



# SRE Update

## Ethics Update

Classes in philosophical ethics for years 5 and 6 will be starting in some schools in first term 2011. *Primary Ethics* ([www.primaryethics.com.au](http://www.primaryethics.com.au)) is the new organisation established by St James Ethics Centre to be the approved provider of Special Ethics Education. It will be responsible for all aspects of course delivery, including providing trained volunteers and resources.

At the end of 2010, principals received documentation from the Department of Education to be sent home to parents to explain the circumstances in which ethics classes could take place in their schools. This included a letter to be sent only to the parents of children who had already opted out of SRE in 2010. An additional letter from Primary Ethics outlined how to express interest in becoming a teacher of philosophical ethics and/or ethics coordinator. Copies of the letters can be found at [www.primaryethics.com.au/principals.html](http://www.primaryethics.com.au/principals.html).

The letter to parents explained that they could indicate their interest online at the Primary Ethics website prior to 17<sup>th</sup> December. The website also offers information on volunteering and training. The St James Ethics Centre website lists the schools where P&Cs are prepared to support ethics classes ([www.ethics.org.au/faq/ethics-complement-scripture](http://www.ethics.org.au/faq/ethics-complement-scripture)).

Additional DET information indicates that to provide a class in philosophical ethics, a school principal must:

- consult with the community
- have 20 parents who indicate an interest in enrolling their children in ethics classes
- have two people interested in volunteering as ethics teachers.

There must be a minimum of 12 interested students to create a class in ethics. These classes are to take place at the time negotiated by the school for SRE.

*A message from the Chair of ICCOREIS:*

*It must be acknowledged that whatever transpires politically the future of SRE is assured. ICCOREIS will continue to engage in discussions and collaboration with the DET and the St James Ethics Centre so that SRE can be provided in the most positive climate possible.*

*ICCOREIS believes that the most effective approach for SRE providers is to concentrate on improving the provision of SRE so that the standard of SRE lessons and SRE teachers can bear the scrutiny that has been applied to ethics. A complementary approach is to concentrate on the provision of SRE lessons to year 4 pupils. These children will be the first intake into ethics classes. It is essential that their parents are given good information about proposed SRE classes for years 5 and 6 in order to make a fully informed decision. The role of the local provider is to support their right to choose.*

*In the current climate, it is perhaps more important than ever in the history of SRE that providers work closely together. Differences need to be set aside. Failure to communicate in an open and constructive manner with other providers will significantly reduce the effectiveness of our ministry and our Christian witness.*



## Divine Ovine Storytelling

### A report on the Hunter's recent Creative SRE Conference

When you begin to plan a conference one of the most important decisions is who to have as the keynote presenter. The Christian Committee for Religious Education in Schools Support and Training in the Hunter region (CCRESST) decided to invite Andrew McDonough, author of the Christian children's books, the *Lost Sheep* series. Andrew was engaged forthwith and a tour was organised which included speaking engagements at chapel services and with trainee teachers, storytelling workshops, and finally the conference on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

The gathering of over one hundred faith educators from many denominations was held at the Belair Baptist Church in Adamstown. Andrew addressed the conference with a humorous account of how Cecil the Sheep (his first character) was created out of necessity as a young trainee pastor at Bible college. This simple drawing of a sheep on an overhead to convey the parable of the lost sheep has developed into a series of Christian books for children which are sold worldwide.

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## Too Little Time

Every SRE teacher has joys and challenges that it's difficult for those who don't teach SRE to understand. The *GodSpace* team has been collecting data across the state to ascertain the most pressing 'felt needs' to be addressed in training.

Participants choose from ten issues such as lack of support from church or school, kids not interested, keeping fresh and enthused, behaviour management, wide variety of interests and abilities.

Interestingly, the issue that generally scores highest is 'Too little time with the children'.

Here are five tips to help you make the most of your time with your group:

### 1. Communication

Make communication with the school a priority. If your group is often late starting, meet with the school coordinator to discuss what can be done to ensure you get the full amount of time for your SRE lesson.

### 2. Efficiency

Ask a couple of students to distribute materials while the others are doing something else. Be there ahead of time and have all your visuals in order and equipment set up. Choose helpers as they come in, not as you need them. Know your lesson plan well.

### 3. Written Comments

With older children, a question box can extend your effective time. If someone asks a question that's off the track, say, "That's a great question. Write it out and

we'll answer it later." Make sure you do - perhaps the next week when you have prepared a concise answer or write an answer on the back of their question and leave it with the teacher.

