

# **ADOLESCENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**A Strength-Based Approach**



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# Overview



- **Current focus of Career Education**
- **Theoretical framework supporting lifelong career development skills**
- **Program outline**
- **Current evaluation**
- **Results**
- **Future implications**

# Current Focus of Career Education



## National Focus

- Co-ordinate the identification of desired skills
- Improve Employability Skills acquisition within the school context
- Support program development through a competency-based approach

## State Focus

- Education & training reforms requiring young people to record earning or learning to achieve the equivalent of a Senior education

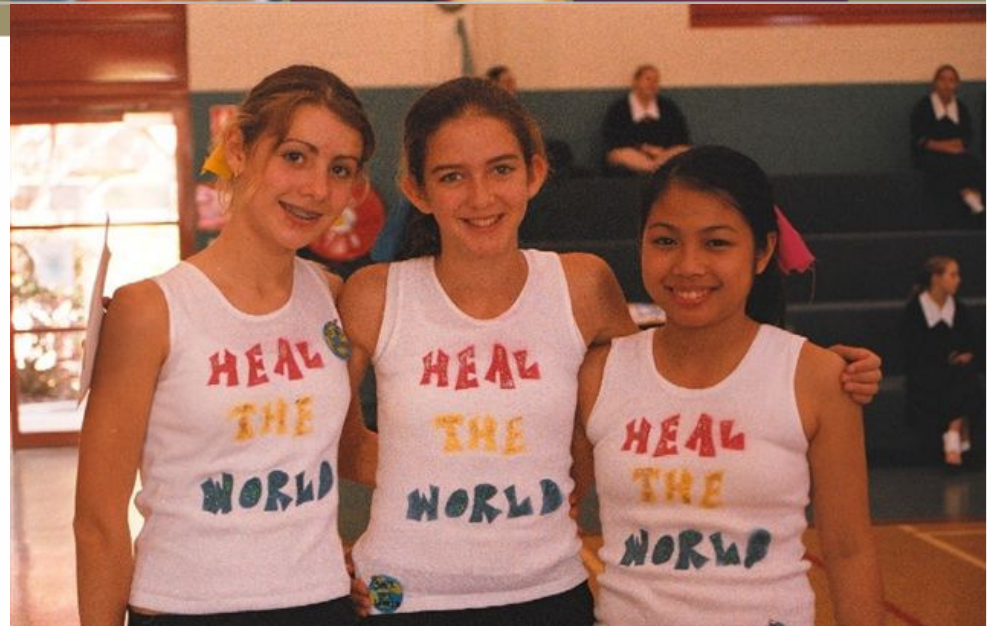


# School Focus



## Encourage all students to:

- pursue personal excellence in learning
- make a contribution to the life of the College in a spirit of co-operation
- develop an awareness of their place and social responsibility in local and global communities
- develop their potential for leadership to improve their lives and the lives of others
- respect and live by the school motto, “in faith and love”



# Concerns



- Developing a curriculum that focuses on content rather than context.
- Establishing a formal process that records deficits rather than achievements.
- Recent history of high academic achievers from the college making unsuccessful attempts at tertiary study.



# Research Indicators



- Paton & Creed (2001) identified that girls have the clearest idea of career strengths and interests at age 14-15.
- Australian Blueprint for Career Development utilizing many of the features developed in Canada.
- Swiss researchers, Downing & D'Andrea (1997) suggested that students were better able to make appropriate training and career choices if parents were adequately informed of their child's abilities and the process of career choice available to their child.



# Underpinning Theoretical Framework



## Contextual Action Theory

(Valach & Young, 2004)

The basis of learning, developing meaning & fulfilling the needs comes through the external reality of relationships

Has been used in multiple contexts with adolescents.



# Strength-based Principles



- Opportunities to identify personal strengths, abilities & interests.
- Utilizes flexible learning environments.
- Utilizes existing resources and support networks.
- Developmentally appropriate.
- Encourages the development of resilience.
- Identifies the underpinning skills required for successful career decisions in competency document.



# Features of Program



- Developmental program for the whole of Secondary School.
- Challenges gender-based stereotypes, particularly in the Senior Phase of schooling.
- Specifically encourages conversations between students and their parents in relation to life choices.
- Teaching staff and parents are educated on the changing world of work & employability skills.

