



C O N S U L T I N G

An Evaluation of the

Community Service Program Pilot

Yule Brook College

Yule Brook College is a middle school situated in Maddington. The College caters for the needs of students from Year 8 -10. Students in Years 11 & 12 attend Sevenoaks Senior College. Yule Brook College was founded in 2000 specifically to develop more effective ways of assisting the teaching and learning of young adolescents. Yule Brook College has developed an environment which fosters relationships and pastoral care, and in which students learn in a collaborative environment.

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

Demographic Profile

- Student population: 231 FTE
- Approximately 26 % indigenous students
- Administrative Staff: 5.0 FTE
- Teaching Staff: 13.5 FTE
- School Support Staff: 10.2 FTE

Additional information:

- Yule Brook has a high percentage of Aboriginal students due to the establishment of the Yule Brook Football Academy in partnership with the Clontarf Football Academy.
- There are a number of community organisations which have office space on the Yule Brook campus: The Smith Family; edventures WA Inc; Yule Brook Football Academy.
- Students are grouped in Year teams - one in Year 8, 9 & 10. Each team is supported by a Learning Team of teachers whose role is to focus as much as is practicable on a single group of students.

- At the heart of the College's approach is a desire to focus on the needs of individual students. This is achieved by implementing approaches to teaching and learning which encourage students to work collaboratively with their classmates and by developing 'open-ended' teaching and learning activities.
 - 'Open-ended' activities are designed to be flexible enough to allow students with less developed skills to participate fully, at the same time as providing sufficient challenge for students with more highly developed skills.
- Resources at the College are utilised to ensure that class sizes are small (none larger than 25) and that a broad and interesting curriculum is available.
- Teachers at the College focus on adopting consistent approaches to teaching and model collaborative learning by participating in professional interest groups which focus on trialling, further developing and sharing these approaches.
- Opportunities to make links with the community are also fostered, and the College has very close links with the local primary schools.

Approach to the Pilot

The Yule Brook College approach to the pilot program involved developing leadership capacity within the young people at the school and focussing on service to the school community as well as the wider community around the College. The Yule Brook approach used a student-led approach to change and students were challenged to identify and address issues within the school and the wider community. In addition, the school integrated a number of community service activities into Society and Environment and Science classes.

Planning and Implementation

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

- Began in Term 4 of 2005 with the development of a student leadership program aimed at:
 - helping students identify their skills and capacities
 - preparing students for leadership roles within the Skills for Everyday LiFe (SELF) program

- SELF consists of multi-year groups of 12 students who worked together with a teacher and a student leader to prepare for the student-led process
- Also focus on developing and using the Habits of Mind as an approach to living and learning
- In Terms 2-4, the students then amalgamated into groups of 24 and under the direction of a teacher and student leaders began to implement the school and community change process
- In identifying and working to resolve issues, students were engaged in service to their school and the wider community
- In Society and Environment and Science, students also adopted a section of the Yule Brook and worked to develop an education and recreation site on land around a portion of the brook.

Partnerships and service activities

The partnerships developed and service activities resulting from the Yule Brook approach to the pilot included:

- School-based student leadership program
- Identification of school and community issues
- Connections with South East Regional Council for Urban Landcare to map the Yule Brook and investigate the impact of human activities in the region
- Development of an annotated map of the brook showing
 - Natural features
 - Built features
 - Land use regions
 - Location and characteristics
- Students will also work to enhance the over all Yule Brook environment with a focus on rehabilitating and regenerating degraded areas
- Planting trees with Madding Primary School students at Parakeela Grove Reserve. This project now comes under the umbrella of the Maddington Kenwick Sustainability Project and includes the participation of:

- Gosnells/Armadale Landcare Group
- South East Regional Council for Urban Landcare
- Southern River Christian Church.

Distinctive Contextual Factors

The Yule Brook College pilot was distinctive in a number of ways including the:

- Adoption of a student-led model

There is significant evidence in the literature that student-led approaches to community engagement are very successful in achieving citizenship development outcomes. Young people learn how to participate as active members of the community and are very well prepared to engage in real-world process as they transition into adult-hood.

- Focussing on service to the school community

Most of the pilot schools focussed primarily on defining the community as that which sits outside the boundaries of the school. In some cases where there were activities for students to do in school, the service was mostly about helping in existing activities and programs. The Yule Brook approach allowed the students to define their own community and to identify what they would do to become active participants in that environment.

- Emphasis on student leadership outcomes

Yule Brook College was very clear that the reason for adopting the student-led approach for the Community Service Program Pilot was to work on achieving real student leadership development outcomes. The college sees the program as an opportunity to build capacity within its students and to prepare them to be active citizens in their communities.

Benefits

The benefits in the Yule Brook College model include:

- The skill development of the students involved in the program.
 - For the student leaders this is particularly important as they are developing the skills necessary for thriving in the world beyond Yule Brook
 - They are developing very useful interpersonal, communication and conflict resolution skills.

- Have also been able to start learning about project management as they move from identifying issues to actually working for change
- Much of the work happens in school time and on school grounds
 - Allows for creative addressing of many of the usual challenges associated with the program
 - Risk management is less onerous
 - Transportation is not an issue
 - Students are engaging on their own terms and may participate more fully
 - Total hours far exceed requirement – so all students should easily achieve the minimum
- Empowers the students within their school environment
 - Students normally have very little power in a school environment
 - Encourages pride of place and ownership of the space
 - Translates to respect for the whole school community – both the people and the place
- Teachers and students are working across year levels
 - Building relationships with students of other ages
 - Helps younger students in the transition from year to year
 - Teachers are able to identify the strengths in students as they get to know them over the whole time they attend the College.

Challenges

Within the Yule Brook model there were some minimal challenges to overcome. However, their model and approach meant that they did not have to deal with many of the challenges which arose for other pilot schools. Some challenges for Yule Brook included:

- Students and teachers not accustomed to working independently
 - Teachers have to let go of some control

- Students must take more responsibility
- Only meeting once per week makes it difficult to gather momentum
- Students don't yet believe they actually can bring about change in the school
- Habits of Mind are not yet routinely used across the school.

Strategies to overcome challenges

Some of the strategies identified by Yule Brook included:

- Refining and further developing the student leadership program
- Reviewing the SELF program with a view to continuous improvement
- Working to further develop the culture of student-led activities across the school community
- Focussing on helping teachers learn to facilitate student-led approaches.

Planning for 2007

At this stage the plan for 2007 is to continue with the student led change, and to work with local community organisations that have some additional expertise in this approach. The school will also continue to focus on developing community partnerships particularly through the Maddington Kenwick Sustainability Project.