### 4. Core (plus extras)

When you're planning, decide on a core of activities that take, say, 15 or 20 minutes and then prioritise the extras you'll do if you have time. Make sure that the core is not just 'telling'. Starting with what the children already know and feel, and helping them understand the Bible input is indispensable. Think how you can shorten the story if necessary.

### 5. Transitions

Does it take minutes to move from one activity to the next? Are you wasting time waiting for the class to pay attention? Put thought and energy into enthusiastically moving from one thing to another so it happens without fuss. Put on a song as they move back to their table. Make a game of it - see how much you can do by the time the song finishes.

Understand that schools also have too little time to do all that's expected of them. Unless you have a prior understanding or ask permission at the time, always finish on time **EVEN IF** you started late or lost time during the lesson.



Sally Smith and  
Cheryl Clendinning  
GodSpace

## Hunter SRE Conference

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Participants at the conference were captivated by Andrew's enthusiastic and inspiring approach to storytelling. Andrew maintains that, "If you don't get into the Bible story, the kids will not get anything out of your story", a message that resonated throughout the *Kids, Storytelling and the Kingdom* conference workshops.

Andrew was delighted to work with SRE teachers who tell stories every week and was amazed at how enthusiastically they engaged with the activities he had planned. He demonstrated how his Storytelling Kits (a pack containing MS PowerPoint presentations on DVD and four storybooks designed to be used with data projectors as slide shows) could be used to tell a story to a class, an assembly or a whole church. Most of his stories are faithful representations of well known biblical stories, and ones often used in SRE curricula, with an Australian sense of humour.

Coming from South Australia Andrew was impressed by the opportunity to teach SRE to children in NSW government schools which is not provided in SA. He made particular mention of the way in which churches cooperated to provide joint denominational SRE throughout the Hunter region.



As well as the Lost Sheep website, [www.lostsheep.com.au](http://www.lostsheep.com.au), where you can download a storytelling kit very easily, Andrew also made us aware of the site where you can find the story behind the story (an excellent resource for SRE teachers): <http://sheepdogschool.lostsheep.com.au>.

This conference, the fourth one in the Hunter, was our best yet, as we gained so much from Andrew and he attested to having benefited from his time with us.

Sue Sneddon and John Donnelly  
CCRESST

# Using Interactive Whiteboards

Blackboards enabled teachers to communicate the written word to a class; they were also used for images and symbols. Teachers were practised in the art of chalk colours and horizontal lines. Then along came overhead projectors which required a separate screen. Overheads could be prepared before class and used repeatedly.

Next came whiteboards with their shining surface and dust free images. Texta type pens enabled bright images and smooth lines. These wide white surfaces suited the overhead projector and its successor the data/video projector.

Interactive whiteboards (IT boards) are a combination of whiteboards, data projectors, computers and touch screen technology. These modern instructional aids are a powerful tool in the hands of contemporary teachers. Large engaging images can be generated instantly or be pre-programmed on clever teaching software.

SRE teachers are increasingly interested in learning to use interactive whiteboards, which are an integral part of the modern classroom. A basic introductory training session has most participants familiar with the operations of IT boards: writing, imaging, erasing, page set up and use of objects.



Participants who have some computing experience are at a distinct advantage. The basic operations are similar to the functions of word processing programs.

One advantage of IT technology is its ability to combine two dimensional images with video and internet. The major advantage is interactivity: students can engage with the activities, puzzles and games to enhance their learning experiences. SRE programmes such as *GodSpace* and *Connect* are developing new interactive software which takes lessons to a new level. All this means more engaging SRE lessons and better education in faith for the students in SRE lessons.

*John Donnelly*

*Children's Ministries, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle*

## Whiteboard Magic (some simple ideas for your next 'trick' during SRE lessons)

Ask the classroom teacher or one of the technically advanced children in the room how to do simple things like:

- Turning the whiteboard into a blackboard so that you can write and draw on it. You need special pens for this - sometimes you can use your finger.
- Turning the whiteboard into a computer screen where your finger acts like the cursor on the mouse.
- Turning the whiteboard into a screen for a MS PowerPoint slide show when one touch of your finger changes the slide.

