

Edmund Rice Education Australia

Flexible Learning Centre Network

National Working Paper 2



Philosophy

Edmund Rice, the founder of the Christian Brothers, established an education system that was relationship based, outreaching, just and relevant to it's time. The educational insight of Edmund was that personal and community liberation could be achieved through educational experiences that enable transformation. The contemporary vision of the Christian Brothers is formed and reformed in response to "the needs of the day" and is reflected in the establishment and work of Flexible Learning Centres.

Including the Excluded EREA FLC National Network

Central to Edmund Rice Education Australia is the provision of a response for the Christian Brothers Congregation to the signs of the times, that is, to be active in creating social environments which enable the emancipation of young people who have been disenfranchised from education and social connection. Br Phillip Pinto calls us to not be reliant on the success of the past but to "take our part in the creation of the new story."

The values of social justice, peace making and human dignity umbrella this endeavor and provide all who participate a place and opportunity to dialogue in an environment of hope and compassion.

This dialogue is central to the development and work of the EREA FLC National Network. The FLC Network has emerged by responding to invitation from communities wanting to offer disenfranchised young people opportunities for educational re-engagement and social connection. The response begins a dialogue with community and can culminate in partnerships that combine to provide a social, spiritual, community and educational provision for these young people

The National Working Papers 1 and 2 create an opportunity for a dialogue about the EREA FLC National Network development. Included in this working paper are the following attachments which provide additional information to facilitate this dialogue.

Attachment 1:

Phases of development of a Flexible Learning Centre/Outreach

Attachment 2:

Flexible Learning Centres Current Overview

Attachment 3:

The status of research within the EREA FLC Network



The Network

The Edmund Rice Education Australia Flexible Learning Centre Network (EREAFLCN) is currently comprised of the EREA FLC Network Team, five Flexible Learning Centres (FLC) and seven Outreach Services.

- Network Team (Principal, Business Manager, Network Support Coordinator, Learning Choices Coordinator, Justice and Formation Coordinator, Administrative Officer + Network Research + Registered Training Organisation)
- Centre Education Programme (Logan)
 - Ipswich Outreach Service
 - Crestmead/Marsden Outreach Service
 - Beaudesert/Jimboomba Outreach Service
- Albert Park Flexible Learning Centre (Brisbane CBD)
- Deception Bay Flexible Learning Centre
 - Caboolture Outreach Service
- Noosa Flexible Learning Centre
 - Gympie Outreach Service
- Townsville Flexible Learning Centre
 - Upper Ross Outreach Service
 - Mt Isa Outreach Service

EREAFLCN established the centres and services in response to invitations from partner organisations and local communities. Details of partner organisations are detailed in Attachment 2: Flexible Learning Centres A Current Overview. A profile of young people and staff within each site is also outlined in this document.

EREA FLC National ▶ 2009 Dec 31st

Principal

FLC Sites 95 Staff / 450 YP

National Network Support

Network Support

Business Manager

Admin Support

Learning Choices

Justice and Formation

Current 2008

CEP + III Outreach

APFLC

Current 2008

DBay FLC + I Outreach

Noosa FLC + I Outreach

Townsville FLC + II Outreach

**Child Protection
Work Force Supervision**

NEW

Consultancies

- Indigenous Support
- Facilitates / Projects

New Semester II 2008

Region Development

**Northern Region Eastern Region
Southern Region Western Region**

NEW

2010

EREA BOARD

EREA DIRECTORATE

EREA FLCN DIRECTOR

FLC National Board

**FLCN Directorate:
(Snr MANAGERS SERVICES)**

**Northern Region
Principal**

**Southern Region
Principal**

**Eastern Region
Principal**

**Western Region
Principal**

- Network Support
- Learning Choice
- Business Manager
- Justice & Formation
- Child Protection /Staff Supervision
- Facilities/ Projects Manager
- Indigenous Support
- National Admin Support

- CEP
- APFLC
- DBAY
- NFLC
- TFLC
- (N.T.)

Industrial Arrangement

- Directorate
 - Service Industry
 - Education Industry
- Regional Sites
 - SAC's
 - SOA
 - Other



National Options

The national governance and operational structures of the Edmund Rice Education Australia Flexible Learning Centre Network as outlined above provides the EREA Board the possibility of developing appropriate national responses to community invitations for the provision of service to young people who have disengaged from mainstream education. The EREA FLC Network has begun (May, 2008) initial conversations in the Northern Territory in response to invitation by key government departments including the Department of Justice and the Department of Education, Employment and Training

Resourcing and Advocacy

The EREAFLC Network Team structure as outlined in Diagram 1 would provide additional capacity to enhance the development of the national agenda. As the EREA FLC National provision of services will grow out of community invitation it is not possible to predict the regions or pace of this growth. Management structures should reflect need and growth as appropriate.

