A recent article in the media claimed that several academic studies concluded that there were no differences in educational outcomes between the three school sectors—Independent, Catholic and Public, once adjustments had been made for the socioeconomic status of the students. The article below from the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) suggests that this is not quite accurate.

Australian research analysing the tertiary entrance performance of over 40,000 Victorian students, published yesterday by the *Australian Journal of Education*, has confirmed that independent schools substantially add value to their students’ academic performance, even after allowing for students’ socio-economic background and prior achievement.

‘Recent claims that there is no academic benefit for students in attending an independent school are wrong,’ said Mr Geoff Ryan, the Chief Executive of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia.

‘The analysis undertaken by Dr Gary Marks found that, on average, attendance at an independent school adds eight points to a student’s ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) score, even after allowing for their SES and Year 9 achievement,’ said Mr Ryan. ‘This is consistent with the findings of every study of Year 12 results against Year 9 or Year 10 test results undertaken since 1999.’

Mr Ryan said the Victorian study also tracked students who changed schools between Years 9 and 12.

‘Students shifting to an independent school during senior secondary school gain an advantage of up to eight ATARs net of their SES (Socio-Economic Status) and Year 9 achievement,’ said Mr Ryan. ‘This is further evidence of the value adding by independent schools.

‘Mr Ryan said that while recent analysis of NAPLAN data for the primary years was held to be evidence that the high academic results of independent schools were simply a reflection of the characteristics of their students, AHISA’s analysis of student gain data on the My School website suggested a more complex story.

‘Dr Marks suggests in his paper that value adding by independent schools could begin before Year 9,’ said Mr Ryan. ‘This is also indicated by our preliminary analysis of NAPLAN results for AHISA members’ schools as published on My School.’

‘Our analysis is still incomplete,’ explained Mr Ryan, ‘but so far the student gain data for Years 3-5, 5-7 and 7-9 shows that, on average, students in our members’ schools are generally achieving above expected academic scores compared to students with similar starting scores. This holds for reading and numeracy, but the value adding is particularly striking in the domain of persuasive writing.’

(continued on the next page)
The contract for Stage 5D was awarded to AYJAY Constructions. AYJAY recently completed the works on the Admin & the Resource Centre.

The College Council met in May to discuss future projects for the College and to work through enrolment projections. They considered educational needs and current pressures on classroom spaces in order to determine the best project possible for 2017.

Of course, the need in a growing school environment has been, and continues to be, significant. Geelong Lutheran College has achieved remarkable progress in its seven years and the challenge of determining the most pressing next step is one that requires consideration of all sorts of factors.

The Council will continue to deliberate in the coming months so that applications for funding can be made later in the year.

Value Added

Mr Ryan said attempts to downplay or deny the value of independent schooling did nothing to raise the overall standard of education in Australia.

‘Research suggests the main contributing factor to the academic success of independent schools is their academic environment or “academic press”,’ said Mr Ryan. ‘Academic press is defined as the extent to which schools press their students to perform at a higher level, for example through higher academic expectations or more homework. This is not “secret schools’ business”. As we know from the many stories of dramatic improvements in schools, all teachers and all schools can make a difference when they have high expectations of their students.’

http://ejd.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/05/29/0004944115586658.abstract

KEY POINTS

• The data set includes all students in Victoria who were in Year 9 in 2008. The analysis compares Year 9 NAPLAN data from the Victorian Department of Education & Training and Year 12 ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) data from the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre.

• The data analysed comprises information from over 40,000 students.

• The raw unadjusted difference between independent and government schools was 26 TEA (Tertiary Entrance Aggregate) score units. Net of socio-economic background, Year 9 NAPLAN performance, gender and language background, this difference was reduced to 12 TEA score units.

• The raw median ATARs for students in 2011 were 59.8 for government, 70.5 for Catholic and 80.7 for independent school students.

• Catholic and independent school students averaged 6 and 8 ATARs higher than government school students, respectively, once student socio-economic background, prior achievement in Year 9 NAPLAN, gender and language background were taken into account.

