Succeeding in the Global Worlds of Life & Work: Evaluation of the Worlds of Work Pilot Project

For Education Foundation Australia

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Executive summary

Context

The purpose the Worlds of Work (WOW) program is to build the capacity of students from socially and economically disadvantaged communities to effectively participate in the future global worlds of work. The WOW Pilot was devised and delivered by City Centre staff during the second half of 2007. It is an offshoot of Education Foundation Australia’s City Centre and Welcome to My World programs, and aims to “extend the City Centre model and methodology into personalised, independent learning about the worlds of work”.

The WOW program is based at the Centre’s Melbourne Central complex, and in proximity of a diversity of participating workplaces. The Pilot comprised a five day sequence of activities and workshops aimed (a) at enhancing the students’ connectedness with the City of Melbourne; (b) at providing opportunities for them to explore definitions of success in work and life; and (c) at providing opportunities for the students to develop the skills and strengths needed “to create their own pathways” in work and life.

Participants in the Pilot were groups of Year 9 and 10 students, and their teachers, selected from eleven State Secondary schools. Most of the schools were defined as “facing disadvantage”. In some cases the WOW week was offered as a “stand alone” educational experience; in other cases, it was offered as a follow-up to an earlier City Centre experience and was an integrated part of a school’s careers syllabus. As well as providing exposure to the CBD and Melbourne’s public transport network, WOW activities included a range of opportunities to visit and interact with major city corporations and organizations (including Workplace Breakfasts, Classroom to Boardroom seminars), a series of skills development classes and workshops (‘Communicating with WOW’, ‘WOW Enterprise Skills’, ‘Imagine Me: Goal Setting / Dreaming’, ‘Brand Me’), and presentations by Inspirational Speakers and the students themselves.

Research design

The Australian Youth Research Centre has been commissioned by EFA to undertake biennial evaluations of its programs, beginning in 2008. As one component of that process, evaluation of the WOW Pilot Program was conducted by the AYRC between February and May 2008. In compiling their report, the researchers utilised information and data from interviews with students, teachers and a WOW representative; post-program student and teacher surveys; teacher journals; written student and workplace reflections; recorded feedback and student DVD presentations.
Findings

Student, teacher and workplace feedback testify to the overall success of the WOW Pilot Program (a) in engaging and challenging the student (and teacher) participants; and (b) in achieving the program’s stated objectives.

Objective 1
To build students’ sense of identity, belonging and connectedness to the City of Melbourne

Student accounts of locating and accessing the City Centre and various workplaces, negotiating the public transport network and successfully participating in specific component activities such as a visit to Eureka Tower, Melbourne Precinct walks and MP3 Interviews, demonstrated and confirmed significantly increased Connectedness with the City of Melbourne. This ‘connectedness’ was supported by survey results which indicated that 87% of the sample now felt “more confident” about navigating the streets of Melbourne while 82% now saw themselves as part of both the City of Melbourne and their own suburban community. Teachers and students commented favourably on the opportunities provided by the activities to enhance their knowledge of the City, and to explore concepts such as 360 degree feedback in a novel and practical way.

Objective 2
To provide new experiences, connections and opportunities for students to explore definitions of success and the skills and strategies essential to success in the CBD environment

Similarly, uniformly enthusiastic teacher and student responses to the Enterprise Skills and Communication Skills workshops, the Classroom to Boardroom lunch and Brand Me activities illustrated (a) the effectiveness of program delivery and (b) the effectiveness of the program generally in providing the students with “new experiences, connections and opportunities … to explore definitions of success”, as well as training in “the skills and strategies essential to success in the CBD environment”. Eighty seven percent of the students surveyed felt that the program had expanded their sense of what was possible while almost 90% now had a better understanding of “what it takes to succeed”. Interviewees provided numerous anecdotal examples of having drawn successfully on aspects of their WOW training in subsequent work experience situations.

Objective 3
To develop students’ capacities to utilise their skills and strengths to create their own pathways and achieve their future aspirations.

