

Australia (Victoria)

Bendigo South East College. Aspire

The Aspire program was initiated to counteract decreasing engagement with school in Year 9 students (age 14-16), by providing experience in responsibility, team building and independent learning. Students' "aspirations" are encouraged both in timetabled subjects and in additional off-campus projects that enable small groups of students to plan and complete a project with clear aims and outcomes and foster social and organisational skills (e.g. a camp on sustainability in partnership with a neighbouring university, and a student-organised stay in the city during which they conduct a research project). Staffs maintain contacts with the students' families by weekly emails. .

Main focus of innovation: CONTENT, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

General Information

Name of the ILE: Bendigo South East College. Aspire

Location/Address: Ellis St, Flora Hill, VICTORIA, 3550

Website: www.bse.vic.edu.au

ILE submitted by: Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Victoria, Australia

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

The opportunity to be involved in the Innovative Learning Environments Universe would allow the sharing of our journey. This would assist in organisations seeing how to escape the problems we found and to reach more quickly the successes we achieved. It will also allow us to find out what other innovative programs are around so we can further improve student learning.

We continuously study various forms of data that relates to student learning, wellbeing and pathways. This allows us to quickly pinpoint areas of concern and work as a team to develop strategies and programs to rectify these concerns. We also share ideas of what learning will look like in five and ten years and strategically develop programs so that there is seamless transition to respond to the challenges of our vision.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

The aim of the Aspire program is to encourage personal growth by providing experience in responsibility, team building and independent learning. These qualities assist students to become confident and skilled individuals with a passion for lifelong learning.

Our Aspire learning program is designed to:

- Engage students in positive learning experiences both in and out of the classroom
- Allow students to explore new ideas and accept new challenges
- Instil in each student a positive attitude to self, community and the world
- Allow students greater independence and the opportunity to develop life skills and qualities
- Allow students to take more responsibility for their decisions

Throughout the year curriculum delivery will be focused on students fostering and developing 'Aspirations'. It is essential that students are able to raise their aspirations in a friendly, exciting and positive classroom and college environment. The College will encourage and motivate students to develop the following aspiration qualities and attributes.

- Confidence to take action
- Leadership and responsibility
- Spirit of adventure
- Curiosity and creativity
- Fun and excitement
- Sense of accomplishment – feeling good about what is achieved
- Heroes – learning from people we admire
- Belonging – feeling part of the team

In helping students to discover their **X factor** the curriculum will challenge students to **eXpress** their ideas, **eXamine** thoughts and concepts, **eXplore** the possibilities, **eXchange** information and opinions while **eXtending** their knowledge, skills and attributes while striving for **eXcellence**.

The Aspire Personal Development Program

The Aspire program will provide a wide range of intellectual, social and physical experiences that will allow staffs to more effectively cater for individual learning needs and interests.

There are three distinct parts to the program in addition to timetabled subjects:

- **WOW ‘Well Being’ Wednesdays**

Off site learning will take place on some Wednesdays. Timetabling will allow creative and flexible use of time, place and space to personalize learning and ensure that all students are active participants in their learning. We have developed a partnership with La Trobe University - Bendigo campus to provide an enquiry unit on Sustainability. Fourth year Outdoor Education students from La Trobe University are integral in developing a program that culminates in a local sustainable two day camp.

- **The Cityscape Program**

All students will participate in a 5 day program at Cityscape in Melbourne. This will be the camp experience for Year 9 and will be curriculum based. Two Learning Teams at a time will spend a school week in Melbourne attending Cityscape and stay at hostel accommodation. The decisions regarding which hostel, meals, transport and night activities will be part of the learning process. Students use Action Research to test an hypothesis against surveys, questionnaires and interviews that they develop and undertake independently during the week.

The Bendigo South East College Cityscape program aims to provide Year 9 students with learning approaches that are authentic, can be related to their everyday lives, and allow self-expression. The program reflects the principles of personalized learning and enables our students to develop their confidence, interpersonal skills and capacity for self-directed learning.

The Cityscape program provides a classroom without walls in central Melbourne. The learning model involves experiential learning and reflective practice, and has four central elements:

- action research, where students work in teams researching an aspect of the city over five days
- opportunities to meet business leaders during their research
- workshops at Reach, Urban Seed, SYN 90.7 FM, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and Fitness First Gyms
- exploring the Melbourne Central Building District (CBD) and learning independence, teamwork, trust, problem-solving and discovery

Students work in small groups to plan, organise and complete a project that has clear aims and outcomes the emphasis is on co-operation, organisational skills, initiative and contribution to the group.

The unit of work is a team task that also includes a personal learning journey as a part of the whole. The assessment is on-going throughout the project, thereby providing authentic reflection on the learning which can be applied immediately to the next activity and so “learning about learning”, learning by experience, applying new skills and knowledge and using reflective thinking. In their self-assessment, students demonstrate skills essential for success in the senior school such as organisation, resilience, independence, social competency and responsibility.

