

# School Principal – the key driver to a high quality school career education plan

## *St Monica's College*

The role and support of the school principal and the school leadership team is integral to the success of a school career education plan. St Monica's College in the northern suburb of Epping in Melbourne, is a good example of a school principal placing high importance on a quality career education plan for the school.

St Monica's College, Epping is a Catholic co-educational secondary school (Year 7 to 12). Established in 1964, the college has over 1900 students and is located on two campuses in Melbourne's northern suburbs. The college provides a contemporary and relevant curriculum that caters for students of all abilities and interests with the curriculum being structured to provide students with the skills necessary for them to make a positive contribution to Australian society.

St Monica's College Principal, Brian Hanley said, "Our college places high value on career education as it is central to the future focus of young children upon their leaving school. It is imperative that our students are knowledgeable about all matters associated with career education so that their decision making will be informed and relevant to their own interests and abilities."

Mr Hanley said, "When the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework was introduced we took the decision to undertake a full audit of career delivery across the curriculum. At the conclusion of the audit the Senior Teacher (Careers) developed the school's first Career Department Strategic Plan. This plan was linked to the College Strategic Plan and this model of operation has continued, allowing for continual development of the program across the college curriculum."

The Careers Department consists of three full-time professionally qualified career practitioners and a full-time associate qualified practitioner.

The department operates from two modern career centres located on each of the college's two campuses. The junior campus centre functions as a Pathways Office.

## **What actions has the Principal taken to support the implementation of the Career Education Plan?**

Mr Hanley has a senior leadership team that works with him to ensure that St Monica's College is a school of educational enterprise and is continually looking forward to improve practice.

To ensure the implementation of the Career Education Plan, the Senior Teacher (Careers) is an active member of the senior leadership team and has a voice at all levels of the college community, as well as being a member of the Curriculum Council Senior Leadership team. This ensures that there is access through which careers can be embedded in all curriculum areas within the school.



Career education across the college has also been written into each of the college's long term strategic plans, both within the curriculum and within the Student Wellbeing sections. This ensures that it is constantly reviewed to meet the needs of the students in an ever-changing world. The college also develops Annual Action Plan Reports where career education has improvement criteria within areas of Teaching and Learning, Student Wellbeing and School Community. The Senior Teacher (Careers) is responsible for developing these in conjunction with the principal and other senior leaders and reporting on developments and successes throughout the year at leadership meetings.

To ensure good communication at all levels of the college, the Careers Department is required to produce a yearly *Careers Report*. The report is disseminated to the college community including the College Board, senior leadership group, parent body and staff. The report sets out and evaluates the activities for the year against the strategic plans for both the college and the Careers Department.

The report is based on measuring processes that have been developed and are used to assess the career practice delivery against the strategic planning objectives for the area. These include evaluation surveys, student, staff and parent feedback, checklists and formal review outcomes undertaken by the college.

## What does the annual careers report look like and what are the measuring processes used?

The annual careers report was developed from a culture of evaluation where identification of outcomes is seen as an integrated part of providing a service to the school community. By integrating a report into their practice through measuring and reporting processes, St Monica's will continually be able to upgrade their practice and inform the community. The report provides an overview of the staff involved, their qualifications and their areas of responsibility. It provides information about the services offered, the facilities and how to access them. It also includes information on funding, service guidelines, facilities, infrastructure and the community resources accessed.

Where possible in term of services, the school evaluates and reports using the following criteria:

- Did the student like/dislike the service?
- Did the student learn anything by using the service?
- Did the student use the information provided by the service?
- Did using the service make a difference to the student?

The Careers Department uses information collected to evaluate and adjust programs where necessary. The information is also used in the preparation of the annual report to the community. Programs evaluated include:

- individual consultation
- classroom activities
- parent evenings
- class activities
- work placement (Work Experience/Structured Workplace Learning)
- year level seminars
- online activities (Facebook, Twitter, website)



## How does the career culture extend across Year 7 to 12?

The career development culture within the college extends from Year 7 to 12 and includes students, parents and staff. Programs offered are based around the *Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework* and are evaluated against the *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*.

At St Monica's College every teacher is considered a career teacher and works with the career practitioners to develop and deliver career related activities within their subject areas. This allows all students to investigate the range of career options available across all the curriculum offerings from Year 7 to 12, as well as having access to individual career planning.

The careers team advise and assist in the development of resources for classroom teachers to use. They also develop and work with year level teams to deliver career education investigation at the transition points between each year level.

All members of the school community, students, staff, and parents have access to career education materials at all times via a dedicated, fully integrated careers website. Information published on the careers website is sent out, via the college's twitter account, through Facebook and through regular editions of the careers newsletter, to staff and students and through articles in the college magazine.

The careers website also allows members of the college community to ask career related questions, book appointments, complete Career Action Plans and update e-portfolios at any time from home and school.

St Monica's College continues to work towards an embedded program that is accessible to all students, teachers, families and the community no matter what the age group of the student and their needs.

Staff at the college receive regular professional development during meetings and other professional development activities about the changes to the careers landscape in the Australian community. This ensures that information provided to students and parents about changes to post-secondary education, job skills and employment opportunities is as up to date as possible.

The Careers Department works on delivering information sessions to parents and other invested community groups, including employers, on a regular basis so that they can work in partnership with the school in developing student understanding.

Careers staff also work with faculties to develop career programs that can be delivered by the teacher within the subject area. This includes student understanding of transferable skills and how an interest in a subject area can lead to future study and employment. The school has developed a culture that is contemporary and comprehensive, global in perspective, and fosters an appreciation of lifelong learning. It is inclusive of all abilities and learning styles and this is reflected in the importance that is placed on the careers program by the school community.

Mr Hanley said, "Career education is integral to an education that is balanced and encompassing of the reality that confronts all school leavers. Thus it is a critical component of a holistic education. With aspects of career education changing so frequently and rapidly, not only locally but internationally, the students require sound understanding, factual information, forms of experiential learning and confidence building."

