filled session he had everyone singing along and joining in with accompanying actions.

The CCRESST group has released a DVD with a selection of the presentations. It could easily be used to accompany training sessions for SRE teachers. An order form is on the Resources page of this *SRE Update*.

Sue Sneddon, CCRESST

Jesus. All About Life



A media campaign entitled *Jesus. All About Life* was developed in 2005 by the Bible Society NSW to raise awareness of Jesus. It has been run in Adelaide, Canberra/ACT and Tasmania. During 2009 this campaign will be run in many regions of New South Wales, including the Hunter Valley and Sydney.

This programme seeks to raise interest in 'what Jesus said about life' and encourages people to contact a call centre, a website or a local church displaying

a *Jesus. All About Life* banner to get more information. Key to the campaign's success is the support of local churches and ministry organisations in reaching out to their local community using the interest generated by the campaign.

A special six week *Jesus. All About Life* lesson programme will also be available during the campaign as a link for SRE teachers and students.

A range of resources will be available via the website: www.jesusallaboutlife.com.au.



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SRE Teacher Training Research

During 2008 a special project, *'An investigation into current training programmes, accreditation processes and ongoing support of SRE teachers across NSW'* was commissioned and funded by ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc, and carried out by Mary Smith, the Director of SRE for the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. The focus of the project was to gain an overview of training and support currently available to SRE volunteers, denominations and groups involved in SRE training.

In the rationale for the project it was stated, *'Students, parents, schools and the community have a right to expect volunteers to have a reasonable level of competence. It is unrealistic to expect a volunteer without training to manage a class, engage the students and present a relevant, age related lesson'*, and that, *'It is the responsibility of denominational providers to ensure that Special Religious Education is adequately staffed and competently taught'*.

The research revealed that although there are denominations and groups that offer training and support, it is not available to all SRE volunteers.

A number of recommendations came out of the information-gathering phase, including:

For ICCOREIS:

- *That a section of the SRE Update be devoted to sharing creative ideas for offering inservice, professional development and support.*
- *That a recommendation regarding Child Protection training and regular updates be made by ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc.*

For Member Churches:

- *That member churches each review the adequacy of training and inservice requirements of SRE teachers and assistants.*
- *That member churches and denominations nominate the modules and practical tasks they see as essential for accreditation (of SRE teachers).*
- *That member churches consider the development of a database of presenters willing to travel occasionally to other regions or isolated areas.*

Denominations and local training groups are encouraged to discuss the recommendations in the report and seek ways to implement changes where needed.

Although it is not easy for a denomination comprised of independent churches to come to an agreement on a policy, it can be done. For some time, the Christian Brethren have been working on a policy for training, accreditation and support of SRE teachers. The leadership have agreed on a process to ensure all their SRE teachers complete training and a central register has been developed to record attendance. They currently offer Child Protection training online and are in the process of developing other modules for SRE teachers which they are happy to share with isolated churches.

Yes, it can be done.

For further information or to request a copy of the report contact Mary Smith,
e: mary.smith@mn.catholic.org.au; ph: 02 4979 1329.

SRE Teaching Tips

Sometimes it's the little tips we pick up along the way that ultimately make a big difference to our classes.

The *GodSpace* website, www.godspace.org.au, home of BURST Christian Resources' *GodSpace* SRE curriculum, provides a new teaching tip each week. You can either go to the site (if you think of it) or better still, you can sign up to have the new teaching tip emailed to you each week.

It's a welcome weekly encouragement and a reminder that we're all part of a large team committed to doing the very best job we can as SRE teachers.



Some recent *GodSpace* Teaching Tips

- When a child answers your question, look around the class and say, "Who else was going to say that?" It gives those who wanted to answer but were not chosen a chance to let you know, and it encourages the whole class to listen to each other.
- Ask the school for a copy of their weekly newsheet so you are aware of what is happening in the school each week.
- Make sure children know what you expect at all times. When you give an instruction ask, "Is anyone *not* sure what they need to do?" Then if a child gets sidetracked you can always ask, "What are you doing?", followed by "What should you be doing?"

