As mentioned in my last newsletter, I had the opportunity through the Independent schools of Victoria to attend a Future of Learning Conference at Harvard in Boston, Massachusetts. This conference is part of Harvard’s ‘Project Zero’ which has been running at Harvard since 1967 and served as a springboard for Howard Gardner to develop his ground-breaking theory of Multiple Intelligences.

The July weather in Boston was quite warm, although manageable, and even a cool breeze from time to time which was a welcome change from the icy winter we were experiencing in Geelong! Summer in Harvard is busy with tourists everywhere and people attending all sorts of summer courses and conferences. It is certainly a vibrant and exciting place to visit.

I attended the Conference with two other Principals—one from Donvale Christian School (Ross Grace and his wife Sue) and the other from a Seventh Day Adventist school in Mildura (Sandra Ferry) as well as two gentlemen from ISV, (Kieran Noonan and Andrew Hay). The conference began on Monday, 27 July, led by the faculty staff of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Veronica Boix Mansilla, an amazing lady, originally from Argentina, who leads the organisation in developing competencies on issues of global significance; Howard Gardner, best known for his development of the theory of Multiple Intelligences which he has continued to develop; and David Perkins, who has conducted research in teaching and learning for understanding, creativity, problem-solving and reasoning in the arts, sciences and everyday life.

The goals for our week at Harvard were:
- To understand critically the three major societal changes shaping learning in the future: Mind/brain; Globilisation; Digital Revolution;
- To ponder ways in which education/learning might be changed and remain constant;
- To further our interests and capacity to enquire about the future of learning in multiple contexts.

The Conference had three threads—Brain & Mind, Globilisation and the Digital Revolution. Each day the conference dealt with a question, or Throughline designed to challenge our thinking on teaching and learning: What do we know; How might we rethink

(continued on the next page)
learning; What should we do differently; and What will these changes lead to?

One of the presenters, Geetha Narayanan, Founder Director of the Srishti School of Art Design and Technology and the Principal Investigator of Project Vision, said that we as educators need to choose between two pills, a blue one or a red one. She said ‘...I choose always to take the red pill instead of the blue pill. Those that take the blue pill serve and promote the ‘status quo’ with digital media, in pursuit, perhaps, of personal achievement or social ‘achievement’ that keeps things static and stable. Those who take the red pill seek to change the game by ‘leapfrogging’ beyond the status quo, in the hope of achieving something for society that reaches beyond our perceived limitation – in the hope of providing for people with no money, no job, no opportunity a chance to tell their stories, to dream of something better.’

Each day began with a plenary discussion panel of experts in the field questioning the current state of play in education. There were a number of ‘courses’ related to each plenary that we attended, and then a series of workshops with a learning group to reflect, question and plan. All in all, a fascinating and challenging week.

What do we know and how do we know what we know?

An individual’s biology helps explain but does not necessarily determine human behaviour. Through science, we are becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of the relationship between the Mind and the Brain.

Human activities are multifaceted and human endeavour is extremely complex. We also know that environments matter and have positive and negative effects as learning happens.

So, people learn best when we ensure our children are placed in nurturing environments.

How might we re-think learning? How do we need to rethink the what and how of learning as a result of these changes or forces?

It is now known that the aspirations we hold set our measures of success. In the digital age of today, there are implications for us to establish new norms for respectful participation in an ‘un-normed world’ – e.g. use of social media. Education will be challenged in the future to consider its access and reach i.e. how do we engage self-guided learners and what is our responsibility to expand the inner self, to re-design the mind, and to generate capabilities among vulnerable populations.

As we educate into the future we will be challenged to allow some things to fall, and others to remain. Change necessarily causes productive chaos and tension will exist as we gauge the impact of these disruptions against the background of the larger human narrative.

What consequences may such educational changes have for learners and societies so we can be responsible 21st Century educators?

Law and reality is upheld as a model for the world yet in many places today, these principles are being confronted. The future will challenge us to implement ways of using politics and power to protect the rights of individuals and none of it will be easy.

Schooling in the future will need to have a role in nation building; providing public meeting spaces where cultures meet and where we can invite an inquiry mindset – to give ourselves the opportunity to inquire why someone may think differently. Schools will need to support youth and ourselves to recognise perspectives and seek out difference.

Harvard’s Graduate School of Education invited us to keep our mind open and to continue the dialogue about perspectives.

We prepare to navigate a complex world by understanding that we don’t have all the answers, but realise that there might be better questions.
Stage 5D—Senior Classrooms at GLC

Stage 5D, our temporary senior classrooms has now been completed and will be available for the students and teachers to utilise from the beginning of 2016. Of course, eventually, these rooms will be renovated to form the extended part of the Resource Centre/Library.

