



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

EREA LEARNING STATEMENT

Implementing Liberating Practice

To Co-create a Better World



PURPOSE

Informed by the wisdoms, spiritualities and Knowings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and shaped by humanity's emerging understanding of its interconnectedness with all life, the EREA Learning Statement respects and honours the unique stories and celebrates the diversity of individuals and learning communities within EREA. These learning communities are inclusive of indigenous, early learning, primary and secondary, boarding, all-boys and co-educational schools; diverse needs and flexible learning schools; inner-city, urban, rural and remote schools.

Within this diverse context, the EREA Learning Statement speaks to all learners, irrespective of age, gender or cultural background in creating experiences which enable all in our communities to live Jesus' radical message of love, inclusion, possibility and hope. In this way, the Learning Statement supports our schools to share in the prophetic mission of the Church.

DEFINITION

**Liberating Practice:
Explicitly co-creating
the learning conditions,
dispositions and
relationships to enable
deep listening, confidence,
agency and freedom.**

THE CONTEXT OF OUR LEARNING STATEMENT



Our Common Home

Reflecting EREA's commitment to ecological justice, the EREA Learning Statement fosters 'a deep and abiding knowledge of our one common home so that we can advocate for ecological care and for justice for the next generations' (EREA, 2021, p. 3).

In solidarity with our global partners (EREBC), and informed by the Sustainability Development Goals, our learning programs will contribute to a cultural transformation by weaving together the ecological and the social to 'promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature' (*Laudato si'*, 2015, n. 215).

The EREA Learning Statement urges all learners to listen to the voice of young people, to our First Nations Elders and to the earth itself, so that we might be awakened to a new reverence for all life and, in developing a firm resolve to achieve sustainability, come to experience our Common Home as a 'joyful mystery to be contemplated' (*Laudato si'*, 2015, n. 12).



Reconciliation and First Nations' Cultural Practice

EREA's learning intention is to deepen the understanding and application of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowings throughout the cultural life, leadership and, most critically, the learning processes of EREA Schools.

In solidarity with this vision, our Learning Statement provides an educational pathway that honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to 'see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas' (ACARA, 2021). Additionally, EREA strives to align with the challenges of 'unlearning, learning, and re-learning' proposed by Reconciliation Australia (2021).



Our National Educational Identity

The EREA Learning Statement is informed by the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration which emphasises that 'Australian schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development, and the wellbeing of all young Australians.' Our EREA Statement supports this national goal of all young Australians becoming 'successful lifelong learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (DESE, 2021).

Our Church

'The person of each individual human being is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the ultimate goal of the Catholic school' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, n.9). Pope Francis reaffirmed this ideal in 2015 when he said that *an education in the fullness of humanity should be a defining feature of Catholic schools* (VIS, 2015). EREA supports this mission in the world 'through a focus on the growth of the whole person, in relationship with others, to be a liberating force for a just society' (SPC, 2019).

Catholic Education recognises that 'every aspect of human knowledge and activity, to the extent that it is truly human, reveals something of the mystery of God and of God's creative intention for the world' (Costello, 2017, p.3). In contributing to this ideal, EREA responds to the call to engage learners in a 'systematic and critical synthesis of culture and faith, and of faith and life' (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, n.37) by providing curriculum and pedagogies that activate the 'head, heart, hands and feet' of learners (EREA, 2016).

Our Relationships

Liberating Practices model right relationships which demonstrate respect, trust, inclusion and integrity. Informed by collaborative educational relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and their communities, with Catholic Education networks, all Commonwealth, state and territory governments and with our university partners, EREA's learning practices are supportive of and responsive to contemporary educational research and philosophies, as well as all regulatory compliances.

Our Charter, Touchstones and Strategy

Formed from the foundational vision and achievements of the Christian Brothers, EREA is a recognised, respected and proactive contributor to the Australian Catholic Church. In partnership with our Bishops, Catholic Education Commissions and Catholic Education Offices, EREA's learning practices will amplify 'our collective voice in offering young people and their families an experience of Church which recognises the divine in every person's search for meaning, models equality and listens and responds to those experiencing powerlessness' (EREA, 2019, p 8).

As part of this educational mission to Church, EREA is responsible for the governance of 55 schools throughout Australia and the care of over 40,000 young people and children. It is our ongoing quest to provide learning experiences which support the formation of those in our care so that they 'may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10).

