



C O N S U L T I N G

An Evaluation of the

## Community Service Program Pilot

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## Applecross Senior High School

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*Applecross Senior High School is committed to 'Developing Citizens of the Future' – graduates who are well-adjusted, creative, have resilience and self-esteem and are able to contribute to a fair society. Established in 1958, Applecross Senior High School is located in the pleasant near-riverside suburb of Ardross, about ten kilometres from the centre of Perth. The school has established and sustained a reputation for high academic, sporting and cultural achievements, winning many academic exhibitions, awards and competitions and is consistently placed among the highest-performing public high schools.*

*(<http://www2.eddept.wa.edu.au/schoolprofile>)*

### Demographic Profile

- Student population: 1388 FTE
- Less than 1% indigenous students
- Approximate university attendance: 60-70%
- TAFE attendance: 20-30%
- Administrative Staff: 13 FTE
- Teaching Staff: 95.2 FTE
- School Support Staff: 17.9 FTE

### Additional information:

- Specialist Programs in Visual Arts (Gifted and Talented) and elite Tennis.
- Applecross SHS is one of the Department's Hundred Schools selected for specialist Information & Communications Technology.

- There are numbers of Year 11 and Year 12 students in School Apprenticeship Link programs, School-Based Traineeships and in Structured Workplace Learning.
- The school celebrates its cultural diversity, with about 50 percent of its student population from non-European backgrounds.

### Approach to the Pilot

The Applecross Senior High School approach to the pilot program involved connecting the initiative to their 'Family-Schools Partnership Research' project. The school saw a clear opportunity to use community service as part of an overall strategy to build stronger links between families and the School. In grounding the pilot in this approach, the school dedicated 0.2 FTE for the community service coordinator's role with the intention of brokering some local partnerships while also encouraging students to engage in parent-organised activities.

### Planning and Implementation

The planning and implementation of the Applecross approach was undertaken as follows:

- Worked to overcome staff resistance to 'another demand' by demonstrating links to "what we already do well" – *developing citizens of the future*
- Planning began at the end of 2005 with a school-wide brainstorming process – involving students, staff and parents
- Used brainstorming to identify all possibilities for student development
- Identified areas where there was already a high level of school participation in the community
  - Fundraising for: Murdoch Hospice; Forty-Hour Famine; Zoo Peru
  - Working in local primary schools
  - Service for District Council of Churches community events
  - Public artworks for the local environment
- Surveyed all Year 10 students to:

- Gauge participation in community service
- Develop profile of interests
- Track current participation rates
- Selected pilot project name – VOYSIS (Volunteering Our Youth's Skills in Service)
- Had difficulty in appointing a coordinator as three staff members turned down the position due to workload considerations
- Principal assumed responsibility for:
  - Negotiating some early projects
  - Keeping awareness alive within the school
  - Publicising opportunities through morning notices and newsletters
  - Sending home parent documentation
  - Issuing log books after confirming details
- 67 Students in total volunteered to participate in the pilot
- In late February / early March a suitable coordinator was appointed from outside the school and appropriate office space was set up on the campus
- A volunteer student committee was established to work in the office during lunch hours as contact points for other students
- Student committee also assumed some responsibility for making connections with community organisation and engaging in follow-up when required

#### **Partnerships and service activities**

The partnerships developed and service activities organised for the Applecross pilot included:

- Braemar Lodge – activities with senior citizen residents
- Red Cross – door knock appeal
- First Click – in school computer training for senior citizens

- Local child care centre – playing with the kids
- Dog and cat haven – working with the animals, walking, providing care
- Friends of Wireless Hill – working with local conservation group
- Murdoch Hospice – fundraising
- Local primary schools – tutoring, coaching

### Distinctive Contextual Factors

The Applecross pilot was distinctive in a number of ways including the:

- Use of students as part of the management structure for the pilot

This created a unique opportunity for students to develop a number of concrete skills as part of their participation in the pilot program. In particular, the students developed communication, organisation and time management skills. Students involved as part of the management group reported that they enjoyed being given responsibility and being treated like adults by staff at community organisations.

- Change of both the Principal and the Coordinator midway through the year

Although not something that is likely to happen often, it is important to note that when there is change in leadership, the implementation of the program is more difficult. The result in this instance was that the new coordinator needed to devote more time to maintaining the status quo and ensuring all risk management issues were appropriately handled. This left little time for on-going program development, evaluation and advance planning.

- A perceived lack of school-wide support for the program due to lack of ownership by the staff and the pilot nature of the program

[While the support (or lack thereof) for the program and program coordinator was not readily apparent across the school community, it is important to note that it is critical to the program that there is school-wide buy-in. In a number of the pilot schools it was clear that some of the challenges encountered were as a result of the lack of support for the program across the school].

- Significant success with intergenerational programs

Two intergenerational programs – the partnership with Braemar Lodge and the first click program were very well received on both sides of the equation. On one hand, the students reported learning respect, patience

and tolerance through both experiences while community members enjoyed having positive contact with young people and learning new skills from them – especially in relation to use of the computer.

### Benefits

The benefits in the Applecross model are most apparent in:

- The skill development of the students engaged in the management of the program
  - This is not to be underestimated as it has the potential to link the Community Service Program with a career development focus
  - The confidence and esteem building that occurred demonstrate that students who are given leadership roles will respond and grow accordingly
  - In addition, using some of the students in this manner allowed the coordinator more time to cover off on other issues
- The relationship development that occurred in the intergenerational programs
  - Both young people and seniors grew in their appreciation of each other
  - Also worked to lessen mistrust and misunderstanding
  - Particularly in relation to First Click it also ensured that the students were engaged in a very practical application of their learning

### Challenges

Within the Applecross model there were some significant challenges to overcome. These included:

- Management of time and appropriate allocation of resources
- Follow-up for each of the placements – especially from a risk management perspective
- Engaging in risk assessments in ways that are not obtrusive for the agencies

*Some organisations, like private hospitals, are very well run and it can seem a bit presumptuous for a school teacher to be undertaking a risk assessment*

- Transition to a new Principal and emphasis on appropriate risk management strategies and documentation
- Transition to a new Program Coordinator and the need for significant re-building of relationships with community organisations
- Perceived lack of school-wide support for the program

### Strategies to overcome challenges

Some of the strategies identified by Applecross included:

- Ensuring that appropriate time is allocated for the coordination of the program – approximately 0.2 FTE for every 125 would be desirable
- Some of the follow-up of placements can be done by the student management team
- The risk management assessment of each placement will become easier once they have been undertaken the first time around
- Risk management could also be handled centrally – there could be a DET approved list of partners who have met appropriate criteria

### Planning for 2007

The current coordinator has confirmed that he will not be undertaking the role next year and that the position will be advertised as part of a larger Student Services focussed role. In 'passing the torch' to next year, the one aspect that three elements that the current coordinator would recommend as essential to the success of the program in the future are:

- The student management team
- Further development of the relationship with Braemar Lodge
- Ensuring that the First Click program continues

It is envisaged that the new Student Services Manager for 2007 will incorporate the community Service program as part of his duties. He will work closely with the Year 10 coordinator and key staff members in the school who are able to

contribute to the program through current school activities. As far as possible the program will become an integral part of the Year 10 program.