

ACCS

ANNUAL REPORT 2008



Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools
2 Highland Road, #01-02 CAEC, S 549102
Tel: 6585 7080
Email: accs@catholic.org.sg
Blog: accs-communion.blogspot.com

CONTENTS:

ACCS Mission Statement

- A) Members of the Commission
- B) Committees
- C) Activities
- D) Formation Committee
- E) Civics & Moral Education for Catholic Secondary Schools
- F) Formation Programme for Educators
- G) Catechetical Text for Primary Schools
- H) Aspirations

MISSION STATEMENT

ACCS supports Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Singapore in their mission of educating children in different aspects of human knowledge and developing in them moral and spiritual values enlightened by the Gospel as well as civic values for living in Singapore society and in the world.

A) MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

The members of the Commission appointed by His Grace Archbishop Nicholas Chia for the three-year term 2008 to 2010 were as follows:

President:	<i>Most Rev Msgr Nicholas Chia, DD, STL</i>
Archbishop's Delegate:	<i>Rev Msgr Eugene Vaz</i>
Chairman:	<i>Mr Bernard Chen</i>
Dy Chairman:	<i>Mr John Yip</i>
Congregational Reps:	<i>Bro Paul Rogers, FSC</i> <i>Sr Maria Lau, IJ</i>
Members:	<i>Mr Noel Hon</i> <i>Mr James Koh</i> <i>Mr Lim Soo Ping</i> <i>Ms Jessica Tan</i> <i>Mr Cheong Yip Seng</i> <i>Dr Esther Chong</i>

Executive and Professional Staff

Executive Director <i>To be appointed</i>	Dy Executive Director <i>Bro Adrian Danker, SJ</i>
Executive Secretary <i>Sr Cecily Pavri (away)</i> <i>Mrs Ursula Quah (covering)</i>	Admin Assistants <i>Ms Shirley A Louis</i> <i>Mr Raymond Lee</i>
Religious Education <i>Ms Jeanette Atabelo</i>	Formation and Training <i>To be appointed</i>

B) COMMITTEES

Steering Committee:

Chairman

Mr Bernard Chen

Members

Msgr Eugene Vaz

Mr John Yip

Mr James Koh

School-Church Relations:

Chairpersons

Mr Bernard Chen

Sr Maria Lau, IJ

Members

Nil

Religious Education:

Chairman

Msgr Eugene Vaz

Members

Bro Adrian Danker, SJ

Bro Dominic Yeo-Koh

Mrs Ursula Quah

Ms Jeanette Atabelo

Formation:

Chairman

Sr Maria Lau, IJ/ Mr John Yip

Members

Bro Adrian Danker, sj

Bro Dominic Yeo-Koh

Mrs Margaret Tan

Mrs Sara de Souza

Mrs Judina Cheong

Mrs Susan Thomas

Mrs Mathew Shu Quo

D) ACTIVITIES

Principals' Commissioning & Commitment of Service

The Principals' Commissioning & Commitment of Service ceremony was held at the Church of St Francis Xavier on Saturday, 19 January 2008.

Four newly appointed principals were commissioned –

- 1) Ms Melanie Martens (St Anthony's Canossian Sec School);
- 2) Ms Clara Tan (CHIJ Kellock);
- 3) Ms Susan Crossley (CHIJ St Joseph's Convent);
- 4) Ms Magdalen Soh (Holy Innocents' High School)

The ceremony took place during mass celebrated by His Grace, Archbishop Nicholas Chia and concelebrated by Msgr Eugene Vaz. Principals, vice-principals, chairpersons of School Management Committees (SMCs) and their families, heads of religious communities sponsoring schools, school supervisors and ACCS commissioners and committee members graced the event.

Just before the Commissioning and Commitment ceremony, a sharing session led by Fr Michael Arro was conducted to help principals and vice-principals reflect on their mission. Fr Arro spoke on “Why the Eucharist and Commissioning”. Mrs Sara De Souza, principal of SJI Junior, gave a personal reflection.

Meeting with Sponsoring Authorities

The Commission met with Sponsoring Authorities in March 2008 to discuss matters related to Catholic schools. The discussion was fruitful. There was support for ACCS’ efforts to build a Catholic Education community. ACCS endorsed the good work Sponsoring Authorities were doing. It was agreed that there be more regular meetings.

Meeting with Priests on Parish-School Relations

Mr Bernard Chen, Br Adrian Danker, Mrs Ursula Quah and Commission members met up with priests at their respective district meetings from December 2007 to August 2008. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss possible collaboration between schools and parishes. Their feedback was positive. There was a collective desire for closer relations with schools. The priests’ feedback contributed greatly to a conceptual framework for parish-school relations. The concept paper was presented to the Senate of Priests in October 2008 for their endorsement. Initial steps have begun with schools and priests to realize the desired relations.