Tip: When using PowerPoint presentations, either one or two touches will change the slide, depending on the setup the teacher has used. If arrows are displayed when you are in the slide show, use a single touch to go forward or back. If no arrow is showing, double tap the screen. (Hint: most classrooms have the arrows showing.)

### Preparation

Make sure that you have organised the use of the magic whiteboard with the classroom teacher beforehand so that the

computer is turned on and ready to go. If possible (with the teacher's permission), have your CD or flash drive already inserted.

### More advanced magic

- Scan the worksheet as a picture and insert into Notebook\* so it can be displayed easily and the teacher or children can add answers if working as a group. This technique can also be used for children who need help with spelling or to assist slow workers to catch up.
- Timer - locate the clock in the gallery in Notebook. This is a great trick when you want to set a time for an activity: children can see how much longer they have and the timer beeps when time is up.
- *Goal* is a word game similar to 'hangman'. Students are invited to choose letters to complete the secret word that you have previously entered. This is a fun way to revise previous learning.

(\*Notebook is a component of the whiteboard software.)

## Making Effective Use of the Technology

Wally Mills, a voluntary SRE teacher from Cooma, has found that using MS PowerPoint slides on the school computer equipment can greatly increase the appeal of traditional SRE lessons for primary school students.

In Cooma, the Ministers' Association, representing all mainstream denominations, has authorised the use of Christian Education Publications' *Connect* material for the SRE classes in the Cooma district. Classes are joint-denominational.

Three years ago, after seeing new data projection equipment and an accompanying interactive whiteboard being installed in a small school at which he was teaching, Wally set out to

adapt his lessons to suit this new technology. With the permission of the publishers, he has been creating MS PowerPoint presentations incorporating pictures and activity sheets from the *Connect* workbooks. Each week he takes the presentation files to the school on a flash drive, which he plugs into the classroom computer, and runs the lesson from there. The children enjoy writing their solutions to the activities on the whiteboard, as well as in their own books. This helps to keep the whole class engaged in the lessons.

Undoubtedly the use of new technology such as this will increase, as the curriculum publishers develop new resources to take full advantage of it.

# Resources

## Kindergarten Orientation Pack

ICCOREIS has put together an orientation pack for use by SRE coordinators and teachers, to explain and promote SRE to parents enrolling their children for kindergarten.

The pack is available for free on the Resources page of the website, under *Promoting SRE*. It consists of the following:

**OrientationPackOverview.pdf**

Describes the files and gives suggestions for their use.

**Orientation.ppt**

MS PowerPoint presentation to be used at orientation days/evenings. It includes information on how to enrol for SRE, the benefits of Christian SRE, SRE teachers, curriculum, and how parents can learn more about SRE classes.



**SREandYourChild.doc**

Brochure that gives an overview of SRE for parents, including what SRE is, who the teachers are, and what they teach. It can be distributed with enrolment forms, school information packs or newsletters, as well as at orientation days. On the back of the document are spaces for the SRE Coordinator's contact details and SRE classes available at the school.

**OrientationLetterTeacher.doc**

Template for a letter from the SRE teacher to the classroom teacher, to be sent before the start of classes in term 1, to gather information about class rules etc.

**OrientationLetterParents.doc**

Template for a letter from the SRE teacher to the parents/carers of children in their class, introducing the teacher and giving some information about the SRE class.

The files are designed to be downloaded and modified to suit each situation. All are compatible with MS Office 97-2003. Further details can be found in the overview document.

## Valuing Volunteers Forum: DVDs Now Available

Two DVDs are now available from the 2009 ICCOREIS Forum: *Valuing Volunteers*.

DVD 1: Sessions 1 and 2 from the keynote speaker, Mr Michael Ryan.

DVD 2: Workshops: Meeting Volunteers' Expectations, presented by Mrs Cheryl Hallinan  
Advertising for Volunteers, presented by Mrs Sue Sneddon.

To order your copies, complete the order form below and return with your payment to the ICCOREIS Executive Officer. DVDs are priced at \$30 each, or \$50 for the set of two.

An order form is also available on the Resources page of the ICCOREIS website.

### ICCOREIS Forum 2009 DVD Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Post your form and payment to:

ICCOREIS Executive Officer  
Mrs Sue Sneddon  
PO Box 756  
Newcastle NSW 2300

Please make cheques payable to 'ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc.'

**Order Details**

DVD	Quantity	@ \$30 each OR \$50 per set
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1: Sessions 1 and 2	_____
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2: Workshops	_____
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Order total	\$ _____
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