For Catholic schools inspired by the life of Edmund Rice, the learning experience is most explicitly expressed within the Liberating Education Touchstone which states that: 'We open hearts and minds, through quality teaching and learning experiences, so that through critical reflection and engagement, each person is hope-filled and free to build a better world for all' (EREA, 2016, p.5).

Our Inspiration

The EREA Learning Statement sources its inspiration and structure from four liberating educators and practitioners: Jesus of Nazareth, Edmund Rice, Paulo Freire and Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.



Faithful to his tradition, **Jesus of Nazareth** interacted with a range of diverse learners in a variety of contexts. He challenged structures in the way in which he created learning opportunities which recognised the dignity of each person and connected with the lived experiences of each one.

Edmund Rice, encouraged by the work of Nano Nagle, challenged political and social structures by providing an education which recognised the dignity, potential and wellbeing of the individual, empowering each learner to participate more fully in society.



In articulating a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, **Paulo Freire** proposed that dialogue, partnership and engagement, within the learning context, created an atmosphere of hope, love, humility and trust. This approach is key to individual learners being equipped to critique their own lives and, in collaboration with others, to experience mutual liberation.

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann addresses the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have a voice in the sharing of knowledge. Her concept of Dadirri, a way of life emphasising deep listening, provides an ancient insight into contemporary, transformative educational practice.



Six Liberating Practices



Within the contexts described above and inspired by Jesus, Edmund, Paulo and Miriam-Rose, EREA commits to implementing liberating practices to build a better world by explicitly co-creating the learning conditions, dispositions and relationships in order to enable deep listening, confidence, agency and freedom. This dynamic intent and these actions are articulated through six practices which in themselves require our ongoing engagement but also inform and have an impact on the other within a learning community.

Within the broader challenge to provide a liberating education for all, the EREA Learning Statement makes explicit the ways in which this can be achieved.

LIBERATING PRACTICE

Explicitly co-creating the learning conditions, dispositions and relationships to enable deep listening, confidence, agency and freedom.



LIBERATING PEDAGOGIES

Within safe and flexible learning places, supported by positive relationships, the learner is free to participate in and lead experiences grounded in collaborative processes, critical thinking and creative problem solving.



LIBERATING SPIRITUALITIES

In exploring meaning and purpose in life, the learner is free to grow in their understanding of themselves, and their relatedness with God, others, Earth and creation, through experiences grounded in wonder, awe, contemplation, and action for justice and the common good.

LIBERATING ACHIEVEMENT

When excellence and improvement are viewed in a variety of ways and evidence of success is gathered, interpreted, and celebrated holistically, the learner is free to pursue a strengths-based learning pathway informed by high expectations and personal ambitions.



LIBERATING LEARNING DESIGN

Where schools design and develop innovative learning environments, whether physical and/or virtual, the learner is free to access and engage in multiple pathways and contribute to a dynamic, connected educational community.

LIBERATING VOICE AND AGENCY

When individual voice is deeply listened to, respected, and included in decision-making processes, the learner is free to develop the confidence, resilience, optimism and agency to fully determine their learning aspirations.



LIBERATING POTENTIAL

When learning experiences are informed by each person's story, strengths and passions, the learner is free to contribute to and participate in challenging, individualised learning plans that orient their goals towards personal growth.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The EREA Learning Statement has been prepared cognisant of the principles underpinning the EREA Formation, Professional Learning and Leadership Development Framework which supports the personal and professional growth of all staff.

Effective professional learning fosters self and collective confidence, promotes innovation in pedagogical practice and equips people with the skills to respond to current realities and alternative futures.

This builds a learning culture of a shared sense of purpose and responsibility for improving the learning outcomes of young people.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

EREA Council

The EREA Council ensures that the Learning Statement is faithful to the EREA Charter.

EREA Board

The EREA Board ensures that the Learning Statement reflects the aspirations and accountabilities named in the EREA Strategic Directions.

Executive Director

The Executive Director ensures the effective provision of professional expertise and resources in order to support EREA school communities in their engagement with this Statement.

School Principals

School Principals ensure the alignment of the Learning Statement with School Renewal, School Strategic Plans, Curriculum programs and registers, School Annual Action/Improvement Plans, Learning Statements, Pedagogical Frameworks and Professional Learning Plans. Principals have the responsibility of engaging with their own ongoing personal and professional growth, and to support their staff to do likewise.

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Edmund Rice Education Australia offers a liberating education, based on a gospel spirituality, within an inclusive community committed to justice and solidarity

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