• The higher performance of students attending non-government schools cannot be attributed to differences in the intake characteristics of each sector’s students. Instead, increments to performance are found net of SES and prior achievement, and net of observed and unobserved differences between students.

• Non-government schools increase students’ tertiary entrance performance net of all unmeasured and stable differences between students, such as parental occupation and education, family income and wealth, and student intelligence, motivation and personality.

• 17 ATARs separated students who moved from the government to the independent sector between Years 9 and 12, compared with students who remained in the government sector. This difference is reduced to about 8 ATARs when taking into account SES and Year 9 NAPLAN performance.

AHISA is a professional association of 420 Heads of independent schools. Its members lead schools that collectively account for over 11 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Year 12 enrolments.

Research indicates that students, on the whole, do perform better in non-government school settings due in great part to the higher expectations those schools, individually and collectively, place on their students. Students respond well and lift their performance when something greater is expected and demanded of them. This expectation is not the exclusive domain of private education, but it is certainly a common attribute that is found in them.
I have recently been invited by Karin Morrison, Director of the Development Centre at the Independent Schools of Victoria (ISV) to attend a summer school at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts. I feel very honoured to be included in this small group to attend the Future of Learning Conference at the School of Education during the last week of July. There are two other Independent School Principals from Victoria attending.

On Wednesday 27 May I attended a meeting at the ISV with the other Principals and the three staff members from the ISV making up a party of six who will attend the FoL Conference at Harvard in July. We spent the day discussing the logistics of the trip and some of the background and vision of this conference.

The Future of Learning institute is part of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and provides a professional development program to advance new conceptualisations of learning and to explore these implications for educational practice.

Modern society is changing continually and advancements in scientific and technology transform the nature of teaching and learning continually, calling for an educationally innovative response. At the Conference we will be invited to explore three strands:

- **Mind/Brian**—the nature of learning is growing in understanding and understanding new research will be critically important into the future.
- **Digital Revolution**—IT is presenting both opportunities and challenges for learning so we can capture opportunities and avoid the risks.
- **Globalisation**—the world is becoming increasingly globalised—people, products and capital. It offers rich learning and exchanges culturally but also generates fear and retreat.

### Q and A

**Q:** What is plagiarism and what does it matter?

**A:** Plagiarism is simply making use of someone else’s work and claiming it as your own. At best it is misleading, at worst, it is stealing.

Due to the unsurpassed access to enormous amounts of information, plagiarism is a challenge in all educational institutions. It has become increasingly important to begin educating students very early in their schooling to be aware of, and to understand what constitutes, plagiarism.

Of course, there are more and less serious forms of plagiarism and it can depend on what the person stands to gain by their use of another’s work, and seriousness can also be influenced when the person who owns the work, loses income or there are financial implications. The realisation that there are real victims from the blatant use of other people’s work can influence students to realise that they should work to avoid it. Teachers too have a responsibility to educate their students by not accepting, or drawing attention to plagiarised work.

Universities will now direct students to Turnitin.com to address the rising challenges posed by plagiarism in educational institutions today.


Although Kindergartens offer and deliver a critical stage of education for children and are overseen by a department within the DEECD, the regulations surrounding Kindergartens fit much more closely with childcare requirements rather than those linked to schooling.

St John’s Kinder offers an excellent learning program for the children and although there may be questions related to funding, governance and regulations, the educational delivery at St John’s remains of high quality. Raelene, Jo and the team prepare the children exceptionally well for the start of their Primary schooling at St John’s.

**Kindergarten**

St John’s Kindergarten, as do all Kindergartens in Victoria, face yet another change in 2016. From next year, staff to student ratios change from the current 1:15 to 1:11.

There are currently three Lutheran Kindergartens in Victoria—two in Geelong and one in Hamilton. The St John’s Kinder is part of the School and as a result, the Government in its wisdom ruled that we should receive just over 50% of the funding per student that other Kindergartens receive. This is the same for all Kindergartens attached to private schools in Victoria. The additional change to student/teacher ratios will have a further economic impact on our Kinder.

