

Transcript Ross Fox's Keynote Address

Part 1 – Introduction and Context



Science of Learning Leadership Accelerator

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A joint venture between



Crowthier Centre
AN ENGINE THAT POWERS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

**Primary
focus**



Where I wanted to start was just to say congratulations for being here. I was really pleased that I got invited to be part of it, pleased to have some teachers and some of our leaders involved, because some of the people here today have been so influential on our thinking.

Pamela Snow presented to our principals about 18 months ago and left us with a lot of challenges in terms of thinking through what was important in the teaching of reading and how we were going about it. Lorraine Hammond, is here who you be hearing from later. We are profoundly influenced by Lorraine's approach and dedication to every student's learning.

Some of the things we're doing I know about because of Ollie Lovell. There was a long drive I did in my diocese. I drove one day from Moruya to West Wyalong. Not a well-worn path, I can tell you. It's about 5 hours. And I listened to all his podcasts about four years ago that Ollie made and I got to know Lorraine and others through that. We've been on quite a learning journey though I'm not here today to tell you, Canberra Goulburn's got it all solved. I'm here to admit that we didn't start in the right place. And I think we've made amazing progress. We're so in awe of the dedication and the commitment of people like Pamela Snow, people like Lorraine Hammond, people like Jenny Donovan, who we're hearing from also later, to really what the evidence says.

If there's one message to take away today, I think the biggest challenge for us as educators - and I admit I'm not a registered teacher, it is illegal obviously, in this country to have a teacher in front of a class who's not registered - unfortunately, is that registration does not tell you anything about what that teacher knows about how students learn to read, how they actually learn to learn, how the brain works.

There's a massive, massive chasm in how we're going about education in this country, so to be in a room of people committed to the learning of students understanding it, focussing on it and nurturing it, because we do share a really common aspiration, whether you're from a Catholic, independent, or government school, we want the best for our students.

We want them to become great citizens of the world. And the way I would summarise that is my belief is that it's possible always and everywhere, through high quality learning. That's unashamedly what we're about in Canberra Goulburn. Congratulations for being here. I'm excited and I'm looking forward to talking with a number of you through the day, getting to know you. I'll say it at the end as well, but if ever Canberra Goulburn can help, you're very welcome to come, very welcome to be part of it. Use anything we're doing because we share that great ambition and aspiration of learning of students.



Today's talk I ambitiously said was about focusing on the learning. You'll hear reference to a program; we've given it the name Catalyst. It was easier to give it a name, but really if you hear Catalyst it is our approach to learning and teaching, how we're thinking about improving learning and teaching in the thousand classrooms in our system.

Just so you know, we have 56 schools. It ranges from 32 children in St Joseph's, Grenfell, up to about 1,900 at St Mary MacKillop College in the ACT. We're unique in Australia. We are the only education system in Australia that operates across both the ACT and New South Wales. 22,000 students, about 3,000 staff, about 2,000 teachers, but about a thousand classrooms, where learning, hopefully, is happening at any given time.

And just to be very transparent, one of the great things about my job in our Archdiocese is you can be as busy as you want to be, so you can get very distracted with all sorts of things. And in our education systems in Australia, even in the school, the school's a very complicated place. You can get distracted by all sorts of challenges, all sorts of ideas, all sorts of innovations, all sorts of, let's call it fads, there's no end of distractions. As an example, I spoke to a Principal in our Archdiocese yesterday, a highly esteemed educational leader who said that at his school, the mission and vision of the school has no reference at all to learning. None whatsoever.

He was saying I think we need to focus on the learning and we're not fulfilling our role as Catholic educators by being nice to people, by nurturing the students, by providing a safe place. We actually need the learning to be first class. I'm pleased that there was that recognition.

I'm just going to go through some of the things that we've learnt on our own journey as a system. Patrick and colleagues can tell you later whether I'm telling the truth, whether I match with the experience. All this is caveated; we're in the process, we've not arrived where we want to be. But we do think we're orientated around the right thing.

Success probably at this stage means in five years we're not waking up thinking this was all about fads. We're talking about how a student learns to read, how a student learns. We think that there's not going to be a realisation in a few years that we got it totally wrong. We are confident with people like Pam (Snow) that we're going to get better and better at understanding the minutiae of that and informing our practice.

