

Communities@Work

Volunteering and Community Engagement in a Trauma Informed Learning Environment

Mel Smith: Teacher - Curriculum and Transitions

AIS ACT Celebrating Teaching and Learning Event

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Galilee School – our context...

Galilee School is a registered, independent secondary school designed specifically for disengaged and vulnerable young people in Years 7-10 in the ACT and surrounding areas for whom the mainstream schooling environment has struggled to deliver positive outcomes.

- Special Assistance School
- We employ a team of highly skilled educators, youth workers and support staff. Aim for a 1:5 staff to student ratio
- We provide students with a quality education aligned with the Australian Curriculum
- Staff work with each student and their parents/carers to develop an Individual Learning Plan
- We provide training, skill development and job ready support for students transitioning to the workforce or to further educational opportunities
- The school is learner centred; strengths based; relationship driven and restorative.



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Our Mission

Galilee School seeks to inspire young people to realise their full potential by developing and utilising their unique talents and capabilities; by aiding students to find a sense of purpose and value in themselves as productive and worthwhile members of our community.



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Year 10 at Galilee School

A shift towards preparing for “what comes next”

- Separate campus to Year 7-9 students
- Year 10 Certificate is the main goal for all students
- Specific transition support targeted towards the following year: further education, training or employment
- Focus on workplace readiness and practical work skills through work experience
- Exploring other training opportunities with external providers e,g, Hospitality Course, White Card course etc
- Developing independent learning skills through scaffolded and supported project work
- Volunteering had been done in the past when the student group was smaller but had become more challenging to maintain consistently as numbers increased

Volunteering with DAS

- Late in 2018 contacted Domestic Animal Services (the pound) in the ACT about students volunteering with them
- In March 2019, the first group of 6 students and 2 staff (one teacher, one youth worker) attended on a Friday afternoon
- This program has continued on Fridays throughout 2019 with rotating groups applying through an “expression of interest” process
- In Term 4, 2019 started Year 10 leading younger students



Developing more opportunities

Can we develop more volunteering opportunities?

- The success of the DAS volunteering program led to staff interest in more volunteering to support students to give back their time, skills and effort to the local community
- Identified bonus for curriculum was tangible skill/s to include on their resumes as many students had minimal work experience or employment history – Work Studies
- Tuesday afternoons were allocated to a “volunteering project” for all Year 10 students

Challenges & Solutions

Challenges in developing a volunteering program that could include all Year 10s:

- Facilitating all levels of interest, engagement and ability
- Risk management
- Transport

Identified solutions:

- Volunteering in specific projects that could be facilitated at the school rather than needing to go into the community
- Incursions and visits
- Provision of choice so students could adjust their engagement based on how they presented on that day

Volunteering Program

Options provided to students:

- Making dog toys for donation centres: **Rainbow Paws**
- Crocheting beanies for babies: **Canberra Hospital**
- Developing a **Community Street Library**: Galilee School / Independent Property Group
- Share the Dignity Drive: **Share the Dignity**
- It's in the bag: **Share the Dignity** / Local book club
- Making environmentally friendly bags from upcycled t-shirts: Local environmentally conscious shops





Unexpected developments of the Volunteering Program

- High levels of engagement and enthusiasm that was fostered without going off school grounds
- Attendance levels on volunteering days were high, many students identified that it was a “highlight” of the week
- Power of side by side learning and conversations between staff and students: plaiting dog toys, making environmentally friendly bags from upcycled t-shirts, crocheting
- Student engagement in community visits: Natarsha from Rainbow Paws, Judith Share the Dignity
- Development of a relationship with the Communities@Work Seniors Program



Positive outcomes

- Student pride in giving back without a financial commitment
- Student feedback on volunteering was positive – **82% said it made them feel good** and **91% said they recommend the program run again next year**
- Two students have applied to become volunteers at the pound and intend to continue their volunteering next year, our “dog whisperer” student is exploring a possible traineeship
- Interaction with community organisations and local Canberra charities
- Research around success of sensory interventions in managing the “window of tolerance” in trauma support is significant. Staff and students observed specifically that the crocheting, dog toy plaiting and bag making had notable calming effects (Champagne, 2007)



Thank you!

Mel.Smith@commsatwork.org

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