EREAFCLN provides a national based lobby group for funding frameworks at Federal and State levels

EREAFCLN will create opportunities for partnership development with local government, non-government organisations, state and federal government authorities, tertiary education, catholic education offices, corporate and philanthropic support.

Attachment 1

Flexible Learning Centres Development Stages.

STAGE 1: COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS INVITATION

(6 – 12 MONTHS)

Pre-invitation

1.1	Community interest expressed for an FLC
1.2	Initial conversation with stakeholders about FLC principles, models and local community needs
1.3	Initially map local community ethnographically

Invitation

1.4	Letter of invitation from stakeholders to begin a consultative process
1.5	A supportive letter from the Bishop
1.6	EREA Board, EREA Directorate, FLC Network Board support FLC strategic direction

EREA approval

1.7	FLC Network Board forwards invitation to EREA Directorate to continue
1.8	EREA FLC Directorate seek initial support from Elders Groups, Catholic Education, State/Territory Educational Authorities and other government service providers and the local Bishop
1.9	EREA FLC Director via EREA Director consult with EREA Board regarding acceptance or non acceptance of invitation
1.10	EREA Board accept/ not accept invitation

STAGE 2: CONFIRMING IDENTIFICATION OF NEED AND DETERMINING RESPONSE

(1-3 YEARS – CAN BE CONCURRENT WITH STAGE 3)

Determine response

2.1	State/Territory Education Department Strategic Direction (eg District Youth Achievement Plan (DYAP) in Qld) identified disengaged young people as a need
2.2	State/Territory Education Department Strategic Direction identified educational response to need
2.3	Further research to map local community ethnographically, meet young people and identify support and transition needs/options for young people.
2.4	Undertake consultative process with all stakeholders to determine support eg Local Government Authorities (LGA), Youth Interagency, Principal's Association.
2.5	Determine response that best meets the needs of young people within the local context eg FLC, Outreach, no response

Securing Capital and Non-Capital Infrastructure Support

2.6	<p>Identify partners and levels of support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct funding eg State/Territory, Commonwealth, Local Government • Edmund Rice Education Australia • Catholic Education • University research • Seconded staff (EREA, State/Territory Education Department, Local Government Association, community agencies) <p>This could include applying for grants eg Dept of Communities, State/Territory Education Department, DEST</p>
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2.7	Identify new site (FLC) Or Assess community assets for Outreach eg venues, support services
2.8	Finalise Deeds of Agreements and MOU's
2.9	Secure address with correct zoning for Educational Faculty
2.10	Apply and receive Non-State/Territory school registration if required
2.11	Develop and sign Deeds of Agreement/ MOU's with relevant partners
2.12	Network recruits appropriate staff, including secondments from EREA or State/Territory Education Dept
2.13	Develop appropriate facilities. This can include Building Grant Authority, Corporate, Community and State/Territory Education Departments.
2.14	Organise appropriate resourcing eg govt or corporate for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment (sports, manual arts, arts) • Furniture • Buses • Info tech communication

STAGE 3: ESTABLISHING THE FLC/OUTREACH

(1-2 YEARS)

Creating an engagement pathway for young people

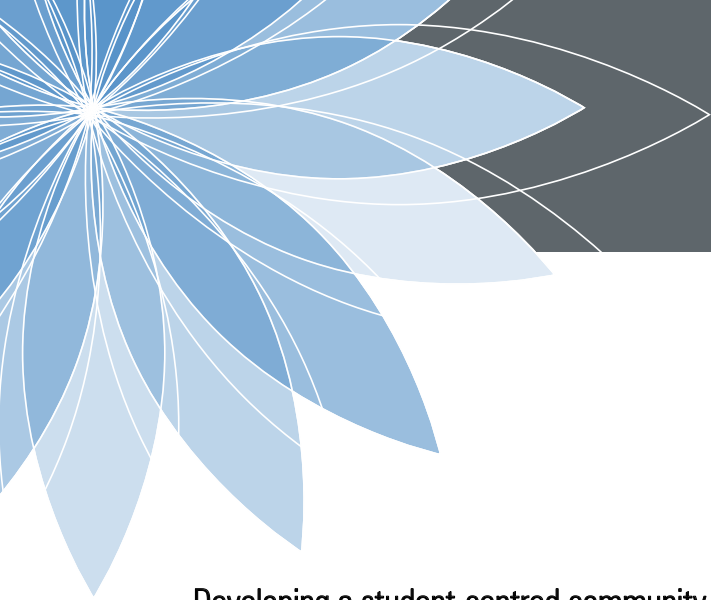
3.1	Identify target cohort within regions eg age, family groups
3.2	Build relationships with young people and identify those with the interest to engage in flexible learning
3.3	Enrol young people
3.4	Begin educational program
3.5	Census young people (both State/Territory (Feb) and Commonwealth (Aug))