Survey data was (slightly) more qualified on the issue of students utilising identified skills and strengths to “create their own pathways”. Only 71% of the sample intended to stay at school longer, for instance. At the same time, 79% felt they had a clearer view of how they would like to work in the future while 82% had a “stronger sense of themselves”. Interview responses were more emphatic,
students citing improved school attendance, changes in behaviour, recognition of the importance of schooling, and clearer perspectives on possible careers as outcomes of attending the Pilot Program. Talks by Inspirational Speakers, the Alignment workshop and the first workplace visit were identified, in both survey and information data, as the activities from which the students learned most.

Interviewees stressed the importance of the WOW experience in enabling them (a) to develop reflective processes (reassessment of the concepts of ‘work’ and ‘success’, for example); (b) to develop networks (including making contact with appropriate sources of career advice); and (c) to develop social skills (increasing confidence and interpersonal skills and expanding social contacts). Teacher responses highlighted intense professional satisfaction at the maturity, work capacity and complex thinking typically demonstrated by students during the WOW week. Tangible outcomes have included presentations by students to community groups, and the successful use of enterprise skills in self-organisation of numerous Year 10 work experience placements.

Participants noted also the success of WOW in providing disadvantaged young people with role models, in nurturing the development of mentor relationships, and in facilitating their contact with sympathetic and informed adult listeners. While levels of student interest, application and enjoyment underlined the great success of WOW in modelling approaches to learning that were significantly “different from school”, there were strong indications that the week’s experiences reinforced the importance of schooling for many students. Interview data confirmed that WOW’s connections and perceived relevance to general school programs were maximised when the week of activities was offered as a formal part of the syllabus, and thus integrated into the school structure (rather than as a one-off elective).

Interview and anecdotal data highlighted a number of impediments to successful participation in the WOW Program, among them the difficulty experienced by some schools in persuading students to move outside their 5km radius, reported parental opposition, possible financial constraints and school priorities. There were strong indications that integrating the WOW Program into the overall Year 9 careers syllabus tended to give it more credence with parents, students and the schools.

Recommendations

Based on overwhelmingly positive student, teacher and workplace responses to the Pilot, it is recommended that:

(1) EFA continues to offer the WOW program in its current form.

(2) Priority and funding be given to schools in disadvantaged communities to assist and encourage student participation in the program.

(3) WOW facilitators examine the possibility of expanding the program, possibly accessing a greater diversity of workplaces for longer periods of time.

(4) Participating schools seek to incorporate the WOW program into the general school curriculum.
Context

**Education Foundation Australia** is an independent, non-profit organisation that supports young Australians by funding and facilitating innovation in public schools. Established in 1989, EFA seeks to ensure educational excellence and equity for all young Australians, in particular young people identified as facing disadvantage. Its programs and ongoing research agenda are guided by (1) commitment to active support of schools in disadvantaged communities; (2) commitment to schooling that addresses the growing social and economic cleavages in Australia; and (3) commitment to young people assuming leadership roles in schools and communities.

Over the past decade EFA has developed a range of innovative programs and educational experiences designed (a) to address the specific and diverse learning needs of secondary school students identified as “disadvantaged” and/or “disengaged” from learning; and (b) to promote partnerships between schools, business, government and the community. Specific initiatives, through which EFA drives leading practice in Australian schools, have included Housing Week, Neighbourhood Renewal, Kids and Community, the Lighthouse Schools Project and (currently) Step Up, Beyond the Classroom, ruMAD and the City Learning programs: City Centre and WOW. Set up in 2003, EFA’s City Centre enables over 4,000 Year 9 and 10 students from over 50 Victorian public schools each year to engage in active independent learning utilising the rich resources of the Melbourne Central Business District.

In 2007, the City Centre introduced and conducted the Worlds of Work Pilot program (“WOW”, the “Pilot”, or the “Program”). The WOW concept evolved out of the City Centre program ‘Welcome to My World’. This comprised a series of ‘World of Work’ days in which 100 young people attended Classroom to Boardroom sessions at 101 Collins Street. Acknowledging the success of the sessions, but feeling that they fell somewhat outside existing EFA program guidelines, City Centre staff opted to create a bigger picture alternative that would focus (a) on the “world of possibilities”; and (b) on how best to prepare students for ever-changing working worlds and environments.