Recently, Mr Brian Schultz and I have attended meetings with representatives from the DEECD (Department of Education & Early Childhood Development), LEVNT (Lutheran Education, Victoria, NSW & Tas.), and the other two Kinder services to discuss funding and governance arrangements.

Part of the discussions we are holding is to consider the possibility of forming our own ‘cluster’ of Kindergartens so we can be centrally managed. Although technically this is possible, and could mean an increase in funding for us, there are also a number of questions that require answering before this can be agreed to or even considered.
Standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in 2009 was a deep and moving spiritual highlight for me and for my wife Libby. We had hired a car in Jerusalem, had driven to Caesarea via Tel Aviv, walked around amazing Roman ruins, and then travelled onto Nazareth, the birthplace of Jesus, where we stayed.

The St Margaret’s Guesthouse in Nazareth is situated high on a hill in the northeast part of the city, set apart from the bustling crowded streets below, and overlooks the Basilica of the Annunciation which is quite a stunning Catholic church in the middle of Nazareth, believed to sit over the site of Mary’s house. Just nearby is Mary’s Well, or the Spring of the Virgin Mary, which is reputed to be the site of the appearance of the angel Gabriel. Here, another Church of the Annunciation, St. Gabriel’s Greek Orthodox Church, is built.

On our travels we visited Cana (for a glass of water!), Bethsaida and Capernaum, now in ruins but were the dwelling places of the disciples, the Chapel at the place where Jesus fed the 5 000, St Peter’s Chapel (“feed my sheep”) and of course the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus and his disciples, as recorded in Mark 4:35-41, were on the western side of the lake preaching and teaching a crowd of people in parables about the sower, the lamp under a basket, the growing seed and about faith as small as a mustard seed. At the end of the day, Jesus suggested they get into their boats and travel to the other side of the lake, quite a different place culturally at that time and has a different feel even today— the eastern side of the lake seems quite different to the western side.

The Sea of Galilee is 213 metres below sea level and just 50 km away to the northeast sits the 2 800m high Mt Hermon. When westerly winds come off this mountain and collide with the warm air over the lake, sudden and violent storms can be produced.

Jesus, exhausted from the days teaching, fell asleep in the stern of the boat. The disciples, professional seaman but very wary of the sea, became quite frightened when a violent storm hit and couldn’t believe that Jesus could sleep through it and not be concerned about their safety. To all intents and purposes, it seemed as though Jesus didn’t care what happened to them and was ignoring their cries for help.

In desperation and fear, the disciples finally woke him up and he simply stopped the storm with the words, “Peace! Be still!” The disciples were amazed and Jesus said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

The disciples were understandably stunned and marvelled in fear that even the wind and seas obeyed him. I find this story of the disciples in the storm on the lake very telling on a number of fronts. The disciples obviously still had a poor understanding of who Jesus really was and couldn’t quite get into their heads the full meaning of the plan that Jesus had explained to them.

Even at this point, they still couldn’t get it!

There are many times in our lives where we may be beset by storms of one kind or another—it may actually be a storm, or a life crisis event that completely rocks ‘our boat’, an internal fear or shortcoming that cripples our participation in life or a situation that we find ourselves in that appears to have no way forward. It is at these times that we often turn to God and his comfort to guide us, to help us or even to rescue us. It may also appear to us at these times, like it was for the disciples, that Jesus is completely asleep on his watch and not interested in what is happening to us.

Like the disciples, we don’t fully understand what is really going on in the world, and that Jesus’ plan of salvation for us is always real, always there and always eternal. We may still crave for his temporal protection and may even expect that, as a follower of Jesus, we will be protected from adverse experiences if our faith is strong enough.

Jesus promises to be always with us and never to abandon us (Matt 28:20b). The misadventures of a fallen world may repeatedly raise their ugly head and inflict their trials upon us, but Jesus walks beside us through it all and his plan for our eternal salvation—‘by grace you are saved through faith’ (Eph 2:8)—remains unassailable.