The School council has established a Project Control Group to oversee the projection and then the planning of building projects to ensure that we manage to keep up with enrolment growth and educational need. The development process never seems to take a holiday!

We will hold a formal dedication and opening at the College some time in the New Year. Planning is now currently underway for future projects—the need for more and more classroom spaces continues as enrolment grows and the senior secondary population grows.

The USA (continued from P4)

John’s mother Rose had given advice to the National Parks Service about the interior layout after they acquired the house in the 1970s. It’s bizarre that three US Presidents came from this relatively small city of Boston – although when you consider the historical significance of this area, I guess it is not all that surprising.

Whilst in Los Angeles I visited the site of Robert Kennedy’s assassination at what used to be the Ambassador Hotel. Bobby was shot there on June 5, 1968 by Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian American. LA in its wisdom demolished the hotel in 2005-6 after it lay unused and deteriorating for over two decades (it was owned by Donald Trump!). It is now the site of the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools, which comprises six schools accommodating approximately 4,000 students.

Out the front is a memorial to Bobby Kennedy with the inscription, “Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation... It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is thus shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, it sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” Robert F. Kennedy. There is a strong message in this as we reflect on education for the 21st Century!

Unfortunately Martin Sheen wasn’t home as he was holidaying in South America with his wife, Janet. I visited his Church in Malibu though. The Principal, Mr Michael Smith took me on a guided tour through the school attached to the Church. Unfortunately, the students and staff were still enjoying their summer vacation.

Q and A >>>

Q: Is our intelligence already determined by the time we are born?

A: The brain is a dynamic organ that continues to be shaped and developed.

All human behaviour and learning, including feeling, thinking, creating, remembering, and deciding, originate in the brain. Rather than a hardwired biological system, the brain develops through an active, dynamic process in which a child’s social, emotional, and cognitive experiences organize his or her brain over time. In the other direction, a child’s particular neuropsychological strengths and weaknesses shape the way he or she perceives and interacts with the world. Current research in neuroscience reinforces the notion that children’s experiences shape their biology as much as biology shapes children’s development. The fields of neuroscience and biology are leading education toward analysing the dynamic relationship between nurture and nature in development and schooling.

Neuroscience Bases of Learning

M.H. Immordino-Yang, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
K.W. Fischer, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, USA
Longfellow was a professor at Harvard in the 19th Century and was considered a ‘rock star’ of his time. Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde (among others) visited him at his house in Boston. Just opposite the Harvard Graduate School of Education is an old house, now a café, where the village blacksmith lived during Longfellow’s time. Longfellow wrote a poem about him:

‘Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.’

I remember learning this poem in Grade 6 from the Victorian Grade 6 Reader and never imagined standing on the corner where this Smithy lived and worked! Longfellow’s first wife died in childbirth, and his second, almost 10 years his junior, died tragically 18 years later and when her dress caught fire from candle in the living room of the house. They had six children. Longfellow suffered depression but was well supported by his friends. He spent this time translating Dante’s ‘Divine Comedy’.

The Graduate School of Education is located in Radcliffe College, traditionally the home of female Harvard students. Harvard only admitted women from 1879 (when Radcliffe College was founded) and right through until 1999 women received a graduation certificate co-signed by the Dean of Radcliffe and the Dean of Harvard! Longfellow’s daughter donated funds for Longfellow Hall at Radcliffe in 1930 and she was instrumental in the management of the Radcliffe Annex for women in the early 1880s.

The birthplace and home of the 2nd and 6th President of the United States – John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams, is situated in a suburb of Boston now known as Quincy. John Adams was instrumental in the tensions that lead up to the War of Independence and fought long and hard for a diplomatic solution to the problems with England. He was a pacifist but had a strong sense of fair play and understood the need to fight for freedom. His son John Quincy was secretary to an ambassador in France at the age of 14 and later became an influential leader and president of the U.S.

John Kennedy was born in Brookline, a suburb of Boston, and I visited the two houses his family lived in when he was very young. A couple of days after JFK was assassinated on Nov 22, 1963, thousands of people turned up in the street outside to pay their respects and express their grief (he left there when he was 3 yrs old) – I can’t imagine that ever happening in the same way ever again.

I also visited the townships of Concord and Lexington where the first battles of the War of Independence occurred (you may remember Paul Revere’s ride which was made famous by Longfellow).

Louisa May Alcott’s family home is in Concord where she wrote ‘Little Women’ and published it at a printing press in Boston (now a Chipotle store which is a Mexican Grill & Take-away store).