Establishing the Administrative Procedures

3.6	Utilise current FLC network procedures to establish the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people record keeping • Staff payroll process • Accounting and financial processes
3.7	Meet contractual obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation of subjects • Term Report to Principal • Office of Non-State School Annual Report • Reports to meet other specific funding requirements

Developing the structure to support the provision of appropriate Learning Choices

3.8	Utilise current FLC practices to establish the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily and Weekly Timetable • Group allocation • Screening and Assessment
3.9	Access available resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Equipment • Information Technology Communication • Buses • Venues external to site eg gym



Developing a student-centred community based on FLC principles

3.10	Establish a solution-focused culture amongst young people via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction for young people • Daily morning group meeting
3.11	Create a Special Person/Pastoral program
3.12	Liaise with parents

Supporting the growth of a strong staff team

3.13	Conduct the following formation/professional development activities at each site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site induction day • Child Protection Training • Daily debriefing with Coordinator • Weekly staff meetings • Staff group supervision (once a term) • Student Free Days
3.14	Participate in Network initiatives via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FLC Network New Staff Induction Day • Access to network professional supervision • Site Semester Review and Planning Days • Outreach Semester Review and Planning Days • Whole Network staff days • Curriculum Development Days
3.15	Access to support for Coordinators via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits by Network Team members (often weekly at each site) • Contact Principal and Network Team members on a needs basis • Fortnightly Coordinator teleconferences • Term Coordinator meetings • Planning and Review Session with Principal

Developing networks with local community

3.16	Establish local Advisory Committee from original local consultations
3.17	Confirm Elders presence/involvement at the site
3.18	Participate in local Inter-agencies
3.19	Develop working relationships with key local agencies eg Child and Youth Mental Health Services (Health Department), Education Department, Child Protection Department, police and non government youth agencies, etc

Attachment 2

Flexible Learning Centres Current Overview

Albert Park FLC	Young person Profile		Staffing Profile	
<p>Non State School Registration: 9.11.05</p> <p>Site: Long term lease DETA</p> <p>Partner Organisations: Brisbane City Council (staff wages 3.8 positions) Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) (Education Queensland facilities) QUT</p> <p>Albert Park Steering Committee: Quarterly meetings Membership includes: EREA Network Albert Park FLC BCC DETA</p>	By Grade (FTE)		Coordinator	1
	Yr 10	2	Teachers	3
	Yr 11	41.2		
	Yr 12	9.2		
	Total:	52.4		
	By Gender (FTE)		Youth/Community Devt Workers (seconded from BCC)	3
	Male	19.8	Chaplain	0.4
	Female	32.6		
	YP and Difficulty		Administration Officers (0.8 seconded from BCC)	1.3
	Literacy/Numeracy diff. N/A		Youth Support Coordinator (Dept Communities)	0.3
	Disability impacting on learning (Not diagnosed)	10		
	Diagnosed Disability (EAP)	2		
	YP who are		Sessional Workers (music, arts)	0.9
	Young Parents	11	Family Program Worker	0.8
Indigenous	2			
YP in Care	1			
Referral Source		Child Youth Mental Health Services (Q'land Health)	0.1	
Youth Services	55%			
Self/Family/Friends	45%			
DETA/Schools Gov. Agency				
YP on Waiting List		School Nurse (Q'land Health)	0.2	
No of YP	26	Totals	11	
Suburbs across Greater Brisbane	23			
		Full Time Equivalents	17	
		No of People	1	
		Indigenous Persons	1	
		Funded other than EREA (FTE)	4.4	

