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### Why this? Where did this come from?

The project has its genesis in the emerging need for an overarching whole of system guide to learning and teaching in our Catholic school communities. This need was articulated by Principals, teachers and CEB staff during the series of focussed conversations across the diocese in 2019 with Trish Hindmarsh. These focussed conversations resulted in the document [Partnering: A Step Further](#) that outlines the strategic directions and areas of inquiry for Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese. The initiation of this project *Co-creating an Educational Landscape* is a direct response to this strategic direction document – *to partner, to take a step further together, in response to the complex and shifting landscape of education.*

### What is this project?

The goal of this project is the **co-creation of an educational landscape with Catholic Education communities across the diocese of Ballarat**. It is an invitation to partner, as together we uncover the multiple story threads of innovation and celebration that already pattern our educational landscape as we *'... take a step further and never be satisfied with conventional things.'* (Pope Francis, 2013)

While we will work together to create this 'educational landscape' and decide on the form it might take, it is becoming clear what it won't be –it won't be a framework or a prescribed set of requirements or actions. Rather, what we have learnt so far from school colleagues is an *educational landscape* has the potential to bring innovation - anchored in high aspirations

for learners and responsive to our Catholic school contexts - to the fore. An educational landscape could also act as a place for local discernment around approaches taken, for example, in curriculum and assessment design, enactment of pedagogy, creating the conditions for learner agency and wellbeing practices. School colleagues have envisaged many possibilities for the ways they might engage with an 'education landscape' as they continue to evaluate and refine their practices and stretch towards their next horizons.

### **How will this happen?**

The co-creation of an educational landscape will be the result of an inquiry process that seeks firstly to understand the current narratives of innovation across the diocese; what is valued and important to pay attention to as we go forward as a diocese. Secondly, the process will determine what else might be necessary if we are to re-imagine new horizons within this landscape, that are responsive to our contemporary times and theologically faithful and culturally plausible.

The process begins with a [Reflection and Dialogue tool](#) that can be accessed via this link. The intention of the tool is to provide opportunities for those in Catholic school communities to engage in deep dialogue, learning and reflection overtime. You may choose to engage with the tool independently, drawing on the experiences of others (see '[What school colleagues are saying about the tool](#)') or you might like to partner with a colleague from the team at Catholic Education Ballarat who have been exploring the possibilities of this project with the following schools : St Mary's Colac, Mercy Regional College Camperdown, St Pius X West Warrnambool, Emmanuel College Warrnambool, St Michael's and St John's Horsham, Lumen Christi Delacombe, St Columba's Ballarat North.

The tool can be used in different ways that are best suited to the context of your school community. This may be with a small team/s or whole staff, it may be as part of existing processes and undertaken over time. We encourage you to ensure there is a diversity of voices over the course of the engagement - school leaders, teacher leaders, classroom teachers, as well as inviting young people to join the dialogue and reflection.

### **Why might we be interested? How might this happen in our school community?**

In conversations with school colleagues, many possibilities have been discovered for how this Reflection and Dialogue tool might support school communities in the learning and work they are already doing, as well as strengthening this work and offering a stretch.

So far school colleagues have identified the following as ways they will use the Reflection and Dialogue tool in their context:

- Within the School Review process
- After the School Review process
- Establishing a focus for whole school professional inquiry
- Within staff meetings and PLT processes to focus dialogue and reflection; to stretch and challenge
- To identify aspirations, innovation and where to next
- Exploring ways to create the conditions for learner agency
- Supporting ways to partner with parents

## What does Pope Francis have to say?

The Reflection and Dialogue Tool draws on the wisdom of Pope Francis where he encourages us to ‘..seek new, unconventional forms of education .... to always go a step further and never be satisfied with conventional things’? To read Pope Francis full text see the document Partnering: A Step Further. Strategic Directions 2020 -2024 (link to doc on CEB website)

## When will this happen?

We are inviting school communities to use the *Reflection and Dialogue Tool* in **Term 2 and 3** in ways that are authentic to the needs of their community. In **Term 4** the focus will be on undertaking a collaborative analysis and the co-design of the educational landscape with interested colleagues across the diocese.

## Are we ready to learn together?

It has become apparent there is a strong mutual benefit in the offer of this Reflection and Dialogue Tool. In partnership, school colleagues and Catholic Education Ballarat colleagues are invited to engage in co-creating an ‘educational landscape’ for the Diocese of Ballarat that is of benefit to all. Simultaneously, school communities are invited to use reflection and dialogue processes in ways that meet the needs of their local contexts.

## What are school colleagues saying about it?

The following quotes have been gathered from conversations with school leaders across the diocese as we explored the possibilities of how they are intending to bring this Reflection and Dialogue tool into their ongoing work and learning.

### Discerning aspirations

*“We can see how we could use these questions about **aspirations** in small groups across our whole staff – gather our reflections, analyse them and come up with some key aspirations – the opportunity to take photos would just add to a deeper understanding of our aspirations and probably give us even more insight into what these aspirations mean in our day to day life of everyone here.”*

### Supporting the School Review process and post Review process

*“These questions, particular the **aspirations** and the photos would be really helpful to us in our review year – we will embed them into our **review process**”*

*“This is not an add on, it will support us on the next steps after our **review process** – we can take our recommendations to this, and ask What next?’ it will provide us with direction”*

### Discerning strategic direction

*“We see how this process could enable us to reflect, review and **create strategic direction** through professional inquiry – so there is mutual benefit, it reminds us to take the time to reflect on some simple but important questions”*

*“This tool offers brings us into the **strategic directions** of the whole of our education system – it supports us to move forward, and to map out our next innovation”*

*“We would use this process to enable our school community to get into the strategic directions [Partnering a step further] document and to guide us to our **next innovation**, questions for investigation – this is a great way to cultivate commitment from colleagues”*

*“We can see straight away how our **review priorities** map to these strategic priorities, they give us questions to inquiry into; our next innovation”*

#### **Process to support reflection and dialogue**

*“This tool will enable us to have **rich conversations**, across a series of meetings – it is certainly not something extra we need to do.”*

#### **Conversations with students:**

*“We love how this process can be informed by our students – asking these kinds of questions give us an understanding of our students’ experiences and what they think is important”*

*“We are really wanting to get into learner agency – so these conversations really provide us a starting point for some of the conversations we need to have – to inform what we are doing”*

*“We would work with our school SRC leaders, and undertake these conversations, and they would be able to lead small groups of students in the same conversations”*

**Want to find out more and participate in this exciting opportunity to work and learn together?**

[Register your interest](#) for a 2hr guided session to explore the Dialogue and Reflection tool and what it might offer your school community.