

## INQUIRY INTO COMBINING SCHOOL AND WORK: SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITIONS

Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and  
Training from McCarthy Catholic College, Emu Plains NSW 2750.

We received the submission invitation and are pleased to respond to this important enquiry.

Our school has a number of innovative programs that assist students in gaining work skills, enabling them to obtain part time and casual employment, and a large contingent of students from the junior secondary years of schooling onwards, who participate in a variety of work options whilst at school.

It is a challenge as a school to accredit paid part time employment, unless it is part of a recognised structure e.g., a school based apprenticeship or traineeship and/or as part of a Cert II VET course, including many of the framework courses that we run at the school or in our school's cluster.

We have a population of families in our school who largely recognise the importance of paid employment. It is true that for many families it is a necessity for their school aged children to work part time, or at least to relieve some of the financial burden of supplying discretionary funding to their offspring. We do have a minority of students living out of home and attempting to obtain their HSC or School Certificate qualifications who are also working, some for considerable hours per week.

Some of the innovative pathways students are combining school and paid employment include:

- Students doing a Cert IV in out of School Hours Care, (OOSH) which combines paid employment and contributes to 7 Units of a HSC over two years
- Our first student doing a School Based Apprenticeship (Hairdressing), combining employment, training and the HSC has commenced this year. The apprenticeship is worth 4 Units over two years of her HSC. We are excited that we have had our bid to become a "Trade School" recently confirmed. This will provide both partly trained and indentured apprentices and mature young people with a work history at the conclusion of their HSC.
- A number of students doing traineeship in Sport and Rec. Services and in Retail, both food and goods based. These are also accredited as 4 Units over two years of the HSC and time is allowed for early leaving and late arrival at school for all of the above students to assist them in combining their work and the HSC
- All students in the senior years studying an academic program are allowed to leave early on Thursday (late night shopping day), and not participate in the school sport program. Therefore they can schedule work and not be absent from classes on this popular day for part time employment

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For junior students particularly, there is an extensive work experience program available should students wish to participate. Work experience is not compulsory in our systemic school structure. However, for a number of junior students, particularly those with special education needs and those who may be 'at risk', work experience is an important avenue of training and, for many, an opportunity to showcase skills to an employer for future employment, particularly part time.

We also maintain close links with our Local Community Partnership and CATS advisers. They are used in a number of ways, including through their widely acclaimed talks to various year groups, parent groups and on school & business information sessions. They have also implemented targeted industry visits, Try-A-Trade days, apprenticeship expos, and visits to institutions such as the Police Academy, TAFE institutions, Careers markets, information breakfasts and similar events.

Last year our school was successful in becoming a 'Careers Lighthouse' project school. The \$10000 we received from the Federal Government was used to build skills in over 75 year 9&10 students by organised training and projects both in the school and in community businesses. In this way, these students, many of whom were identified as being 'at risk', were able to show specific skills in Hospitality, Hairdressing, Makeup, Construction, Metals, Landscaping and Bricklaying. Once they had completed projects such as garden building at the school, a TAFE Outreach course in Makeup, a series of Hospitality lessons and experiences and so on, they then went to prospective employers for Work Experience and/or part time employment. Many of these same students now have apprenticeships in the area they experienced, including the bricklaying instructor taking one of the Year 10 students as his apprentice this year.

We are always striving to accommodate the needs of students and their need and desire to earn income and gain valuable experience through part time employment with the ongoing and almost competing agenda of raising academic standards and exam results. Whenever students can see relevance in their courses and gain hands-on experience through real work situations, they are far more committed to gain credentials and qualifications. Through the trade school initiative and the programs we are introducing to the school for students to gain real work experiences, we hope to maximize interest and at the same time encourage students to gain higher credentials before exiting school.

We would be interested in reading the committees findings and would be available to answer further questions or host a visit if desired.

Yours Sincerely



Kevin Holohan  
College Principal



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Careers Adviser