Centre Education Programme	Young person Profile		Staffing Profile	
Registered Non-state School: 1992 Site: Purpose Built Facility owned by EREAFLCN Partner Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) Office of Non State Schools (Triannual Service Agreement, 0.5 Transition Worker) Youth Family Services Dept of Housing (Community Renewal Start Up funds for Crestmead/Marsden Outreach) Boystown (start up funds for Beaudesert/Jimboomba Outreach) Department of Communities (Sport and Rec posn) Outreach Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crestmead/Marsden (est. Jan 2007) Beaudesert/Jimboomba (est Jan 07) Ipswich (est Jan 2006) CEP Advisory Group: Quarterly meetings Membership includes: DETA YFS (Youth Agency) Community Elders Parents	By Grade (FTE)		Coordinator	1
	Yr 8	14	Teachers: CEP	4.6
	Yr 9	21	Outreach	4
	Yr 10	61	Total:	8.6
	Yr 11	18		
	Yr 12	17		
	Total:	131		
	By Gender (FTE)		Education Support Workers: CEP	3.5
	Male	84	Outreach	2
	Female	47	Total	5.5
			Chaplain	0.4
	YP and Difficulty		Administration Officers	1.2
Literacy/Numeracy diffic.	124			
Disability impacting on learning (Not diagnosed)	64	Youth Support Coordinator (YFS)	0.5	
Diagnosed Disability(EAP)	12			
YP who are		Sessional Workers (music, mechanics)	1.04	
Young Parents	1			
Indigenous	38	Transition Workers: CEP	1.2	
YP in Care	5	Outreach	0.8	
Referral Source		Tuckshop Coordinator	0.7	
Youth Services	3%			
Self/Family/Friends	77%	Caretaker	1	
DETA/Schools	17%			
Gov. Agency	3%			
YP on Waiting List		Totals		
No of YP	111	Full Time Equivalents	21.94	
13 Suburbs across Logan Corridor + Ipswich, Beaudesert/Jimboomba		No of People	30	
		Indigenous Persons	6	
		Funded other than EREA (FTE)	1.5	

Deception Bay FLC	Young person Profile		Staffing Profile	
<p>Non-State School Registration: 9 Nov 2005</p> <p>Site: Currently in rented premises over 2 sites New purpose built facility currently under construction, anticipated finish November, 2008. Land provided through DETA on long term lease.</p> <p>Partnerships DETA (Funds 3 teacher positions) Dept of Housing (Through Community Renewal start up funds for Caboolture Outreach) Community agencies</p> <p>Outreach Programs Caboolture Outreach (established Jan 2007)</p> <p>Deception Bay Advisory Group: Quarterly meetings Membership includes: EREA FLC Network Deception Bay FLC DETA (Local Principals, Regional Staff) Community Organisations</p>	By Grade (FTE)		Coordinator	1
	Yr 8	3	Teachers: Deception Bay	4
	Yr 9	12	Caboolture Outreach	2
	Yr 10	20	(3 Teachers seconded from DETA)	6
	Yr 11	15	Total	
	Yr 12	10		
	Total:	60		
	By Gender (FTE)		Education Support Worker	1
	Male	33	Youth Workers	1
	Female	27	Chaplain	0.4
	YP and Difficulty		Administration Officers	1
	Literacy/Numeracy diffic	49	Youth Support Coordinator (Dept Communities)	0.2
	Disability impacting on learning (Not diagnosed)	3		
	Diagnosed Disability (EAP)	2		
	YP who are		Sessional Workers (music)	0.1
Young Parents	7	Sport and Recreation Officer (Dept Communities 2007-mid 2008)	0.5	
Indigenous	6			
YP in Care	1			
Referral Source				
Youth Services	25%			
Self/Family/Friends	42%			
DETA/Schools	28%			
Gov. Agency	5%			
YP on Waiting List				
No of YP	26	Totals		
Suburbs Northern Brisbane	10	Full Time Equivalents	11.2	
		No of People	14	
		Indigenous Persons	1	
		Funded other than EREA (FTE)	4.7	

