School Profile

Albion Park High School is a comprehensive co-educational high school situated in a rapidly developing residential area in the Illawarra region. Founded in 1991 the school has established a strong reputation for outstanding programs supporting the academic, sporting, vocational, cultural and interpersonal development of students. The current school student population is 909.

The mission statement of Albion Park High School states that Albion Park High School endeavours to develop students who will be inquiring, confident and participating members of society.

These traits are developed through the provision of a safe environment, a relevant curriculum, broad community involvement in school life and an emphasis on collaborative school planning and quality assurance.

The Albion Park High, School To Work Program is an integrated, cross curriculum program. The school has a STW Team who is responsible for delivery of program initiatives involving all Key Learning Areas (KLA’s).

School to Work Committee - STW
Cheryl Burling – Careers Adviser
Mary Cooper – Transition Adviser
Julie Tolley – Head Teacher VET

The School to Work Committee has implemented the S.T.A.R. Program (Strive To Achieve Results) and is co-ordinated by the Transition Adviser – Mary Cooper.

Rationale

The direction taken in this initiative is to support students who are underachieving/disengaged,(for a variety of reasons), rather than those students who are defined as ‘at risk’. This approach was taken after mapping programs already offered at our school for ‘at risk’ students and deciding that they were well catered for e.g. Youth Support, YPP, Work Experience Program, Shine Program, and Learning Support Team.

The aim of this initiative is to:

• develop a connection with targeted students to provide consultation, program intuition, initial mentoring and advocacy.
• promote active engagement and retention of targeted students
• target Year 9 students, who have academic ability, but are underperforming or disengaged at school and who have not been involved in any other intervention programs offered by the school
• targeted students to work towards achieving the best possible result in the School Certificate.

Targeted Group

The selection process is quite unique and is based on students who have academic ability but are underperforming or disengaged at school. Through analysing results of the ELLA and SNAP Tests, students are targeted who show a downturn in English or Maths from Year 7 to Year 8 and who also show underperformance in their Year 9 Half Yearly and Yearly Reports.

Staff Involved

• The Principal
• The Career Adviser
• Transition Adviser
• Deputy Principal
• Head Teacher Welfare
• Year Adviser
• Student Welfare Team
• School Counsellors
• Learning Support Team
• STLA Teacher
• Teaching Staff

Key partners beyond the school

• Parents
• Local Community partnerships (LCP'S)
• Employers
• Beacon Foundation.

Implementation of the S.T.A.R. Program

1. Student numbers have fluctuated since the beginning of the program in relation to resources available. E.g. In 2005 – 15 students; 2006/07 – 12 students; 2008 – 7 students.
2. Students are identified through consultation with the Year Adviser, teaching staff and the STW Team.
3. Letter to parents outlining the initiative to help students and permission for their child to be involved. Students may decide not to be involved at this stage.
4. Inform staff of targeted students and obtain feedback.
5. Transition Adviser and Careers Adviser meet with students to explain why they are being monitored and how the program will run. Group will be known as the STAR (Strive To Achieve Results) Group.
6. Meeting times of the student will be flexible to meet the demands of the Year 10 academic year. Session times vary between 20 – 60 mins and can involve individual, group or peer mentoring
7. Both staff and parents will be notified regularly, (e.g. end of each term or if the need arises), on the progress of each targeted student.

Program Outline

The program is flexible to meet the needs of each targeted group. The program has included the following activities:
• Student self-evaluation – appraisal of progress, application, strengths/weaknesses, and subject related problems.
• Educational goals linked to each term
• Action Plans – career goals, career pathways
• Educational goals linked to career pathways
• Relationship of the School Certificate and career pathway
• How to organise, plan, prioritise – developing a weekly organiser (Study Skills).
• Evaluating the weekly organiser
• Career Choices workshop – LCP ‘My Future’
• Step-up Bricklaying Program
• OH & S Greencard
• Apprenticeship Workshop – LCP
• Tapping into programs – ‘Plan-it-Youth’, ‘Beacon – Mock Interview’.
• Investigation of senior school subject selection – Program consultation and tuition.
• Consultation with Career Adviser – developing of Exit Programs
• School Certificate planning
Program outcomes:

The following outcomes were achieved throughout the year;

- All students sat for the School Certificate
- All students satisfied all course outcomes
- Students made more effort to take heed of deadlines and therefore were more consistent in handing assessment tasks in on time.
- Students were regularly recognised for consistent application towards their studies at school Merit Assemblies.
- A positive response of students being part of the STAR Program and they looked forward in attending meeting times. In fact, students were constantly asking when meeting times were going to be held for the week.
- Peer meeting sessions proved quite valuable because it allowed students to discuss issues to do with school work and teachers; it allowed students to hear how others are getting organised for job applications or different courses; it created the opportunity for peer mentoring.
- Students appreciated the individual sessions – allowed for mentoring and individual problems to be addressed.

In relation to the career and transition planning of the STAR students, most chose to proceed onto senior school with the Higher School Certificate as their personal goal. Several students elected to return to senior school but would leave if an apprenticeship was offered. All of the students seeking apprenticeships had clear employment goals, registered with Group Training organizations and employment agencies and also intended to enroll in Pre-Vocational courses at TAFE if unsuccessful in securing employment as an apprentice.

Transition Adviser’s Reflection:

I found the experience enjoyable and worthwhile. The students were very co-operative and felt quite privileged in being involved in the program. Students responded positively to most strategies and activities of the program. An activity that some students lacked motivation to continue with was the weekly ‘organisational planner’ and it was a challenge in keeping the students engaged in the task. Another challenge was the time constraint regarding the time allocation given to the Transition Program to operate within the school. I found the support, guidance and assistance of the Career Adviser invaluable. Working collaboratively in a team based approach has made my role more meaningful and rewarding.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the STAR Program’s aims have been achieved by observing the outcomes i.e. an effective connection was made between students and mentor; all students successfully completed all tasks in all subject areas and all sat for the School Certificate, therefore, students remained...
engaged to the completion of Year 10. All targeted students had a written career and transition plan, with those who left school at the end of Year 10, having positive outcomes.

Recommendations:

- To inform parents of student’s progress on a more regular basis
- To inform staff of student’s progress on a more regular basis
- For students to complete a program evaluation
- To have a smaller target group – 12 students is too large a number to have in the program when considering period allocation.
- For students to be followed up when entering Year 11 – at least the first term preferably the first two terms.