Georges River College
Oatley Campus

School profile

Georges River College is a four campus secondary school, comprising three middle campuses, catering for Years 7-10, and Oatley Senior Campus, catering for 900-950 students in Years 11-12. As a senior school, it provides a transition between school and university, TAFE, further training or work, in an atmosphere appropriate to the personal and social needs of young adults.

The school aims to prepare students for a successful transition to the next stage of their life, giving them the “keys” to access education, training or employment pathways which will support them in fulfilling their goals and becoming responsible citizens and productive members of society. Its career education program gives expression, direction and a framework to achieve this aim and is designed to equip students with the transition skills needed for managing their future.

Career education at Georges River College Oatley Campus

Education at Georges River College Oatley Campus is based on senior pedagogy, teaching students to be independent adult learners. The same philosophy underpins the career education program, which is embedded in all teaching and learning programs at the school, both explicitly and implicitly. It involves all staff and reaches all students – a truly whole school approach.

Career education is positioned as an important, relevant and integral part of the school community. It is expressed in the school’s Mission Statement, Statement of Purpose, Principles and Underlying Values and Management Plan, in priority areas of strong curriculum outcomes, community links, leadership and management, as well as the Annual Report outlining outcomes for students.

The hub of the career education program at the school is “My Exit Plan” – a career planning and resource package to guide students through transition planning. “My Exit Plan” is based on globally accepted vocational learning theory, is sequential in design but also accounts for students’ individual development rates and needs, is influenced by successful international “large school” strategies and incorporates best practice methods of learning assistance to students with disabilities. My Exit Plan is delivered by every teacher in the school through 75 minute tutorial sessions for Year 11 once per fortnight (1:17 staff/student ratio) and 20 minute mentoring sessions for Year 12 once every week (1:6 student/staff ratio).

My Exit Plan contains sections on self assessment and discovery, goal setting, information gathering and research into post school options, implementing decisions and networking. It
is provided as a workbook so students can record their findings and complete their own personal exit plan. Key competencies, employment related skills, the School to Work Logbook, Career Voyage, Ozjac and myfuture are embedded in the program.

My Exit Plan is supported by additional strategies, including:
- lunchtime workshops (to maximise access)
- workplace learning
- an emphasis on access to and use of electronic resources
- individual exit planning interviews for every Year 12 student
- newsletters
- an additional 0.6 Careers Adviser allocation.

As well as providing a stand alone career education program for students via My Exit Plan, career education is explicitly embedded in all KLA curriculum programming through the School to Work Program. All faculties within the school have been provided with professional development to review syllabuses and identify explicit and implicit career education references. As a result, programs have been amended to emphasise the relevance of syllabuses to students' post school futures, content has been mapped to employment related skills and opportunities provided by the course, and statements of attainment of skills and outcomes have been developed to provide students with evidence of achievement. Two weeks in each calendar year at the school are dedicated School to Work weeks. All teachers are required to spend some time with each of their classes discussing the relevance of the skills students learn in their subjects. This aligns with professional teaching standards 1.2.4, 4.2.5, 6.2.3, 6.2.4 and 6.2.7.

Key competencies, employment related skills and vocational relevance are also explicitly embedded in all welfare programs for targeted student groups throughout the school, including Gifted and Talented, GALS, students requiring learning assistance, and Year 11 tutorial and Year 12 mentoring programs. Employment related skills outcomes are stated in these programs.

Information and communication technology (ICT) strategies and resources are incorporated in all aspects of the career education program, to teach and encourage students to be seekers of information rather than receivers of information. Students are required to become competent and discerning in the use of ICT – preparing them for the e-world they will face in their future employment and training. Students have access to software programs including Careers Central, My High School Careers, WIRL, Career Voyage and Ozjac from all networked points throughout the school and at home.

The career education program’s flexibility allows the school to respond to changing client and community needs and economic trends. Curriculum evolution and packaging, access to TAFE and university curriculum both on and off site, links to the local and wider community through workplace learning and network connections all help the school to maximise opportunities for students. Every Year 12 student is provided with an individual exit planning and preparation interview with a professional Careers Adviser. Business partners provide workplace learning opportunities to more than 50% of the student body.

This focus on career transition also extends across the school to reach into Years 9 and 10 in the middle school campuses. As part of the enrolment and subject selection counselling process for Year 11, students prepare and submit a Senior Education Plan, which is the platform for developing and managing their career and transition plan over the next two years. All materials for Years 10 to 11 subject selection are available on CD.
Professional development is provided to campus and school staff, Careers Advisers and counsellors to enable them to provide meaningful input to students.

The Georges River College career education program has recently been reviewed, based on the NSW Department of Education and Training Quality Teaching document, and has been upgraded to emphasise higher order thinking. Students are not only required to recognise the employment related skills they have acquired by studying each of their subjects, but need to be able to articulate their relevance to an employer. Examples of how to do this have been developed by each faculty and are available on the school’s intranet as well as being modelled in classes.

The findings of a recent survey of former students from the school supported the success of the career education program in providing value added for students. An extensive tracking survey of all school leavers over a two year period was conducted to elicit information on post school outcomes in education, training or employment. Students, parents and staff (including relevant middle school campus staff) were surveyed. The program was developed, piloted and then evaluated by all stakeholders. A focus group of Careers Advisers provided further input.

The results of the survey were very encouraging indeed:

- 100% of students left with a written exit plan, including all early leavers.
- less than 5% of early school leavers exited to unemployment or no further education or training.
- less than 3% of HSC students exited to unemployment or no further education or training (including travel or gap year).
- 100% of School Based Trainees have continued with their employers post school.
- Retention from Year 10 to Year 12 was above regional and state averages.

For more information about this exciting program at Georges River College Oatley Campus, please contact Kate McRae: Kate.McRae@education.nsw.gov.au or (02) 85673744

Kate is Head Teacher of Vocational Education and Training and the Careers Service at Georges River College Oatley Campus and is the leader and manager of a whole school team effort that has resulted in an innovative whole school approach to career education.