Noosa FLC	Young person Profile		Staffing Profile	
Non-State School Registration: 8 Nov 2005 Site: 2 Sites leased through United Synergies (Youth Agency). Located in Tewantin and Sunshine Beach Partner Organisations: United Synergies Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) (Funds 1 Teacher posn) Outreach Program Gympie (established Sept 08)	By Grade (FTE)		Coordinator	1
	Yr 9	10	Teachers: Noosa FLC	3.9
	Yr 10	15	Teachers: Outreach	1
	Yr 11	13	Total:	4.9
	Yr 12	7	1 seconded DETA	
	Total:	45	Youth Worker: Noosa	0.8
	By Gender (FTE)		Youth Worker: Outreach	1
	Male	23	Total:	1.8
	Female	18	Chaplain	0.4
	YP and Difficulty		Administration Officers	0.8
	Literacy/Numeracy Diff	37	Youth Support Coordinator (United Synergies)	0.05
	Disability impacting on learning (Not diagnosed)	3		
	Diagnosed Disability (EAP)			
YP who are				
Young Parents				
Indigenous	3			
YP in Care	1			
Referral Source				
Youth Services	18%			
Self/Family/Friends	30%			
DETA/Schools	52%			
Gov. Agency				
YP on Waiting List				
No of YP	9	Totals		
Suburbs across Sunshine Coast	18	Full Time Equivalents	9	
		No of People	11	
		Indigenous Persons	1	
		Funded other than EREA (FTE)	1.05	

Townsville FLC	Young person Profile		Staffing Profile	
<p>Non-State School Registration: 14 Oct 2005</p> <p>Site: Previous primary school, modified to FLC needs, owned by EREA FLCN</p> <p>Partner Organisations: Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) Townsville CEO James Cook University (ARC grant) Dept of Housing: (Community Renewal start up funds Upper Ross Outreach) DEST (Funding for Mt Isa Outreach) Dept Communities</p> <p>Outreach Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Isa (established Jan 2008) • Upper Ross (established July 2007) 	<p>By Grade (FTE)</p> <p>Yr 8 4</p> <p>Yr 9 17</p> <p>Yr 10 35</p> <p>Yr 11 11</p> <p>Yr 12 4</p> <p>Total: 71</p>		<p>Coordinator 1</p>	
	<p>By Gender (FTE)</p> <p>Male 46</p> <p>Female 25</p>		<p>Teachers: Townsville 4</p> <p>Teachers: Outreach 2</p> <p>Total: 6</p>	
	<p>YP Difficulty (N/A)</p> <p>Literacy/Numeracy</p> <p>Disability impacting on learning (Not diagnosed)</p> <p>Diagnosed Disability (EAP)</p>		<p>Youth Workers: T'ville 1</p> <p>Youth Workers: Outreach 2</p> <p>Total: 3</p>	
	<p>YP who are</p> <p>Young Parents 1</p> <p>Indigenous 46</p> <p>YP in Care 5</p>		<p>Education Support Workers 2</p>	
	<p>Referral Source</p> <p>Youth Services 4%</p> <p>Self/Family/Friends 48%</p> <p>DETA/Schools 15%</p> <p>Youth Justice 20%</p> <p>Child Protection 13%</p>		<p>Administration Officers 1</p>	
	<p>YP on Waiting Lists</p> <p>No of YP</p> <p>Suburbs</p> <p>TFLC doesn't hold waiting lists</p>		<p>Youth Support Coordinator (Dept Communities) 0.6</p>	
			<p>Sessional Workers (music, arts) 0.3</p>	
			<p>Chaplain 0.4</p>	
			<p>Tuckshop Convenor 0.4</p>	
			<p>Totals</p> <p>Full Time Equivalents 14.7</p> <p>No of People 18</p> <p>Indigenous Persons 5</p> <p>Funded other than EREA (FTE) 0.6</p>	

Attachment 3

The status of research within the EREA FLC Network

Over the last few years, the FLC Network has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to research based practice, which informs the work we do with young people who have been disenfranchised from mainstream education.

Developing opportunities for research through partnerships with universities, organisations and the staff and young people of the FLC Network is an ongoing priority. The underlying rationale of this commitment includes:

- The complexity of our work with young people
- The scarcity of research based practice and evaluation

at a national level

- The need for the development of relevant theoretical frameworks based on professional experience, reflective practice and a growing understanding of the complex needs of the disengaged young people whom we support as they make life and learning choices.

Currently there are three Research Projects at various stages of development associated with the Flexible Learning Centre Network.

