Learning From Others

The last 2 weeks has seen some good examples of how we can all learn from each other. The new SA Thinker-in-Residence, John McTernan, has been in Adelaide exploring how education can be more responsive to the needs of the community, by listening to parents, principals and school governing councils. Originally from Scotland, John has seen major improvements occurring in schools across the UK as a result of stronger and effective partnerships between education, parents and the community.

We have as much to learn from the UK in how communities can come together to solve challenges. Inverclyde in Scotland has seen their attainment grow from one of the lowest rates in the country to one of the highest in just 5 years - a change ascribed to the value of using parents to enhance learning. So, how engaged are parents in your school’s learning programs? Geoff Ewens, Managing Director

Partnering in Action...

Parents and Community Consultation Forums

During February 2011 AITEC organised two parent, community and business consultation forums, one in Gumeracha and another in Mt Barker. These had the support of Adelaide Hills Council, Torrens Valley Community Centre and the District Council of Mt Barker.

At these forums several barriers to attainment were explored as well as means to overcome them.

Some of the barriers mentioned by parents and community members at both forums were:

1. Parents missing vital information about pathways and changing work environment
2. Two-income families lead to less time spent parenting; single parent families have challenges too, as no extended family support is available (transport issues, isolation, etc).
3. Lack of parental support for attainment due to a poor perception of the value in completing YR12 or equivalent, or to short-term thinking ("just go out and get a job, like I did")
4. Family dynamic and environment leading to low confidence and low self-esteem of youth

Other barriers - related to infrastructure, economy, education system or to social issues - mentioned at either Mt Barker or Gumeracha forums included:

- Perception of the Hills as an affluent area, so fewer resources available
- Drugs, alcohol and mental health issues
- Parents not on radar in education and government initiatives
- Lack of local job opportunities
- Not enough practical, hands-on experiential learning
- Schools and teachers not parent-friendly
- Teaching practices not keeping up with how young people learn

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AITEC staff talked to parents and distributed flyers to them at drop-off and pick-up times.

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Overcoming attainment barriers in the Hills
Suggestions made by parents to help identify and remove barriers to attainment came out during the community forums:
• Engagement of parents and families with students’ learning
• Schools need to be ready to adapt to various parent cohorts
• Coaching, mentoring the family unit (e.g. Family by Family) & more programs about parenting
• Utilising community’s wisdom and experience and having youngest being taught by the best and brightest
• Partnerships between national, state and local governments – working together
• More alternative learning spaces and options to complete Year 12 in Hills
• More accessible and youth-friendly services for drug, alcohol and mental health issues
• Early intervention and prevention – in primary school

The Facts…
• Only 15% of jobs need no qualifications
• 63% of jobs need VET qualifications
• 22% of jobs need university qualifications
So,
• 50% of the current workforce without qualifications are competing for just 15% of jobs
• 30% of the workforce with VET qualifications can access 63% of the available opportunities

These forums provided AITEC with an opportunity to learn more about what makes a difference to attainment.
They also enabled us listen to and discuss views on what challenges need to be overcome to improve attainment and transition outcomes in the Hills.
Out and About.

2011 Strategies and Activity Alignment

As part of the Environmental Scan and Strategic Plan updating, a series of consultation sessions was organised by AITEC staff with key stakeholders to identify emerging trends, gaps in available services or support, challenges and opportunities recently arising within Eastern Adelaide (EA) and the Hills (AH).

As a result, the following shifts have occurred:
1) AITEC will re-focus its resources to support the Onkaparinga Valley community in the Hills;
2) A shift has occurred in engagement between Youth Connections providers and AITEC to redirect focus from operational type activities and responses to systemic and recurrent regional challenges;
3) ICAN programs will be introduced in both the Hills and Eastern regions from July 2011; and
4) New Principals in the Hills: Oakbank Area School, Mount Barker HS, Heathfield HS and St Francis de Sales provide an opportunity to focus all efforts on attainment across all Government and non-Government schools.

Three large Australian and New Zealand studies found in regards to taking Cannabis by young people:

1. High school drop out rates would fall by 17% with no cannabis use
2. Cannabis use hastens the onset of psychosis among young people by up to 2.7 years
3. Cannabis can disrupt brain development, which implies that it is far more dangerous to the brains of teenagers than it would be for middle-aged groups.

Other consultation sessions were organised by AITEC staff with:
- David Joliffe and Janet Harrison, (DECS Adelaide Hills Regional Director and Assistant Director)
- Sam Pearse - Industry Skills Manager, Abbie Cerchi - Apprenticeship Broker and Steve McVicar - Coordinator VET and TTC (all of them located in the Hills, DECS)
- Ksenija Bould and Mark de Lange - Youth Development Officers (YDO) at District Council of Mt Barker and Adelaide Hills Council respectively
- Tracy Johnstone - Manager - Community and Customer Services-Campbelltown City Council (CCC), Laura Zimbardi - YDO - CCC
- Pam Ronan, St Francis de Sales College Principal, Mt Barker
- John Coates and Linda Winton from Employment Options Mt Barker
Business & Community InterAct
Finding out future skills needs.
NCVER Employer Survey

The Survey of Australian Employers managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), will see 7,500 employers interviewed this year to identify strategies employers use to meet their skill needs.

Businesses are being randomly selected to participate and will be contacted from February - June 2011.

The survey will offer employers the opportunity to help improve the training system.

The Survey of Australian Employers is being conducted on behalf of the state, territory and Australian governments. The results will be published on the NCVER website in late 2011 in Australian vocational education and training statistics: Employers’ use and views of the VET system.

Did you know?

Outcomes from combining work and tertiary study by NCVER finds that working 16 to 24 hours a week reduces the completion rate of full-time students by eight percentage points, and the more hours worked, the greater the effect. For those who study part-time, full-time work reduces their chances of completing their qualifications by an estimated 12 percentage points.

However working in the last year of study improves students’ chances of finding full-time employment for up to three years after they complete their qualification. Their chances of getting a full-time job within a year of finishing their study improve significantly when that job complements their study.

Youth Week 2011 Upcoming events...

National Youth Week (NYW) 2011 will take place from Friday 1 April to Sunday 10 April 2011.

In the Hills it will commence with the GumaROCKa event at the Torrens Valley Community Centre from 4pm to 8pm (see adjacent flyer). Also keep your eyes open to other activities across the Hills during the NYW. More information is available from the contacts below:

At Mt Barker
- Tom Fest on 3rd April (contact Ksenija Bould at 8393 6413)
- Employment Options Youth Centre Open Day on 4th April (Linda Winton at 8398 2355)

At Adelaide Hills (for the following events, contact Mark de Lange at 8408 0590)
- Cyber Safety session on 6th April
- XITH (Xboxing In The Hills) on 9th April