

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College – Bentleigh, Victoria 2009

Students Yr 11 Intermediate VCAL program – 16 students.

Background

The VCAL team is made up of 4 staff members, and each staff has expertise in literacy, numeracy, pathways or personal development. We have had 2 years experience running VCAL and all activities are based on integrated projects. We felt that TLfS was perfect for this level and well suited for the VCAL program.

Process

- The VCAL team work all programs as a coordinated team. We have an allocated meeting time and we also meet daily on a more casual basis.
- Communication within the team is good.
- We engaged other members of staff as projects were organised. We engaged the maintenance and gardening teams, as well as the school Ground and Facilities Manager.
- As a team we decided to work on 3 projects with 5/6 students per project. The students understood that they would have to evaluate the project and present their results to a “group” of people. They also were aware that they would be involved in activities outside of school with a variety of organisations and that they might be involved in a work placement. We gave the project a three term timeline. .

Partnerships

- We spent a day at CERES before the end of Term 1 to familiarise students with aspects of sustainability
- We contacted the sustainability education officer from Glen Eira Council
- Latrobe Uni Wildlife Center

Projects

- Creation of a Water Wise Garden. Students did scale drawings of the school and then drew in current plants. The plan is to change the garden content to water wise plants over the next five years. They have planted one main area of the school with a water wise garden.
- The amount of waste generated by the school was the catalyst for the next project. This was determined by completing a school ecological footprint study. This took about 3 weeks. The project is the development of a compost system throughout the school. Compost to support garden beds to create a vegetable garden for the food tech area. Students have the compost system ready to start operation next year and have commenced the planting of a small vegetable garden. A worm farm is also planned.
- The third project is a clothing exchange program for the school. The details have been worked out and it will start operating at the beginning of next year.

Feedback

We have found that some of the work in the manual has been difficult for the students. These students are Yr 11 and some of them are quite bright. I would imagine that Yr 8's would find some of this very difficult. The History of Leadership Theory was irrelevant to them: we tried to bring it down to their level more. Barack Obama has been a great talking point and we have certainly looked at him in depth. The quotes on page 19 were OK. The barriers and solutions they found difficult, but the examples on page 14 helped. They also found the styles of leadership difficult (p 27) even though definitions were given.

“Students have developed more confidence in oral work. Some (not all) have excelled in leadership work and in setting goals for teams. Students have completed self evaluation sheets on how they feel they are going. We received very honest assessments from them. Most believed they had room for improvement.”

“We have had very positive support from the school principal and deputy principal who have spent 80 minutes with the students, asking very pertinent and necessary questions. Students have also presented to Yr 8 and Yr 9 classes. Teachers from these classes were very impressed with what they have come up with.”

Why the TLFS program worked for VCAL students at OLSH College in 2009

(Intermediate Yr 11, 14 students)

1. It is well structured with the student workbook and many opportunities to expand their curiosity.
2. Offered lots of scope to move off into a variety of related interest areas as they arose
3. Helped meet many outcomes across the range of VCAL areas. We used this as the overriding “integrated project” for the year and activities generated from this for many VCAL outcomes.
4. Lots of hands on opportunities
5. We spent first semester on generic activities from the book plus ran 2 full day excursions to Latrobe Uni Wildlife Centre and Ceres. In second semester students started on projects of their choice.
6. Students presented to Yr 8 classes, a number of private sessions with the principal and deputy principal, a retired principal for the annual gardening awards, the student leadership group and the whole school at an assembly. Oracy skills and confidence improved immensely.
7. Students had ownership of projects, so were keen to create plans for how the projects would run.
8. They completed personal and home ecological footprints and then spent 2 weeks analyzing the school ecological footprint. Each student had a particular category and they had to liaise with many and varied staff within the school to complete this. They reported to the school leadership team on the results and then to the whole school community.

9. Students have written reports, created folios of evidence to support research; numeracy skills such as scale, graphs, and charts have expanded these skills, they have researched work related areas, created a sustainability newsletter, etc.

I would recommend this project for VCAL, particularly if you take an integrated approach to the teaching of VCAL.

We work on “projects” and within each project we have literacy, numeracy, personal development, and work related components. We are going to continue with this group of students into Yr 12. The focus will be different, as they will work in individual areas. Each of the projects will continue and as Yr 12 students they will be expected to operate and run the area they are interested in.

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