Research Project 1:

Project Title:	Re-engaging Disadvantaged Youth Through Science
University:	James Cook University, Townsville
PhD Research Topic:	Re-engaging Disadvantaged Youth Through Science
PhD Recipient:	Kimberley Wilson
Stage of Progress:	First year of three year project
Funding arrangements:	Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant

Research Project 2:

Project Title:	Developing A Values Approach to School Renewal
University:	Griffith University, Gold Coast
PhD Research Topic:	A socio-cultural approach to investigating teacher enculturation in contexts of Flexible Learning education
PhD Recipient:	Ann Morgan
Stage of Progress:	Awaiting signing of contract from EREA – starting Sem 2, 2008
Funding arrangements:	Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant – approved Industry Partner: EREA

Research Project 3:

Project Title:	Sustainable Selves: A New Assessment Model for Marginalised Secondary Students
University:	Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
PhD Research Topic:	To be determined
PhD Recipient:	To be determined
Stage of Progress:	Pilot Research completed – 3 year project to start July 2008
Funding arrangements:	Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant – approved Industry Partners: EREA, Brisbane City Council

Details of Research Project 1:

Research proposal for PhD Candidate, Kimberley Wilson, as part of the ARC Project

“Re-engaging Disadvantaged Youth Through Science”

The ‘Re-Engaging Disadvantaged Youth Through Science’ Project originated as a partnership between Edmund Rice Education Australia, James Cook University (Townsville) and the Australian Research Council, who provided funding for the three-year project. Key participants in the project include: Dr David Lake, A/Professor Sue McGinty, Professor Neil Anderson, A/Professor Glen Dawes, Professor Nola Alloway and Edmund Rice Education Network Principal, Mr Dale Murray.

The Edmund Rice Education Flexible Learning Centres ‘walk with’ young people who have disengaged from the traditional schooling system and aim to provide a flexible, relevant and supportive educational experience that will enable young people to discover their own pathway in life. Students attending the Flexible Learning Centres have often experienced disruptions to their schooling experiences that have impacted on the development of basic academic and learning skills. In some cases, difficult life circumstances have also influenced social/emotional development as well as the ability to form positive relationships in the school setting.

Flexible Learning Centre staff have endeavoured to build on the strengths of these resilient young people to overcome the barriers they face to achieve success in the educational setting. A primary focus has been to work intensively with young people to develop their literacy and numeracy skills so that they are able to function at a level related to their chronological age. Much attention is also directed to building positive relationships, both between teachers and students as well as between peers and the wider community.

Science, as a key learning area of the Queensland Curriculum, has been integrated into learning experiences by innovative teachers across the Queensland Flexible Learning sites. However, dealing with the immediate needs presented by students has left little time to develop a specific framework to guide science education in the unique context of the Flexible Learning Centre network.

Development of scientific literacy is well-recognised as an important tool for participation in today’s technologically advanced society. Scientific literacy as a concept presents itself in many guises but a key element of relevance to the Flexible Learning context as well as to a philosophy of life-long learning is that of the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively and make wise decisions. There is also a need for students to be able to participate in the discourse of science prevalent in society that may have a direct impact on their

own health and well-being as well as their ability to enact full citizenry. To have limited access to the scientific way of knowing is arguably equivalent to having a door slammed in the face of young people operating in an era where information is currency.

The intention of this project is to enlist a participatory action research model to engage teachers across several flexible learning sites (Centres and Outreaches) to develop a framework of good practice in science education to guide future curriculum development. It is hoped that a virtual connection may be established with a remote site in order to trial a distance model of professional development which would later be available for teachers across the network.

Details of Research Project 2:

Research proposal for PhD Candidate, Ann Morgan, as part of the broader ARC Project Developing a Values Approach to School Renewal, Griffith University and EREA.

“A sociocultural approach to investigating teacher enculturation in contexts of Flexible Learning education”.

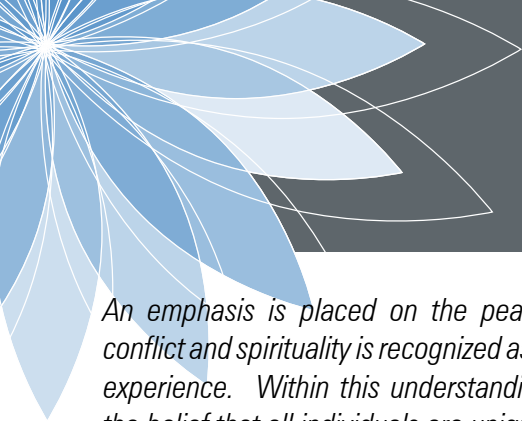
A statement defining the problem and significance to the field:

Edmund Rice Education Australia oversees a number of Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition, promoting authentic human growth through an approach to education that is holistic and supportive of principles of social justice. In Queensland the schools include both primary and secondary, boys and co-educational, day and boarding Colleges. In Queensland, Edmund Rice Education includes the Flexible Learning Centre Network “which provides young people, who have disengaged from education, with a place and an opportunity to re-engage in a suitable, flexible learning environment”. (“Edmund Rice Education Flexible Learning Centres,” 2006)

In the Flexible Learning Centre Network, the four guiding principles of Respect, Participation, Safe and Legal, and Honesty, provide an ethical framework which defines relationships and group dynamics. Negotiations around the four principles influence and shape the interactions of staff and young people, encouraging responsible behaviour and “peaceful resolution of conflict”.

The concept of “common ground” applies to all who choose to participate in the programme. Adults and young people alike commit to participate in a learning environment that is democratic, relational and operates through key principles.

Relationships within the programme are based on a respect for personal dignity and recognition of difference.



An emphasis is placed on the peaceful resolution of conflict and spirituality is recognized as a universal human experience. Within this understanding of spirituality is the belief that all individuals are unique and gifted
(Edmund Rice Education Flexible Learning Centres, 2005, p. 287).

A number of factors influence the dynamics of relationships in the Flexible Learning Centre Network. These include:

- the ethos and values of the Christian Brothers who founded the first Flexible Learning Centre in the Edmund Rice Tradition;
- the necessity to find new and effective ways of interacting with disenfranchised young people which involves an openness to dialogue and engaging with young people's experiences;
- the presence at each Flexible Learning site of other professional staff including, social workers, youth workers, counsellors and community development workers;
- smaller numbers of young people in classes and the flexibility this affords.

Through the research I will explore the dynamics of the 'common ground' approach to developing a learning environment, with a view to discover what enables young people and staff, specifically teachers, to shift their perspective of education from the control paradigm of the "command society" to a cooperative paradigm of "the society of reflexivity" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005).

The new paradigm, in which interpersonal dynamics of learning to "negotiate difference" and develop "strategies for finding common ground, collaborating with strangers" and "the morality of compromise" will be inspected (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005, p. 24). The processes of teacher enculturation will be explored and the details and specifics of an emergent everyday language of cooperation and negotiation, influenced by the four guiding principles in the Flexible Learning Centres Network context, will be analysed.

A further aim of the research will be to seek to determine how the four principles are aligned to the values of The Edmund Rice Education Charter (Christian Brothers Australia, 2004) and the three characteristics of Edmund Rice Education, namely 'presence, compassion and liberation' (McLaughlin, 2007).

Details of Research Project 3:

Sustainable Selves: A New Assessment Model for Marginalised Secondary Students

The ARC funded this research proposal based upon the FLC Network's significant partner contributions. Dr. Andy Brader will seconded to QUT as for the projects duration as a post-doctoral fellow. There is no PhD candidate selected yet as the full-scale project only received funding result on 28th May 2008.

The project is a "design experiment" in educational assessment (Kelly, 2004). Researchers will work with FLC teaching and counselling staff to design, pilot and implement an alternative assessment approach, protocols and materials that captures the kinds of personal and intellectual development happening in the FLC programs. This will involve background documentation on the current assessment practices and cohorts (Phase I), building an assessment prototype (Phase II), piloting it and gathering qualitative and quantitative data on its use (Phase III), and subsequent modification of the instrument for larger-scale implementation (Phase IV). Phase I of the project began in 2007, with focus group interviews of students and staff on assessment needs underway (Brader & Graham, 2007).

The design experiment uses current models of "authentic assessment" and "assessment-for-learning" (e.g., Klenowski, 2002; 2006), and draws from structuralist sociological models (Bourdieu, 1990) to describe the full range of capacities and resources developed and acquired by marginalised youth, and a copyrighted new template instrument for their developmental assessment. It will provide educators and youth support workers at all levels with an alternative approach to evaluating at-risk students.

The four research and development questions that focus on the assessment of sustainable selves are:

1. What is the optimal model for the assessing the intellectual, social and aesthetic resources that at-risk youth bring to (and develop through) these programs?
2. How can teachers, youth workers and counsellors use this assessment model to inform decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and care for these students?
3. How can students use this assessment model to enhance their self- understanding of learning and life pathways?
4. How can institutions use this assessment model for accountable reporting on value-added educational outcomes to funding and statutory curriculum authorities?