WOW’s purpose is to build the capacity of students from socially and economically disadvantaged communities to effectively participate in the future global worlds of work. This is facilitated through three primary student learning objectives:

- To build students’ sense of identity, belonging and connectedness to the City of Melbourne;
- To provide new experiences, connections and opportunities for students to explore definitions of success and the skills and strategies essential to success in the CBD environment; and
- To develop students’ capacity to utilise their skills and strengths to create their own pathways and achieve their future aspirations.

The Program facilitates access by students to major workplaces and organizations across the CBD. (The City Centre’s proximity to a wide range of CBD workplaces is at the core of the program). Over the course of a week, program participants interact with five different ‘worlds of work’, including government departments, NGOs, and other corporate businesses. As one of the facilitators commented, “We
wanted to have [several] different workplace experiences for each student and to be able to relate to workplace participants in a different way in each”.

The 14 organisations that supported and took part in the 2007 Pilot were Booz Allen Hamilton, Cadbury Schwepes, Challenger, City of Melbourne, Connell Wagner, Credit Suisse, Education Foundation Australia, Goldman Sachs J B Were, Macquarie Bank, Myer, State Government of Victoria Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, State Government of Victoria Department of Human Services, The Smith Family, and Telstra Foundation.

As part of WOW, students:

- Undertake challenging activities in a range of major workplaces across the CBD;
- Participate in workshops with titles including I AM: its all about me, Imagine Me, Brand Me, Balancing Me and Communicating with WOW;
- Conduct street-interviews in a range of Melbourne’s work precincts; and
- Learn about themselves and the capabilities needed to succeed in the worlds of work via a 360 degree feedback tool.

Program Delivery

The Pilot was delivered at EFA’s City Centre in the second half of 2007. Twelve schools were invited to take part; eleven did so. Keen to involve a cross-section of students, facilitators included a country school, a combination class (students from two settings), and an inner-city secondary college catering for slightly older (Year 10) students from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Some schools already had a relationship with the City Centre (through their involvement in the ‘C C’ and ‘Neighbourhood Renewal’ programs); others were selected “out of the blue”. Each school group comprised approximately twenty-five Year 9 or 10 students and 2 teachers. Schools participated without charge during the trial period. (In 2008 participation will cost $185 per student).

Pre WOW work

Introduction to the WOW Program generally comprised:

- Preliminary visits to schools by WOW representatives and informal discussion (by teachers) about the work of the City Centre;
- Provision to teachers, via e-mail, of an information pack/manual containing information on the week, the curriculum and its connection to VELS;
- Intending participants also attended a Pre Program Induction day at WOW where students were encouraged to share their ideas on “success” and teachers outlined their own expectations of the program. Students were provided with an Induction pack containing a summary of Centre rules and regulations, an explanation of the terms Signature Strengths and Star Skills, a timetable and a map of the CBD. Students problem-solved practicalities such as accessing and navigating the CBD, and completed the pre-program 360 degree Positive Feedback activity. (The WOW 360° Positive Feedback Questionnaire is a workplace evaluation strategy, designed specifically for the WOW program by Iedex Pty Ltd (pro-bono) and Education Foundation Australia for use in the WOW Pilot program to provide participants with four different perspectives on their strengths and skills). Students also completed the online VIA Signature Strengths Survey for Children – Measures 24 Character strengths (University of Pennsylvania) www.authentichappiness.com integrating a positive psychology framework.
According to one student:

[Our teacher] roughly explained what other schools had done. We had meetings, outlined boundaries, learned how to read maps, how to get around the City, buy a ticket … catch the train. Some kids hadn’t been into the City before … It wasn’t a case of ‘Just follow me’. We sat down and helped them read the maps before they went into town … We had role plays on how to speak to people [Student, Fawkner Secondary College].

The 2007 Pilot was delivered by staff already employed on the City Centre program and with backgrounds in theatre, psychology and teaching. The same team is scheduled to deliver the program in 2008.
Evaluation context and design

Evaluation context

The evaluation will analyse the extent to which the Pilot has met its stated student objectives that are:

- To build students’ sense of identity, belonging and connectedness to the City of Melbourne;
- To provide new experiences, connections and opportunities for students to explore definitions of success and the skills and strategies essential to success in the CBD environment; and
- To develop students’ capacity to utilise their skills and strengths to create their own pathways and achieve their future aspirations.