Meetings with SMC Chairpersons on Education Matters

ACCS engaged Chairpersons from Schools Management Committee to discuss possible ways to build the Catholic Education community and to jointly work with the parishes. The discussions also focused on key issues in Catholic education such as succession planning for school leaders, religious education in schools, affiliation and the school management model. These took place between September and October 2008. There was agreement that there should be more synergy and collaboration between the SMCs and ACCS. It was agreed that there be regular meetings in the coming year.

Communications

Documents

Several papers have been drafted and disseminated on various aspects of Catholic education in Singapore to key partners, namely, school principals, SMCs, and priests. These include papers on communal responsibility for Catholic education, definitions of terms used in Catholic education, formation and guidelines on appointing CME coordinators in schools.

Blog

ACCS launched a blog, *Communion*, on 21 April 2008 to share news and views with schools leaders and teachers. The blog covers activities, events, celebrations and anniversaries in the various Catholic schools as well as articles on Catholic education. To date, the blog has received over 1,500 hits. The blog can be accessed via <http://accs-communion.blogspot.com/>

Catholic News and Internet portal

Initial efforts are underway to promote Catholic schools through the Catholic News. This involves gathering newsworthy stories from schools. There are also plans to create an IT portal for Catholic schools to showcase themselves and to share resources. These efforts aim to inform the Catholic community about the good work being done in Catholic schools.

Teachers' Day Celebrations

For the first time the Catholic Teachers' Movement (CTM) and ACCS jointly hosted the Teachers' Day Celebrations on 30 Aug 2008. Mass was celebrated by His Grace, Archbishop Nicholas, concelebrated by Msgr Eugene Vaz and Fr Michael D'Cruz. SJI International graciously offered their chapel and hall for the event and have offered to host subsequent celebrations. Another first was the inclusion of principals and teachers of Catholic kindergartens. There was a good turnout of guests for this event.

To emphasize the importance of the teaching vocation, Archbishop Chia directed that a special blessing of teachers be given in all parishes on the Teachers' Day weekend.

School Visits

Sr Maria Lau, ij and Br Adrian Danker, sj visited our Catholic schools. They engaged principals in a dialogue on the state of Catholic education and the possible support they would need from ACCS. The visits were insightful. Our schools leaders are aware of their roles as principals of Catholic institutions. Our schools work hard at developing every child holistically; this often done within the best traditions of their respective visions and missions as Catholic schools. Principals expressed a desire for greater collaboration and sharing between schools, more attention to the spiritual formation of educators and stronger relations with parishes. They also desired continued leadership and guidance from the Church. The overall impression is that our schools are doing well both academically and spiritually. There is also recognition that there is room for further improvement.

Individual school reports have been drafted. Feedback and findings have been tabulated for a systemic overview of the state of Catholic education in our schools. Follow-up visits are planned for 2009.

D) FORMATION COMMITTEE

The Training & Development Committee was renamed the Formation Committee to better reflect the Committee's intent to meet the formation needs of principals and vice-principals, as well as teachers.

Communio

The committee engaged school leaders and key educators once a term in a gathering called *Communio*. The aim of *Communio* is to share experiences and ideas on managing and leading Catholic schools. These meetings also aimed to promote greater interaction among educators. In 2008, the three *Communio* sessions were:

‘Developing Catholic School Culture’

The first *Communio* gathering was hosted by Maris Stella High School on 27 March 2008. Br Anthony Tan, principal of Maris Stella High School gave a presentation on his school’s approach to developing school culture. About 40 participants, including school leaders and SMCs members came. After the presentation, they formed small groups to share the best practices in their respective schools. This was later shared with the larger audience and online on the blog. The day ended with a meal together.

‘Leaders-educators in Catholic Schools & Catholic leader-educators: - Living the Values and Culture’

This was the second *Communio* gathering hosted by Montfort Secondary School on 27 June 2008. There were about 50 school leaders, teachers and SMC representatives for the workshop. Mr Michael de Silva from the Ministry of Education, in his personal capacity, was the guest speaker and facilitator. He identified several areas of concern that Catholic schools leaders face in leading Catholic schools and urged participants to think beyond managing them. There was fruitful discussion throughout the workshop.

‘Social Teachings of the Catholic Church’

This was the third *Communio* gathering hosted by CHIJ Kellock on 31 October 2008. There were 50 participants came for this gathering, including some from the National Institute of Education. Fr David Garcia was the key speaker. He began by sharing the history of the social teaching of the Church. He then introduced the principles of Catholic social teachings, illustrating them with everyday examples. Participants appreciated this as it helped them to see how the various principles are very much a part of the way schools educate students and collaborate as a community.