The teacher’s role is pivotal to the success of the project. The role may best be described as mentor or facilitator. To begin this project students are supported by the teacher to use and develop their skills in a new context. The ability to provide a safe and supportive environment where students feel empowered to make decisions and take learning risks outside their comfort zone is a facilitation skill that requires the teacher to support what each group or individual needs to take the next step. It requires some ‘letting go’ so students understand the responsibility of being in charge of their own learning.

Students are given 4 lessons prior to leaving for the 5 days in Melbourne to make teams and develop their focus of action research. In this time students also choose the method of transportation to Melbourne, the accommodation and the night activities for the 5 days. They have 4 lessons on their return after the city week to finish the stages of the project and prepare for the student led conference.

The students have a 'classroom' base in the CBD on the fourteenth floor of a busy business high rise. Staff and students meet at the base classroom daily but move around the CBD to do their action research projects and keep their various appointments.

- **Pathways Focus**

Students will learn about the world of work and the varied opportunities available to them as careers for the future. Students will be assisted in understanding their own strengths and to develop basic skills in being involved in interviews, resume writing and presentation at interviews.

The learning program focuses on the following skills: setting goals, reflecting on and striving to enhance performance, recognising success, taking educated risks, perseverance, making sound choices, recognising thinking as an effective tool, working in teams, problem solving, articulate their needs, reflect, create strategies and actions for improvement, adaptability and can clarify.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

The Aspire program is aimed at all Year 9 students. This year this consists of 350 students aged from 14 – 16 years old.

The program aims to provide the following for student learning needs:

- Classroom organisation and learning and teaching practices that are responsive to the diverse learning, social and emotional needs of Year 9 students.
- Learning opportunities that support students to engage with real problems that require complex solutions
- Opportunities for intensive off-campus, community based learning experiences
- Opportunities for students to participate in events that are of substantial interest and that challenge them

Opportunities for students to celebrate and be recognised for their contributions, efforts, and achievements.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

There is a dedicated team of 14 staff and a Learning Team Leader that facilitate the program at the school setting. These are VIT registered teachers that work in pairs with their Learning Teams. There are 7 English/Humanities teachers and 7 Maths/Science teachers.

Each teacher acts as a mentor/advisor to their Learning Team and teaches then for either English/Humanities or Maths/Science.

Components of the Aspire program have external teachers and facilitators providing the course. These vary from University lecturers, student teachers.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Students share a common journey that focuses on personal development and growth.

The Aspire program has allowed students to demonstrate skills of organisation, resilience, independence, social competency and responsibility that are essential life skills.

The Aspire program is focused at Year 9 level and incorporates academic rigour with inquiry based learning. Students are in Learning Teams and form a strong relationship with their Learning Team Mentor who teaches them for a significant amount of their program. The Community, Cityscape and Sustainability components of the program enable small groups to plan, organise and complete a project that has clear aims and outcomes. The emphasis is on co-operation, organisational skills, initiative and contribution to the group.

The Aspire curriculum marries academic knowledge based units of English, Mathematics, Science and Humanities with skills and from elective units and attributes from Community based projects.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Learning takes place in many different environments, from the traditional classroom, to surfing at the beach, to problem solving how to find out how to get to a meeting place in the centre of Melbourne after becoming lost. It is incorporated in the Community projects every student is involved in, as well as the study of the environment during the Sustainability camp.

As you would expect with the variety of things offered to the students the physical learning environment is virtually everywhere they go.

Community projects including volunteering are integral to the Aspire program and rely on the goodwill of staff, parents and the many service providers in the community.

All staff maintains regular home contact with the families in their Learning Teams by weekly emails. Day 1 conferences are held at the beginning of the year to establish this school – home partnership.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

The Learning Committee instigated a review of the Year 9 program as a result of Year 9 student data indicating a decrease in engagement with the curriculum and learning performance. The review was performed in a Curriculum Working Party in 2007 and the Aspire program was developed. This is the second year of the Aspire program and it is evaluated each year and changes made according to the results of the evaluation. The project is evolving as we find the students responding to learning approaches that are authentic, that can be related to their everyday lives and that allow self-expression.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

Aspire is funded through distribution of funds at a school level, similar to all programs that run. Funding for the Cityscape program is applied for through the Foundation for Young Australians.

The Principal and School Council are responsible for funding the Aspire program.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

The College tracks all completion of work and behaviours exhibited by students. This tracking includes academic performance, attendance, punctuality and behaviour in class. Data also include student self-assessment surveys as well how they see the school.

The school incorporates student attitude, parent survey and staff opinion data as well as NAPLAN data. Anecdotal material from students and parents is also studied.

Teachers study data on an individual, team and school level and Benchmarks are set at the start of each Semester at each level.