



C O N S U L T I N G

An Evaluation of the

Community Service Program Pilot

Morley Senior High School

Strong academic success, highly regarded sports programs and a wide variety of extra curricular activities characterise the schooling available to all at Morley Senior High School. The commitment to learning, excellence, equity and care is reflected in the School's motto, 'Together We Achieve.' The school is committed to providing a safe environment to ensure that each individual can fulfil her / his learning potential. Developing active and discerning citizens is a fundamental ambition of all staff at Morley Senior High School.

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

Demographic Profile

- Student population: 961 FTE
- Approximately 4% indigenous students
- Percentage achieving secondary graduation (2006): 94%
- Administrative Staff: 12.0 FTE
- Teaching Staff: 51.9 FTE
- School Support Staff: 16.2 FTE

Additional information:

- Morley Senior High School is committed to:
 - Learning - Learning is not just associated with academic improvement at Morley Senior High School. Morley SHS is particularly concerned with the holistic development of students. Programmes of learning and extra-curricula activities are designed to enhance students' academic abilities, physical and

mental health, social well-being as well as improving their understanding of their civic and community responsibilities.

- Excellence -With a number of specialised and selective entry courses, Morley Senior High School students are encouraged to pursue excellence. Students with a talent or interest receive expert tuition to accelerate their knowledge and skills in their chosen specialty.
- Equity - As a comprehensive high school, Morley SHS can and does cater for all secondary high school years. A broad range of subjects, programs, courses and extra-curricular activities assures equity and inclusion.
- Care - A range of initiatives are in place to ensure each student feels safe, valued and has a sense of belonging at Morley Senior High School.
- The school already had a small, voluntary and low key community service program.

Approach to the Pilot

The Morley Senior High School approach to the pilot program involved building on a commitment to community service that had already been cultivated in the students when they were in Year 9. The Morley Community Service Program Pilot coordinator's existing passion for service was crucial in working to establish that culture early on. For the pilot, students were offered either school organised or parent organised opportunities to engage in community service. Students were encouraged to undertake their community service during Term 3 and Term 4 – with most of the activity being ultimately organised by the school. Students participated in their community service activities each Tuesday from the start of the lunch period through the end of the school day.

Planning and Implementation

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

- Principal identified a community service coordinator and released 0.2 FTE for the role

- Developed, managed and coordinated the pilot program
- Prepared a management plan for each service activity in accordance with DET Draft Procedures and Guidelines
- Initially decided to use Career Education as opportunity to provide students with information
- Developed connections with some local community organisations
- Worked with Y-Volunteer to identify and develop some additional opportunities and to brief staff and students
- Developed PowerPoint presentations for students, staff and P&C to introduce them to the program
- Advertised the program through the Parent's Newsletter, local paper, school TV Station
- Linked with other programs in the school that support community service
- Shifted from Career Education to using the time for Science and Maths classes to support the implementation of the program
- Coordinator and Chaplain assumed responsibility for transportation
- Conducted follow-up surveys with students and kept contact with agencies to monitor student progress and behaviour
- Organised reward opportunities for students as they completed their requirement.

Partnerships and service activities

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

- Church of Christ Homes
- Uniting Church Homes
- People Who Care
- Volunteer Task Force
- National Trust
- Local primary schools

- City Farm
- Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul.

Distinctive Contextual Factors

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

- Effective use of the relationship with Y-Volunteer

Morley used the resources provided by Y-Volunteer very wisely. Although schools did not have to use the Y-Volunteer support structures, those that did found them to be very helpful. At Morley in particular, they were instrumental in assisting with the development of partnerships and placements.

- Vision for a culture of community service

Although there were some challenges in the implementation of the pilot at Morley, there is a clear vision for how this program can help to create a culture of service at the school. The current coordinator has a particular passion for community service and this enthusiasm and commitment seems to have spread to students and they are starting to buy-in to the notion that the program is simply part of the culture of the school.

- One-day per week approach to organising the community service activities

Morley chose a model whereby 90 students in Term 3 and 90 students in Term 4 would all engage in community service activities from lunch until the end of the school day each Tuesday. Although in the early planning stages, this approach seemed to have significant merit, it proved to be quite logistically challenging. In particular, by having all 90 students engaged in activities at the same time, the burden of responsibility on the coordinator was significant.

- Limited support received by the coordinator

While trying to organise all 90 students each Tuesday, the Coordinator received limited support from other colleagues at the school. Of particular concern was the lack of support from the teachers who were essentially released from teaching during the times when students were undertaking service activities. The Coordinator did receive some support from the Chaplain, but even between the two, managing the Tuesday activities was highly stressful.

- Limited buy-in and support from the rest of the school community

Part of the reason why the Coordinator did assume so much responsibility seemed to be limited buy in and support of the program across the school. While the pilot was seen as valuable, it was not necessarily a priority. This does suggest that ownership will be a key issue during the full program implementation.

- Significant transportation issues

The one-day per week approach did compound transportation challenges as well. With 90 students engaged at any one time, much of the Coordinator's energy each Tuesday was dedicated to shuttling students to and from their placements.

Benefits

The benefits in the Morley model are most apparent in the:

- Creation of a culture of community service.
 - This has been a significant motivating factor for the current Coordinator and will be critical in bedding down real support across the school
- Responses of the students.
 - Most of the students who participated in the Morley pilot have reported that they enjoyed their experience
 - The second group of 90 was more engaged than the first – perhaps indicative that the culture of service in the school is developing
- Connections made with the wider community
 - Many organisations have thanked the school for sending the students
 - Organisations have also congratulated the students on their work and contributions
- Increased support from school staff
 - They are more helpful and responsive to requests for assistance
 - They are promoting the program with students and also asking them about their experiences.

Challenges

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

These included:

- Lack of school-wide ownership of the program – and a resulting lack of support for the coordinator
- Time and skills required to deal with the multiple stakeholders in the program – parents, students, teachers, community groups
- Transportation – everything from the time required to drop-off and pick-up to the fact that some students didn't initially know how to use public transportation
- Taking students out of school /class and away from curriculum areas
- Finding time for recording information, corresponding with parents and building relationships with community organisations – in addition to managing the students
- Dealing with the flow of new students into the school at different times of the year – and then trying to get them up to speed.

Strategies to overcome challenges

Some of the strategies identified by Morley included:

- Being flexible, not expecting the perfect outcome and being ready for two new challenges to arise for every one that is addressed.
- Ensuring that the Coordinator is given enough of a time allocation – and that appropriate clerical support is also provided.
- Maintain effective and regular communication with all program stakeholders
- Defining explicit outcomes – citizenship, leadership, learning, etc. – and then evaluating against those goals.
- Calling on more support from colleagues at the school.

Planning for 2007

At this stage planning and preparation for 2007 is underway. With the time and resource allocation, there is some optimism that the program will continue to grow at the school and will contribute to the creation of that culture of service.

Some specific learning from the pilot which has informed the planning thus far includes:

- Focussing on school organised activities with a clear view towards creating that culture of service
- Shifting from having all activities on Tuesday at the Police and Citizens Youth Centre, to a flexible model in which the real needs of the community organisation are taken into consideration as well.
- Making sure that students are rewarded for their efforts and achievements
- Developing possible links to real learning outcomes.