



C O N S U L T I N G

An Evaluation of the

Community Service Program Pilot

Carine Senior High School

Carine Senior High School is a co-educational secondary school, located in the north-west suburbs of Perth close to the ocean and approximately 15 kilometres from the city centre. The school was established in 1973 and has achieved a reputation for strong academic achievement. The school has a very high student retention rate, an experienced staff and an active School Council, made up of students, parents, staff and community members. There is a strong values based curriculum which emphasises the responsibilities of all community members whilst celebrating achievement and difference.

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

Demographic Profile

- Student population: 1294 FTE
- Approximate university attendance: 50%
- TAFE attendance: 25%
- Administrative Staff: 13 FTE
- Teaching Staff: 73.1 FTE
- School Support Staff: 18.4 FTE

Additional information:

- Recent influx of fee paying students from Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Germany and Switzerland
- School motto is 'service'
- There are existing service awards for students at the school including:
 - Citizenship award

- Colours and honours for leaving jumper – gold for commitment to service for all four years of school

Approach to the Pilot

Carine elected to participate in the Community Service Program Pilot because they saw a good opportunity to trial the program with their Year 10 students. It was felt that being a part of the pilot would give the school some advantages once the program went to full implementation. In addition, as the school's motto is 'Service' the Community Service Program was seen as having a natural fit within the existing culture of the school. It was initially envisioned that the pilot would confirm that the program required a low maintenance approach whereby journals were distributed at the start of the year and collected at the end – with the students (and their parents) assuming responsibility for organising each individual activity.

Planning and Implementation

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

- 50 students were selected at random by the Year 10 Coordinator
 - Students were selected to ensure a good mix of responses – from those who would have no difficulty achieving the requirements through to those who were likely to 'throw the journal in the bin immediately following the initial meeting'
- No time was given to the coordinator position, so the Community Service Program had to be organised as an added responsibility to the teacher's normal role
- The service 'log books' were distributed to the students and letters were sent home to the parents concerning the nature of the program and the associated expectations
- Some students who were not originally selected asked to be involved of their own accord
- Identified existing programs within the school that already have a service component

- Approach to organising changed dramatically once risk management issues were raised – particularly to focus on school-organised activities.

Partnerships and service activities

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

- Anzac Day flower laying ceremony
- Student Mentor Program (peer support)
- Recycling
- Involvement in sports as coaches and team managers
- Singapore Music Tour
- Umpiring at winter sports carnivals
- Red Cross Appeal
- Clean-up Australia.

Distinctive Contextual Factors

The Carine pilot was distinctive in that:

- The initial decision was that all service would be organised and managed by the parents and the students

This approach was initially identified because of the lack of time given to schools specifically for a coordinator during the pilot phase. In addition, there was a belief that as the school's motto is service; the program would fit in well with the culture of the school. It was felt that the requirements of the program could be met in a fairly straight forward manner and that it was just a matter of 'ticking the boxes' at the end of the year to ensure that all students had filled the requirement,

Within this approach there was an expectation that there would be a certain number of recalcitrant students each year, and that any time commitment made by a coordinator would be in chasing up the few who fit into this category. In addition, there was a strong sense that the pilot year would inform the school as to how these students could be better dealt with in the future.

- Once risk management became a more significant issue, the pilot coordinator immediately shifted to a school organised model

As it became apparent that the coordinator (and then in turn the school) would bear the responsibility for risk management in either the student/parent or school organised models, Carine shifted towards assuming significant control and responsibility for the activities that would be organised. The thinking behind this was also to begin to try and make sure the experiences were meaningful to the students and that the school could manage them in a way that was connected to other activities happening within the school and the curriculum.

Benefits

The benefits in the Carine model are most apparent in:

- The impact it has had and will have on the students as they are:
 - Developing a sense of altruism, kindness and empathy towards others within the students
 - Building character, self esteem and a sense of responsibility
 - Gaining satisfaction from helping others
 - Developing resiliency
 - Training for citizenship by engaging in active civic participation
 - Gaining practical work experience and exploring career options.

Challenges

Within the Carine model there were some significant challenges to overcome.

These included:

- Collection, storage and validation of the journals
- Getting the full support of the staff – especially to encourage support and offer assistance in suggesting appropriate activities
- Communicating with and getting cooperation from parents
- Providing enough opportunities for the students to complete their service
- Tracking students who transfer between schools / arrive from interstate or overseas
- Transportation / student travel

- Giving appropriate recognition / reward for completion
- Lack of time allocated to coordinate the pilot
- Risk management
- Changing the culture of the students and parents

Despite the school's commitment to service, this will have to become part of that culture and as yet it is not.

- Developing within the students an appropriate sense of work place etiquette – what to wear, how to behave, etc.
- Mixed messages communicated by the name of the program.

What happens when there are two brothers at the school and one is 'sentenced' to community service for anti-social behaviour and the other is 'required' to do community service for graduation?

Strategies to overcome challenges

Some of the strategies identified by Carine included:

- Moving toward activities which can be organised by and within the school / school day (now using very few outside agencies or parents)
- Using school or hired bus to address issues related to travel
- All activities have been conducted in school uniform
- Students have been recognised by receiving certificates of commendation, colours and citizenship awards.

Planning for 2007

At this stage the school is still working to appoint the coordinator for next year. The current coordinator would like to assume the role and has some clear ideas in mind about how the full implementation of the program could be undertaken. In particular planning could focus around projects that:

- Can happen in the community immediately around the school – especially in the large areas of natural bushland which are located in surrounding areas
- Link in to parts of the curriculum where appropriate

- Can be timetabled on their own when possible
- Can be undertaken in large groups at regular intervals

Note: There is significant concern at this school that in each Year 10 cohort there will be a number of young people who do not complete the requirement and this increases the total number in the program from year to year.

For example, if there are consistently 200 students in a year group and there are 160 who complete the requirement, that leaves 40 (200-160) for the next year. If the same situation occurs again, and 20 of the remaining 40 are successful in year 11, that will leave 20 (40-20) to be accounted for by the third year of the program.

These concerns aside, there is confidence at Carine the pilot has helped them become well prepared for 2007 and that after using Term 1 as a further planning period, there will be every opportunity for success moving forward.