Year-long Programme for Spiritual Wellness for Catholic Educators

In response to the overwhelming requests by school leaders and priests that ACCS look into the spiritual wellness of Catholic educators, ACCS initiated the programme which was launched by Archbishop Chia at the Archdiocesan Teachers’ Day celebrations. The programme will run from November 2008 to September 2009. It constitutes a retreat in 2008 and 3 days of prayer in 2009.

Retreat

A stay-in retreat on the theme *Called to be Teacher* was held from Friday, 28 Nov to Sunday, 30 Nov 2008. The aim of the retreat was to help educators to recall, appreciate and celebrate their teaching vocation and ministry. It was conducted in Montfort Centre by Br Adrian Danker, sj and several teachers. CTM assisted. Seventeen people attended. Feedback on the retreat was very positive.

E) CIVICS & MORAL EDUCATION FOR CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Choices Unit

The final edition of this unit was officially distributed to all Catholic secondary schools in May. Some commissioners and ACCS personnel visited the schools and personally handed over the Choices manual to the school principals and RE coordinators. Schools are expected to use or continue using the Choices Unit in their RE/CME classes.

God Unit

The official draft was completed and released to schools for the teachers to try out in their CME/RE classes. The trial phase will give RE teachers the opportunity to give feedback, share their experiences and insights as well as additional learning materials they have used in teaching the unit. Their contribution will be essential to the production of the final edition of the God Unit.

Cluster Meetings

RE teachers met in groups at quarterly intervals to share experiences, resources and concerns related to the implementation of the Choices Unit. It is intended to enrich, help and support the RE teachers in their efforts to deepen their understanding of the unit so as to share it more meaningfully with the students. There are four clusters, namely:

Cluster A: CHIJ Katong Convent, Hai Sing Catholic, St. Anthony Canossian Secondary and St. Patrick's.

Cluster B: CHIJ St. Joseph, Holy Innocents High, Maris Stella High, Montfort Secondary

Cluster C: Catholic High, CHIJ St Nicholas, St Gabriel's Secondary

Cluster D: Assumption English, CHIJ St Theresa, CHIJ Toa Payoh, SJI Independent.

During the year, RE teachers from Clusters A and C met regularly to discuss concerns, share experiences and teaching materials for classroom use. The challenge most teachers faced was their lack of training and formation to facilitate RE classes. Their training in specific academic disciplines was inadequate when it came to teaching religious education.

F) FORMATION PROGRAMME FOR EDUCATORS (FPE)

The FPE began on 18 Jan 2008 with eight participants from the following schools:

St. Gabriel Secondary School – 1
CHIJ St. Theresa's Convent – 2
Holy Innocents High School – 1
Hai Sing Catholic School – 1
Catholic High School – 2
CHIJ Secondary (Toa Payoh) – 1

Course Modules for 2008 were as follows:

1. *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation I* by Fr. Michael McGuire, ssc
2. *Prayer* by Sr. Francisca Tan, rc
3. *Principles of Religious Education* by Mr Arthur Goh
4. *God* by Bro Adrian Danker, sj
5. *Contextual Theology* by Bro John D'Cruz, fsc
6. *Moral Theology I* by Fr. David Garcia, op

Participants exhibited strong interest in learning and in being formed through the FPE. They were actively involved in the activities conducted during the sessions. However, they found it difficult to cope with both the workload in school as well as the demands of the course. They often struggled to find the time to read their notes and work on their assignments.

The first year of the course ended on 7 Nov 2008 with a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated by Msgr. Eugene Vaz. The second and final year for the FPE will commence on 16 Jan 2009.

G) CATECHETICAL TEXT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

All 19 Catholic Primary Schools in Singapore use the ‘Walking with Jesus’ series textbooks for catechism in schools. The series comprises
 Student Workbooks for P1 to P6 @ \$6.00 per book
 Teachers’ Manuals for P1 to P6 @\$7.00 per book
 Musical CD-1 for Lower Primary @\$10.00 per CD
 Musical CD-2 for Upper Primary @\$18.00 per CD
 Children’s Lion Bible and the Good News Bible

The proceeds from the sale of the student workbooks for period October 2007 to April 2008 amounted to \$37,302. The Teachers’ Manuals were distributed free of charge to schools whenever orders exceeded 40 copies of Student Workbooks per level. Only a few musical CD-1 and CD-2 were sold in 2008.

Student Workbooks	Quantity	\$
Primary 1	1382	8,292
Primary 2	1449	8,694
Primary 3	1086	6,516
Primary 4	884	5,304
Primary 5	860	5,160
Primary 6	556	3,336
TOTAL		\$37,302

H) ASPIRATIONS

ACCS aspires to play a significant role in supporting Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Singapore in their mission of nurturing the holistic growth of our young people as human persons and believers in God. ACCS will strive to ensure the long-term continuity and viability of Catholic education in Singapore and will do our utmost to carry out the mission entrusted to us by the Archdiocese.

End