# Features of Program (cont...)



- Able to be flexible to accommodate a time poor curriculum & increased student involvement in part-time employment & extra-curricular activities outside school.
- Able to be utilized by students with special needs.

# Middle School Phase (age 12-14)



## DISCOVER ME

- Introduces the young person to the idea that it is normal & necessary to begin to develop self-knowledge.
- Activities focus on discovering personal skills, interests, strengths & goals.
- Parents are supported through a program focusing on skills for parenting adolescents.



# Transition Phase Year 10 (age 15)



## **DIRECTION AND DIVERSITY**

- Begins to build student portfolios to be used for employment.
- Begins to support students in making life choices about future study.
- Parents transition to an active support role.



## Senior Phase (Age 16-18)



## LIFE CHOICES

- Very little time available in teaching period due to demand of curriculum.
- Utilizes cross-curriculum learning specifically in maths, english, business and study of religion.
- Specific career information events focus on specific industries, eg creative industries, health care, physical & natural sciences; or topics, eg 21<sup>st</sup> century employment trends, tertiary application processes.
- Parents are invited and involved in every event, along with staff, local employers & providers.

# Implementation Considerations



- Providing time to adequately inform all staff of the cross-curricular aspect of the program.
- Developing students' understanding that they can demonstrate competency through any activity – not just those conducted at school as a specific career event.
- Enlisting involvement of other school groups in key events associated with the program structure.
- Working in partnership with key staff and networks beyond the school context.

# Implementation Issues

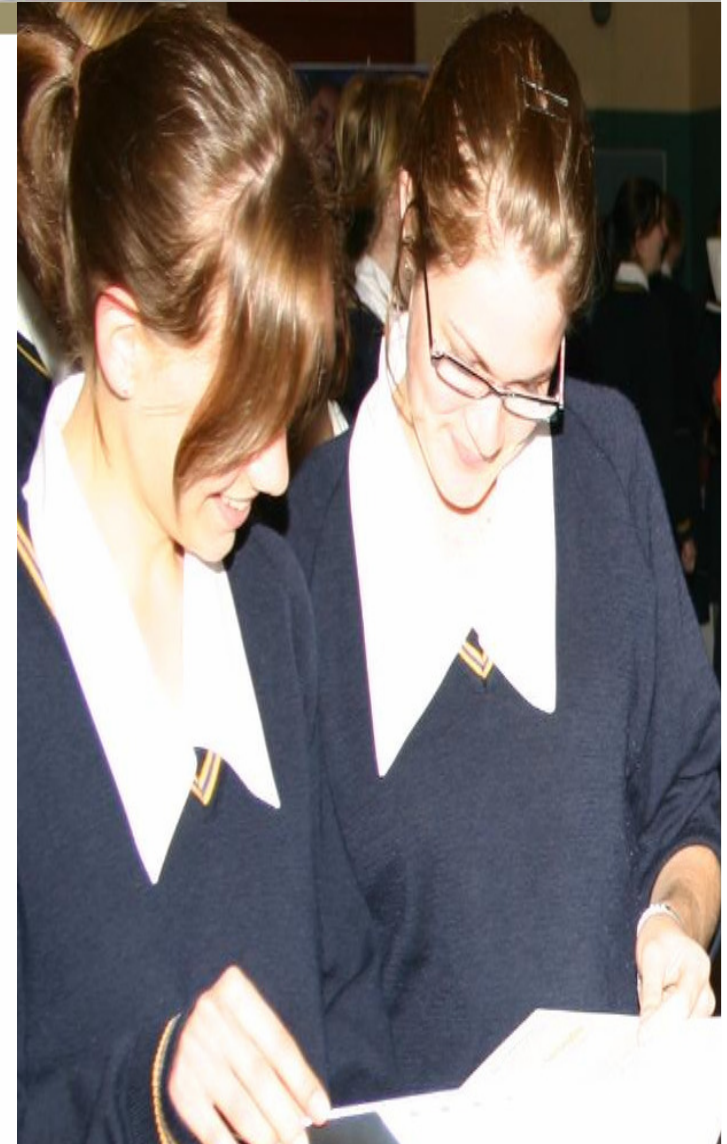


- Career advisor granted leave of absence and duties were divided between 3 other staff members with other specific roles.
- Encouraging full staff participation and active engagement in the program.
- Requires sound organisation and communication throughout the implementation and facilitation of the program.