Evaluation design

Timeline

The evaluation was conducted between February 2008 and May 2008.

Evaluation Activities

Collection of existing program data

Over the course of the pilot program, a range of data was collected by the program staff to be used in the evaluation process. This data included:

- End of week program surveys from students and teachers (154 students and two teachers completed these surveys).
- Teacher learning journals (Five out of the 12 participating schools completed the teacher learning journals).
- Pre and post program recorded feedback sessions with students and teachers (This was conducted with all schools and recorded).
- Written student reflections and
- Student movie presentations

Interviews

Interviews have been conducted in 2008, post completion of the program, with teachers and students at two of the schools involved in the Pilot Project.

Four students (three girls and one boy) from the 2007 pilot were interviewed at Fawkner Secondary College for one hour about their experiences of the Program. Three boys and a girl from the 2007 pilot were also interviewed for one hour at Hillcrest Secondary College. The careers teachers at Fawkner Secondary College and Hillcrest Secondary College (both of whom attended the Program) were interviewed for forty minutes and one hour respectively.
Evaluation findings

The WOW program has broadened my outlook on life and my future career. This week has been an experience beyond words as I have learnt so much about myself, about other people and how I can communicate with a range of people and understand them. I feel this program has given me more hope for the future and given me the motivation to succeed in different aspects of my life [Student].

The program has such an exciting feel about it. The people who organised and participated in it were so inspiring and generous in spirit. They gave the kids something they would never usually get back in the classroom. They gave them the overview of the world at work and how they work, succeed and interact. They shared their lives and their rich tapestries of experience. [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College].

Why WOW?

Students cited a number of reasons for their decision to participate in the WOW program. Comments included: “I chose WOW because it’s good to try new things ... good experience to get out there and see what it’s like”. Some hoped the program would be “confidence-building”, an opportunity for “communication training”, and “a chance to learn new skills ... I was interested in what Mr [the teacher] said ... it sounded good”. Some were attracted simply by “being out of the classroom ... Love that it gets you out of school”. One student, a recent migrant to Australia, saw the program as a good way “to meet new people ... see something different”.

WOW Facilitators see the Program as all about expanding the possible life and work choices of young people, particularly those facing disadvantage, enabling participants “with limited knowledge of what is possible” to identify the skills needed for success and providing them with opportunities to put them into practice. They aim also to expand the awareness of participating teachers, to illuminate the “greater meaning” of what they do, and to facilitate their interactions with professionals in other fields.

WOW Facilitators seek to “role model career satisfaction, authenticity, curiosity and that learning is fun”. Program content, based on an experiential model of “learn, act, reflect”, and a Positive Psychology framework is designed to continually (and increasingly) challenge students so as to maximise their sense of achievement and self esteem, at the end of each program segment. Emphasis is placed on achieving a responsible balance between expanding possibilities and grounding young people in real life.

Program Selection

Schools selected student participants in different ways. In some cases, students were asked to submit a written application detailing their reasons for wanting to be part of the program. Students’ past school records and/or suitability for the program were sometimes taken into account. One teacher chose a group:
... from all over Year 9, including some kids I had never spoken to. I selected kids who wouldn’t muck around and stuff it up for us ... Not necessarily the brightest academically. [Teacher, Fawkner Secondary College]

Teachers at some schools in lower socio economic areas, where WOW was not integrated into a Year 9/10 program, noted that they had encountered significant difficulty in persuading students to attempt the week of activities. A frequent consideration was reluctance by students to move outside the school or local environment (“Most don’t go past Jacana Station prior to Year 9”). In some cases this reluctance, and consequent failure to turn up to some scheduled WOW sessions, appears to have reflected limited parental support for the experience. As one teacher commented:

... A lot of the kids are really wary about leaving their comfort zone ... A couple of years back we had to pull out of [another program] because the kids just wouldn’t travel past Box Forest Road ... Believe me, it took a lot of cajoling and talking to get them to take part. They were all a bit nervous. I had to reassure parents that they weren’t going to get lost, that they’d be safe in the City and on the trains travelling in....