*Rev Cheryl Clendinning, GodSpace Production Coordinator
Sally Smith, SRE Consultant, GodSpace*

Report from Nov/Dec ICCOREIS Meetings

November

Special Projects

Research into SRE Provision

ICCOREIS is proposing to conduct research into the provision of SRE in NSW schools, with the project being undertaken by the University of Newcastle. The Ethics Committee of the NSW Department of Education & Training (DET) has rejected the proposal.

The ICCOREIS Executive met with Professor Lovat and Neville Clement from the University of Newcastle to develop strategies for gaining approval and support for the proposal from the DET.

Prof Lovat also met with a representative of the DET to discuss their perception that ICCOREIS is not representative of the scope of SRE in public schools, in particular that it does not represent the majority of providers.

It was decided that ICCOREIS will organise a summit in 2009 with counterparts from the other states to discuss national curriculum issues regarding religious education and chaplaincy. This should also include representatives from faiths other than Christian.

SRE Teacher Training Research

The Secretary distributed the final report from Mary Smith of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, on her research into SRE teacher training and support. (For details see the article on page 2 of this *SRE Update*.)

Chaplaincy in Schools (NSCP)

The National Schools Chaplaincy Association is planning to undertake research into the efficacy of school chaplaincy, in order to provide supporting data for the extension of the NSCP.

GenR8 (NSW High Schools SRE Association) currently sponsors 36 chaplains, making it the largest provider in NSW.

December

Safe Church Training Agreement

Peter Barnett, National Coordinator of the National Council of Churches Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA), presented an informative session, updating members on the progress of this initiative. The aim of the agreement is *'facilitating quality, easily accessible safe church training within the Australian Church'* focusing on *'safety for all people'*.

The SCTA was endorsed by the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) in November 2007 for a pilot year to learn how best to establish the agreement nationally by 2010. Fifteen denominations and/or dioceses have become members so far. With the assistance of the SCTA team, a number of existing training workshops have been modified and endorsed for accreditation of participants under the agreement. These include the Australian Christian Churches' *Towards Safe Places*; Sydney Anglicans' *Safe Ministry*; and the Salvation Army's *Caring for Kids*. The NSW pilot included a three day Safe Church training workshop for presenters/trainers.

The pilot has shown that the SCTA is both necessary and workable. The biggest obstacles to overcome are communication and cost. Availability of workshops and information about the SCTA needs to be more widely communicated. A state-based approach to funding will also be needed.

For further information and dates of training workshops in NSW visit the website: www.safechurches.org.au.

Important Dates for 2009

Summit The summit with ICCOREIS' counterparts from other states in Australia is being planned for the end of May. This will be a two day event.

Forum The ICCOREIS forum on volunteer recruitment and maintenance will be held on 31st August.

Details will be available on the ICCOREIS website and in the next edition of *SRE Update*.

For further information, please contact your denominational representative.

Resources

In the September 2007 *SRE Update* we featured two brochures produced by Anglican Youthworks; one for churches to use to encourage people to be involved in SRE and the other for parents at school enrolment. In this edition we present the revised and updated versions.



Shape the World

This brochure invites Christians who may be interested or don't know very much about SRE, to be involved in this ministry. It offers suggestions such as:

Talk to your local minister or coordinator about the needs and opportunities in your area;

Assist someone already teaching SRE;

Pray for a particular SRE teacher and class each week;

Help with transport, resources, child-minding, etc to allow someone else to teach SRE.

Why Consider SRE?

This brochure presents information for parents and provides contacts if they wish to know more. It is available in a number of languages. It promotes the benefits of SRE, even for those who are not religious:

- to nurture the child's spiritual side;
- to give informed answers to the child's religious questions;
- help in forming a personal moral framework;
- as part of an holistic education;
- as an avenue to pastoral care.



Both brochures are available from Anglican Youthworks, on 02 8268 3367. For more information on SRE resources see www.training.youthworks.net.

2008 Creative SRE Conference DVD

CCRESST has produced a DVD containing a number of the sessions from the 2008 Creative SRE Conference. (See page 1 of this *SRE Update* for a full report.) To order a DVD, complete the form below:

Creative SRE Conference 2008 - DVD Order Form

Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

Contact phone: _____

Quantity: _____ @ \$25 each

Total amount: \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to 'CCRESST'.

Post your order to:
Creative SRE DVD
C/- CEY Ministries
PO Box 817, Newcastle 2300.

For further information contact Sue Sneddon
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