NSW SCHOOL TO WORK PROGRAM
SCHOOL CASE STUDY

INTEGRATING ENTERPRISE EDUCATION IN A MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOL

Enterprising students possess the drive and commitment to identify, initiate, be resourceful and successfully manage activities that are real and relevant to them both within the school and the wider community. Schools have a role to play in providing access to opportunities where students can develop their enterprising attributes. Here is an example of how one comprehensive government high school in Sydney has achieved many successful vocational learning outcomes through a student run coffee shop.

MARRICKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

Marrickville High School is a small inner Sydney co-educational high school supporting comprehensive education for a predominantly local community from diverse non-English speaking backgrounds. The school's ethos is built on a strong multicultural tradition that values tolerance of diversity and inclusivity. The students benefit from an excellent student welfare program that supports and rewards individual and team achievement. The junior curriculum develops basic literacy and numeracy skills and integrates computer technology across the curriculum. Senior students have a full range of subjects to choose from including five VET courses and produce excellent results in a setting based on small class numbers and individual attention. The school enjoys excellent facilities especially in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and on this basis will become the e-learning centre of the inner west. The grounds are extensive allowing the students to pursue a full range of sports. In addition, the school includes two special purpose units: a support unit for students with intellectual disabilities and the Marrickville Intensive English Centre (IEC) providing specialist English language development for recently arrived non-English speaking students immediately prior to their enrolment at local high schools.

BACKGROUND

Café 308 was established at Marrickville High School in early Term 4, 2000 to support a small group of Year 10 students identified for their poor attendance, low participation in learning activities and under performance. A significant number of these students had disengaged and were at risk of leaving school early with limited skills and knowledge.

The Careers Adviser, with the support of the executive and other staff members, approached the Department’s Regional Office for funding to assist in setting up the project. A small proportion of funding was also sourced through the School to Work Program with additional donations from the local Rotary Club. Breville Australia was approached and supplied the school with a range of electrical goods. Once all the funding was in place the student identification process was completed.

Each student was interviewed with their
parents/carer and the outcomes of the program were fully explained. Parents agreed that by participating in this program students would:

✔ Enjoy success in a school based venture
✔ Gain work based competencies
✔ Improve their attitude to learning and schooling
✔ Develop employment related and enterprise skills
✔ Increase their self-esteem
✔ Improve their school attendance
✔ Experience a smoother transition from school to work and/or other post-school options.

In order to achieve these outcomes, students were expected to be involved in each step of the process. Working collaboratively, the students selected a room in the school, decorated it, developed a menu, bought stock, learnt budgeting and developed a range of skills needed to run a coffee shop. The converted Science lab that accommodates the café is Room 308 so it became known as Café 308.

The café now operates each Friday and is open to all staff and community members. Each term, ten Year 10 students are identified and trained in the procedures required to run a coffee shop. The students take ownership of their project and draw up rosters each Friday so all work is shared equitably. A group of students go shopping on Thursdays to buy the food and ingredients needed for lunch and morning tea. Students are involved in cooking, cleaning, coffee making, front of house, customer service and cash handling. All students record their skills and document their café experiences in their Employment Related Skills Logbook. At the end of each term the parents of these students are invited to morning tea to share in the success of this initiative and ask questions.

IMPLEMENTING VOCATIONAL LEARNING THROUGH CAFÉ 308

Café 308 has developed and expanded since 2000. Although this specific enterprise program focuses on ‘at risk’ students in Year 10, there is a strong commitment to vocational and enterprise learning across the school incorporating programs such as Work Education in Year 10, a work readiness program in Year 11, VET programs in the senior years, Links to Learning program and strong partnerships with TAFE, local employers and the community.

A number of school and industry people have been involved at each stage of development of Café 308. Cross curriculum skills development, for example budgeting/cash handling in Mathematics, designing and decorating in Visual Arts and word processing in Information and Communication Technology forms part of the learning outcomes. Students have visited local coffee shops and spoken to employers about their business operation and its successes.

In addition, the Hospitality teacher has taught the students hygiene in the kitchen and OH&S awareness. Recently a commercial kitchen was installed as part of a VET Skills Centre. In the near future the hospitality teacher hopes to have the food prepared in her classes served in Café 308. The ICT Co-ordinator has also agreed to install computers at the back of the café and more recently, the Visual Art faculty has agreed to display student art works, thus increasing student participation in this initiative.
One of the most important aspects of this project has been the training of students in coffee making. Initially a partnership was established with a local barista training school where all students were offered a 3 hour training course and rewarded with a certificate. In 2005, a close working relationship was established with the local RSL and students entering the Café 308 program now receive training on the club premises. At a discounted fee, students attend a six hour course titled “Prepare and Serve Espresso” and are provided with a Certificate III in Hospitality (No THH33002) from a Registered Training Organisation. These certificates are proudly framed and displayed in Café 308 during the program and then presented to the students at a formal assembly.

Community members are invited to hold their meetings in the café and to date, local Police and Community meetings, P&C meetings, Aboriginal committee meetings and Health Department meetings have all been held at Café 308. The students serve coffees and light refreshments and are given the opportunity to improve their interpersonal skills, talking with community members and putting their hospitality skills into practice. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from visiting clients significantly increases their self-esteem.

At Marrickville High School the VET program is an integral part of the senior school curriculum. It is not surprising that a large proportion of students who take part in Café 308 choose to study hospitality in Years 11 and 12. There is continuity in the successful development of knowledge and skills used in their work placement. Many of these students go on to successfully complete Year 12 and a Certificate II in Hospitality Operations, and then continue their studies at TAFE.

Local employers are very supportive and provide workplaces for the students to complete their Year 10 work experience program or work placement as part of a VET course. Recently the owner of the local Gloria Jeans franchise contacted the careers adviser because she had heard about the coffee shop and asked to interview students for part-time employment. Ten students from Years 10, 11 and 12 were interviewed and three were successful. The employer commented on the students’ confidence and their knowledge of coffee shop business management.

THE FUTURE FOR CAFÉ 308

Quality improvements and expansion of the coffee shop business operation are plans for the future. Specialised OH&S training would increase student understanding and improve safety standards to ensure a safe working environment. Plans are also in place to extend participation to include Year 9 students.

Overall, Café 308 has been a successful program at Marrickville High School with participating students gaining:
- A sense of employment
- The acquisition and utilisation of enterprising skills and behaviours
- The development of employment related and work skills
- Confidence and self-esteem from being a part of a school initiative
- Improved prospect of post-school employment or other pathways.

As part of the School to Work Program, Marrickville High School intends to continue running Café 308 to ensure that students have access to a variety of learning opportunities and are well prepared for their future.