



C O N S U L T I N G

An Evaluation of the

Community Service Program Pilot

Rockingham Senior High School

Rockingham Senior High School is a well-established and resourced school that offers our students a comprehensive and caring secondary education. Our size enables each student to choose from a wide range of interesting courses designed to meet their individual needs and aspirations. We offer an excellent academic program that allows each student to extend their learning in a variety of specialist areas in both middle and senior school. The school successfully operates a sub-school system where studies are focussed towards student selected preferences namely Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology or Maritime and Human Movement.

The school has a long traditional of community involvement having developed numerous partnerships with a wide range of organisations which has led to the establishing and development of several specialist programmes in response to identified industry needs.

The school is widely recognised as a provider of Maritime related secondary education and is acknowledged as the Maritime Specialist School in Western Australia by the Department of Education and Training. It is also considered to be innovative in its programmes and varied approach to learning.

Demographic Profile

- Student population: 1010
- Less than 4 % indigenous students
- Percentage achieving secondary graduation (2006): 86%
- Administrative Staff: 12 [Level 3 and above] FTE
- Teaching Staff: 74
- School Support Staff: 21

Additional information:

- Through a sub-school structure students now have the unique opportunity to pursue a broad-based secondary education while focusing on their personal interests and career aspirations.
- In response to identified industry needs Rockingham offers five specialist Vocational Programs – Life Long Learning [formerly Fast Track], Maritime Business, Maritime Metals & Engineering, Automotive and Health and Children Service's.
- The school motto is 'Learn to Live' and reflects an approach to teaching and learning that is grounded in ensuring that students develop real life skills through specialist programs
- The school has a long history of community involvement, regularly being invited to participate in a wide range of community projects. E.g. Maritime Wrecks Trail and the creation of community gardens

Approach to the Pilot

The initial approach to the pilot at Rockingham Senior High School focussed on challenging students to make a commitment to community outside of school hours. The school saw real value in asking young people to be of service to others in their own time – asking them to make additional personal sacrifices in support of others. This approach also sought to recognise and reward the activities in which many students were already involved.

Planning and Implementation

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

- Began by auditing students
 - What commitments were they already making
 - How much time were they giving
 - Some were already doing up to 240 hours / year on their own
- Students were then invited to participate in the pilot
- Used some spare time allocation to create some time for the Coordinator
- Intention was to implement during Term 2 and Term 3
- Evaluation and review would be conducted during Term 4
- Changed track in September and conducted an informal audit of:
 - Activities already on-going through the school that meet the Community Service Program criteria
 - Other opportunities to meet the criteria through in-school activities
- Focus in moving forward to 2007 will be on linking with what already goes on and where possible making real connections to the curriculum
- The need to give the programme its own identity and to distinguish it from other forms of community service hence RSHS have called its CSP SCIP – School and Community Involvement Programme.

Partnerships and service activities

The service activities recorded through the initial audit for the Rockingham pilot included:

- Helping a church relocate
- Preparing lunch for international women's day
- Red Shield Appeal

- Drama performances and art exhibitions for the community
- Building an access bridge so that disabled people could get to the ocean

Distinctive Features

The Rockingham approach to the pilot was distinctive in a number of ways including:

- The initial understanding and positioning of the program as something extra

In defining community service, the school saw a clear opportunity to challenge students to engage with their community outside of school hours. This vision proved to be more challenging from an organisational perspective and leadership team for the program pilot shifted to a new approach during Term 3.

- Shifting to using existing activity within the school as a foundation for the program

Making the transition to the new approach during the pilot year was challenging, but leaves the school in an excellent position with regards to full implementation in 2007. The Coordinator and Deputy conducted an audit of current community service related activities within the school and have identified a clear foundation for 2007 with over 45 in-school / school-base activities already fulfilling the criteria for the program.

- Commitment to recognition and reward

From the outset, Rockingham has been clear about being committed to recognising and rewarding students for their achievements in the Community Service Program. Within the literature there is evidence that celebration is a significant aspect of successful programs and within that lies the importance of developing a framework for recognising the work of the students that perhaps extends beyond the WACE.

Benefits

The benefits in the Rockingham experience are most apparent in:

- The shift from one approach to a new one.
 - This gives the school a real opportunity to maximise learning and development opportunities within the program.
 - Students will see real value in getting additional recognition for much of what they are already doing.

- Will place additional value on the links that students are making with the community
- Demonstrating the value of being flexible
 - There will be many schools who will need to make major adjustments to their approach during the course of 2007
 - This experience shows that there is real value in being willing to change
 - It also demonstrates that despite careful planning and preparation, things will change and will need to be changed
- The new relationships forged with the community
 - Have brought new opportunities for partnerships to light
 - Created possible links to employment for some students
 - Have solidified the reputation of the school within the community
 - See young people as a positive not a negative
- The opportunities for students to:
 - develop new skills
 - undergo personal growth and change
 - improve their communication skills and
 - begin to take pride in their community.

Challenges

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

- Allocation of time and other resources
- Moving from a clear vision to the reality of implementation

- Getting other staff to understand the program / get involved / be supportive

Strategies to overcome challenges

Some of the strategies identified by Rockingham included:

- Being flexible and willing to change direction and focus
- Accepting that community service doesn't need to happen only outside of school time
- Identifying the existing / potential links to the curriculum
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for communicating with the whole school (teachers)

Planning for 2007

At this stage the plan for 2007 is focussed on working to maximise the existing links between the school and the community as a basis for implementation and to build a culture of acceptance of the program within the school.

- This will begin with an audit both of school activities and of the activities of the students themselves.
- Term one will be reserved for planning and preparation
- Work will be done to develop an effective communication strategy with the staff and students regarding the program