MANAGING THE LOGBOOK IN A MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOL

The Employment Related Skills Logbook is a tool designed specifically to support students and assist their career pathways planning. Although schools and students see many positive outcomes by using the resource, schools have been challenged to manage large numbers of logbooks. Many productive solutions have been developed to suit the needs of individual schools. Here is an example of how one mainstream high school has achieved their success.

HOLSWORTHY HIGH SCHOOL

Holsworthy High School is situated in Sydney’s southwest, neighbouring the Holsworthy Army Barracks with a school population of 715 students. Approximately 25% of these are from Army families (a heavily transient population), 50% local enrolments and 25% from out of the area. Holsworthy High School consistently achieves HSC results on a par with State averages and also delivers a comprehensive welfare system which accommodates a range of socio economic, social and welfare issues.

The school prides itself on instilling its informal motto: “Be the Best We Can Be”.

BACKGROUND

Holsworthy High School has been closely involved with the School to Work Program since 2002. The current careers adviser has managed the program for the past two years, including Year 9 students ‘at risk’ and the whole Years 10, 11 and 12 cohorts into its activities.

This year all Year 10 students have a timetabled careers lesson during an English period once a fortnight. These lessons include a range of School to Work activities such as preparation for job interviews, work experience and careers expos, the Real Game series and workplace health and safety issues.

Program initiatives have included:
- The introduction of specific activities for Year 9 students in terms 4 after Year 12 have left.
- All senior students having individual contact with the careers adviser to develop resumes and engage in pathways planning.
- The timetabling of Work Education through a faculty area rather than the careers adviser who supports these students in specific School to Work initiatives.

The profile of The Employment Related Skills Logbook has been raised over the years with teachers, students and parents now regarding it as an essential resource. Since 25% of the student population come from Army families, the logbook is now regarded as a valuable tool that can be transported from school to school. Although these students potentially have disruptions to their subject continuity, the logbook is a stable carrier of their work samples and planning activities.

Both the mainstream and support versions of the logbook have been welcomed by Holsworthy High. The support version has enabled Year 10 students with learning difficulties to engage in planning processes consistent with their own capabilities. Some pages from the mainstream version are photocopied and also used by these students.
INTRODUCING THE LOGBOOK TO KLA TEACHERS

Introducing the logbook to the teaching staff came with some challenges. It was initially perceived as “more work” and “we already do this in class” so interest was low. The invaluable support provided to the careers adviser/school to work coordinator by the executive has enabled staff to be informed about vocational learning through staff meetings and school development days. At this time the English faculty were asked to identify and work on current and new learning activities and programs with a vocational focus. All teaching staff have been updated on the progress with English and have been provided with classroom examples. Over time staff have realised that embedding vocational learning into their teaching and learning programs is not as difficult as first thought and they can now confidently link the Board of Studies Work, Employment and Enterprise statements in each syllabus to their work. One staff member even finishes his lessons with a brief section that relates learning to the outcomes of the School to Work Program.

Presentations to staff on the School to Work Program and vocational learning have become the norm for staff as other faculties come on board with new programs and learning activities. The careers adviser/School to Work coordinator has made herself available to all staff to assist in implementing vocational learning and also attends some KLA classes to provide support and feedback.

USING THE LOGBOOK AT HOLSWORTHY HIGH

The logbooks are used extensively in the school. They are regarded as an essential Careers Education resource and most lessons refer to the logbook or incorporate activities to highlight the importance of the resource to students’ career planning. Often students are given homework in careers classes where they need to take the logbook home. Students are diligent in bringing them back the next day because they know the importance of having them at school to use.

All the logbooks are kept in the Careers Centre above the Library and are available to all classes; however, most students tend to add their own information regarding other subjects at the start of careers lessons or in their own free time. They are categorised by year groups in English classes and students and teachers are encouraged to access them when needed. The logbooks don’t tend to be transported from the Careers Centre but KLA classes use the space to gain access to them. Each year more and more teachers are asking for access to the Careers Centre.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL TO WORK COORDINATORS

Here are some strategies for coordinators to consider:

1. It is important to introduce the School to Work Program to staff not as extra work but as an opportunity to bring a ‘real life’ context to their lessons.
2. Show students how the logbook can assist them by explaining all the parts of the resource and how they can be used.
3. Find a secure but accessible area to store the logbooks so they are not hidden away and forgotten.
4. One person should take responsibility for the logbooks (which may be someone other than the coordinator) to coordinate with other teachers how to use them in their classes, so there is some consistency with entries and processes.
5. Use the logbooks in all careers classes.
6. Leaders and coordinators must be enthusiastic about the program and using the logbook. Students know if teachers believe in the program and their enthusiasm will reflect how their teachers view the program.

SUCCESSES FROM STUDENT USE OF THE LOGBOOK

The introduction of the School to Work Program into the school has definitely raised the profile of career planning and vocational learning. Students are more engaged because they see them as beneficial to their future.

Parents have expressed through formal and informal ways how happy they are that this comprehensive program based on transition pathways is available for their children. They value the opportunities that it gives to prepare for life beyond school.

Members of the community and employers often comment on the excellent presentation of student resumes and their outstanding interview skills. Students can see how the extra direction in these areas has helped them to secure work experience places and casual employment.

Post school follow up has shown that most of the students in the 2004 year 12 cohort have secured a place at University or TAFE, an apprenticeship or full-time work. The school strongly believes that the School to Work Program has contributed to this success.

FUTURE OF THE LOGBOOK AT HOLSWORTHY HIGH SCHOOL

The Employment Related Skills Logbook is a valued resource at Holsworthy High School and will continue to be promoted and used within and beyond the school. A future initiative will be the targeting of staff new to the teaching profession. The careers adviser is working with the “New Teachers” coordinator to develop a process that informs and supports these teachers in using the logbook in their classes. This ensures that teaching programs embed vocational learning and include the Work, Employment and Enterprise cross-curriculum content from the new Year 7 – 10 syllabuses.