



## Re-engaging disengaged students in the learning process

### School Based Research Project 2017 Interim Report Trades Norwest Senior Anglican College

#### Project overview

Trades Norwest Senior Anglican College is designed to engage students who might have been disengaged with the learning process or expectations at previous schools. The College strives to provide students with a model that enables them to work and think differently about learning. In line with this philosophy, this project aims to address the following research question: *How is the pedagogy at Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College reframing the learning environment for students whose needs have not been addressed at a previous educational environment?*

The research team expects to demonstrate through literature research, surveys and one-on-one interviews with staff, students and parents that the educational environment at Trades Norwest enables students and teachers to engage in a constructive and mutually trusting relationship to bring about success and reengagement. Evaluation of external (NAPLAN data) and internal data (HSC assessments) will form an integral component of the project.



#### The research team

The research team is led by Gaynor MacKinnon, College Principal, and supported by academic mentors Professor Rosemary Johnston and Associate Professor Annette Hilton (University of Technology Sydney).

#### Project design

The research team will conduct:

- an extensive review of the relevant literature and a search for institutions that are similar to Trades Norwest worldwide. Areas to be researched include

alternative educational environments, disengaged students, reengaging students, stresses associated with formal/external examinations, teacher-student relationships, student success and students with mental health diagnoses

- a series of parent, student and staff surveys that address the four main areas identified by the College. These include teaching program, teaching practice, trade, and student wellbeing. Similar surveys will be completed by the two associate schools, including Shoalhaven Anglican School, Milton and Macquarie Anglican Grammar School, Dubbo
- a series of one-on-one interviews in Term 4 of 2016 with the staff and students in order to offer direction for future surveys in 2017.

This project uses data that are obtained, processed and shared from three colleges, including:

- Trades Norwest Anglican Senior College, Glenwood (the main site)
- Shoalhaven Anglican School, Milton
- Macquarie Anglican Grammar School, Dubbo.

#### Progress to date

The research team has begun to investigate the literature surrounding the identified research topic. Results of the preliminary analysis of data obtained from initial surveys and interviews with students have provided a more specific direction for the literature search.

Upon enrolment at Trades Norwest, students and parents are requested to supply previous reports and NAPLAN data. Despite some difficulties associated with this, data have been supplied from many students and are being used to confirm the hypothesis that the structure of Trades Norwest promotes student reengagement.

The research team surveyed parents, students and staff about various aspects of the College philosophy. Early interviews with students served to direct future research for the team. Subsequent evaluations and discussion have led to a set of interview questions being constructed for students. A similar process will be established for conducting staff interviews.

Data obtained from the initial surveys indicate that the majority of stakeholders responded positively to all aspects of the College, including the teaching components, the teachers, the trade aspects and the Integrated Learning Projects. The majority of parents of Year 11 and Year 12 students (75%) were pleased with the school based apprenticeship program offered by the



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College. A small number of parents further indicated they would like the College to introduce a better induction program for new students, especially students enrolled during the year.



Results of the preliminary survey of staff indicated their full support of the philosophy of the College. The staff will be re-surveyed and interviewed again in the future.

The staff are very interested in the results of the surveys, interviews and literature reviews and these are compiled and shared. Table conversations regarding pedagogy and andragogy regularly occur. Time is devoted at staff meetings to discussion of project progress and future planning where all staff have the opportunity to contribute to the project's direction.

### Where to next?

The timeline for the project has been established by the research team as follows:

- interview Year 10 and Year 11 students (December, 2016)
- modified surveys posted and completed by Shoalhaven Anglican School, Milton and Macquarie Anglican Grammar School, Dubbo (December, 2016)
- further visits to Milton and Dubbo campuses by the Trades Norwest research team (February, 2017)
- further collaborative workshops involving staff from Milton and Dubbo campuses and the Trades Norwest research team (March, 2017)
- interview and survey new Year 10 and Year 11 students (April, 2017)
- literature search finalised (April, 2017)
- visit Merrylands site of Youth Off the Streets (April, 2017)
- visit Brisbane alternative education sites (April, 2017)
- surveys to Trades Norwest students and parents posted and completed (July, 2017)

- collation and analysis of NAPLAN and HSC data (October, 2017)
- final draft of project response (October, 2017).

The greatest challenge facing the research team is the small number of students enrolled at Trades Norwest (a total of 86 as of August, 2016) and the other two campuses. It is imperative that as many students complete the surveys as possible in order for data to be analysed meaningfully and validly.

In 2017, the research team anticipates the following outcomes:

- validation of the College philosophy
- examination of current programs in Year 10
- examination of possible VET/TVET subjects to be included in teaching programs
- affirmation that the processes operating within the College work productively to reengage disengaged students.



### Contact details

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