# Evaluation



- Key staff involved in the oversight of the program facilitation were able to engage in a process of ongoing evaluation so that key aspects of the program were able to be appropriately adapted to ensure opportunities for competency achievement.
- General teaching staff began to identify embedded competencies in their teaching programs and were able to encourage the development of identified competencies.

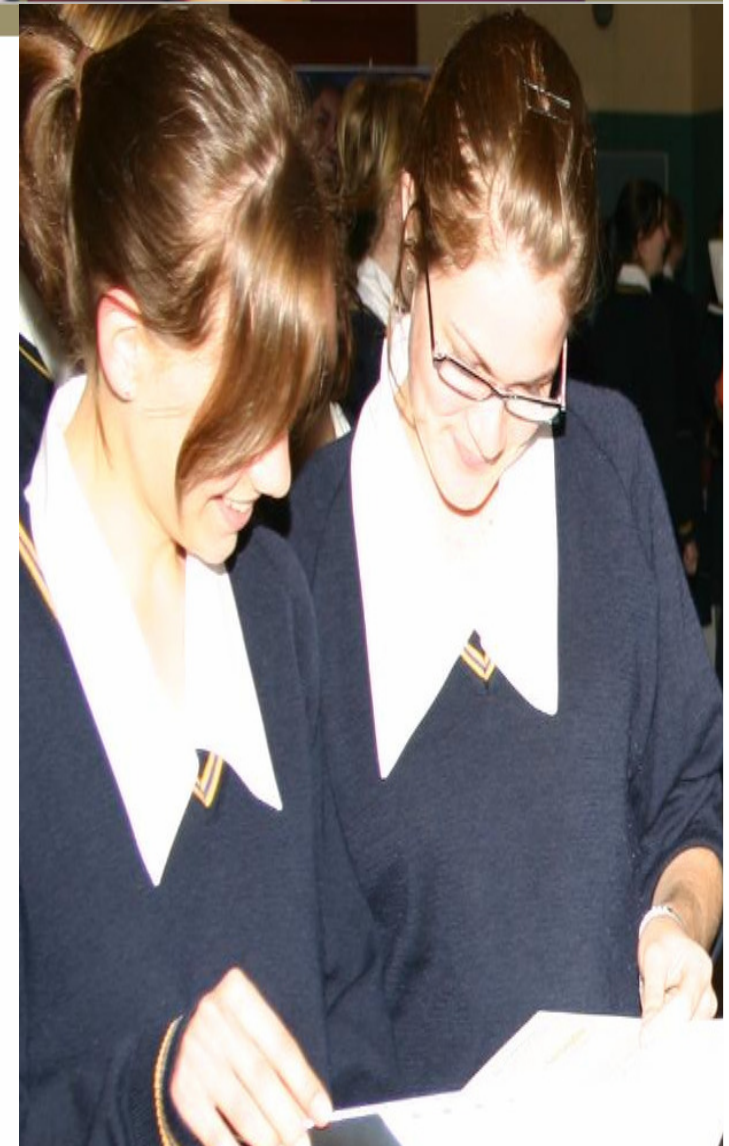




# Results



- Students are offering support to each other.
- Fewer individual contacts from distressed parents following release of Senior results.
- Students are transitioning to a wider variety of post-school options.
- Students identify that individual career counselling continues to provide the greatest support in the career decision-making process.



# Future



- Continue to improve the understanding of how competencies can be best achieved through the cross-curriculum aspects of the program.
- Develop more activities to complement content of curriculum and improve timing of events to support high pressure phases in the student year.
- Competencies are to be extended to underpin the Personal Enrichment & Pastoral Care Program offered by the school.

**An  
educational  
system isn't  
worth a  
great deal if  
it teaches  
young  
people how  
to make a  
living but  
doesn't  
teach them  
how to make  
a life**