The teacher cited above stressed the value and importance of the WOW program as a way to get the students “out of Fawkner, out of here”

Had to be done. For some kids it was the first time into the City ... One kid had never been on a train without her mother ... Just to see big buildings, sit in an office ... By the end of the week they were managing the City easily. The kids had time to look around, go out to eat, shop. Every day was a day out ... They got to deal with a variety of people – not just me. Kylie, Rhonda, Dean, Darren ... [At the end] I couldn’t find one student who didn’t like the program.

The same teacher noted regretfully that his school’s participation in WOW 2008 was unlikely.

It looks like we won’t be running it this year. I couldn’t get 25 kids ... only ten. I hoped that hearing last year’s kids talk about what they did would help, but ... 40 kids took the note home ... [but] they just won’t bring the notes back signed ... I suspect the parents don’t see it [WOW] as relevant or valuable ... Even if it was free ... I know if I could just get them there there’d be no problem [but] they just won’t go. [Teacher, Fawkner Secondary College]

In some instances, teachers chose to offset a shortage of applications by combining for the week with another school. The prospect of teaming up with strangers/outsiders sometimes compounded students’ fears of the experience; in at least one instance, the arrival of another school towards the end of the WOW week “totally threw” the group in residence. In other cases respondents felt strongly that “the schools could mix more” and that “it was good to interact with another school ... greatly appreciated”. One rural school saw sharing space and activities with city students as an important part of the experience and combined by choice.
Due to there only being a small number of students from our school, we teamed up with Thornbury, another secondary college. It wasn’t until half way through the week that we actually started to associate and become friends and I guess this was due to a lack of confidence. However, when we did interact we found that these city kids weren’t that bad and were really laid back and friendly ... By Friday, we all felt disappointed in a way as these new formed friendships didn’t have a chance to really start, but with the exchange of email addresses and mobile numbers we were sure that contact would not be a problem. [Student, Korumburra Secondary College]

Reluctance to attempt the experience seems to have been significantly less at schools where EFA activities (including the Pilot Program) were an integrated feature of the overall Work Experience syllabus. At Hillcrest Secondary College, for example, all Year 9 students had already completed a Term III City Centre component as part of the school’s Learning Journeys curriculum area. Consequently they (and their parents) tended to be much more “open” to the option of undertaking WOW in Term IV. “Going into Melbourne Central [was] built in, part of the culture”, noted Hillcrest Secondary College’s careers teacher.

Stressing the importance of preparatory work at school in Terms I, II and III (“It would have been a disaster otherwise”), the teacher in question cited “huge enthusiasm” for WOW – “We had trouble fitting all the kids in ... had to book two more WOWs ...” (“City Centre was a lot of fun... I wanted to do another program”, reported one Hillcrest student). In this instance, the teacher noted that the inability of some families to pay for the year long program was not a consideration. “No kid doesn’t go” thanks to a generous grant by the Myer Foundation [Student & Teacher Hillcrest Secondary College]

There was some feeling that integrating City Centre and WOW in this way tended to give the programs more legitimacy with both students and parents. Consequently the “five kilometre radius” factor seems to have been less of a barrier at schools where all Year 9 or 10 students participate.

Program Travel

Students clearly brought differing histories to bear on accessing the CBD. For some, from outer northern schools, simply going into the City was a novelty. In some cases, accessing the City Centre was their first experience of buying a ticket and catching a train independently. After initial difficulty just finding the way around Melbourne Central and the City Centre, they typically “… learnt to get around with the right instructions”. [Students, Hillcrest Secondary College] “I think we should do this every year because it gives you the chance to [know] Melbourne” was another observation.

For rural students, billeted in different parts of Melbourne during the Pilot project, the task of becoming familiar with the urban train/tram network was compounded by the need also to negotiate unfamiliar suburban locales. “Because the twelve of us had different accommodation it was our responsibility to get from A to B by ourselves, which meant we also had a lot of freedom and had to manage our time well”, reported one of the Korumburra Secondary College participants.

This contrasted markedly with the experience of Fitzroy High School students, most of them already very familiar with the CBD and accustomed to using the public transport network on a daily basis.
Program Language

Assessments of the difficulty or accessibility of language used in the program varied. Some respondents felt that terms like ‘Signature Strengths’, ‘Alignment’, Star Skills’, ‘Networking’ and ‘Enterprise Skills Model’ might have been explained more fully prior to commencement of the program. For example:

The WOW Enterprise Skills could have been explained more effectively with reference to real world examples. A few students were unsure what their group’s chosen skill meant and found it difficult to relate to the Youtube video with it. One group did not understand what networking meant and found it really difficult to find a Youtube video [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College]

“I am realising that many of our kids probably didn’t [even] know what 360 degrees means”, one teacher acknowledged. Another (teacher) respondent suggested that a glossary on the wall at the City Centre, and daily revision of terms during the program, might have been beneficial. (“We need to brainstorm the new words we have heard in the wrap ups each day to make sure the concepts are understood”).

While conceding that “it might have helped to learn the terms earlier ... [perhaps] to have our own little program beforehand”, other respondents felt that the WOW staff “explained everything pretty well ... by the end we knew what they meant. Some kids had a bit of difficulty – talking to them helped ... No one left them floundering” [Students Fawkner Secondary College] Elsewhere respondents conceded that the surprise factor was a distinctive feature of WOW and recognised that “giving too much away” beforehand – including terminology – might well dilute the impact of the experience. According to one teacher, “The [terms/concepts] were OK once explained by the facilitators ... In general the kids dealt with them without problems” [Teacher Fawkner Secondary College]. One student actively “liked the terminology”, while another is “still using the terms ... I use them everyday” [Students, Fawkner & Hillcrest Secondary Colleges]
Program Outcomes

Objective 1
To build students’ sense of identity, belonging and connectedness to the City of Melbourne

Activities conducted to achieve this objective included:
- A visit to the Eureka Tower discussing big picture perspectives;
- Melbourne precinct learning walks and street interviews;
- Welcome to My World – small group interviews in major workplaces across Melbourne;
- Balancing Me – physical fitness activity focussing on health management and concept of a ‘balanced life’ is conducted in Flagstaff Gardens (see description under objective 3);
- Classroom to Boardroom Lunch – Workplace exploration and boardroom lunch in major workplaces across Melbourne; and
- Workplace Breakfast – students are given directions and need to make their own way to the Workplace Breakfast (see description under objective 3).

Survey responses

After participating in the different activities the students completed a post WOW survey. Overall, students responded very positively to the program with 87% of students feeling more confident navigating the streets of Melbourne, 83% of students now seeing themselves as part of the City of Melbourne as well as their local community, 89% of students feeling safe doing new things and getting to know new people in Melbourne. There was a lower response to the number of students who wanted to share the experience with their family with 65% of students saying they would like to bring a family member into Melbourne CBD and share discoveries from the program.

Student & Teacher interview responses

Eureka Towers

Designed to familiarise students with such terms and concepts as the Big Picture and 360 degree perspectives; and to encourage reflection on personal possibilities, a visit to Eureka Towers was the first workshop of the WOW program. (“It was important that the program did have a WOW factor which really grabbed the students’ attention straight away”, noted one of the facilitators). Teacher participants described the orientation exercise as “an excellent way to introduce students to ‘working Melbourne’”, noting that students were strongly engaged by the activity. “I heard many students pointing at specific buildings and saying ‘I would love to work there one day”, observed one teacher. “Eureka Towers was brilliant”, confirmed another. “The reinforcement statements about zooming 360 degrees out and then zooming back in were powerful if over their heads at times”.
One student was intrigued by symbolic aspects of the building, notably the significance of the colours gold and red in relation to the Eureka uprising. Others responded enthusiastically to the surprise element of the visit. Several respondents cited Eureka Towers, and particularly the experience of travelling in the glass-sided viewing box, as their favourite part of the week. According to one:

... the WOW program couldn’t have started any better than with a trip to the Eureka tower for a 360 degree perspective. During the week the term 360 degree perspective was essential ... for reinforcing the message that part of succeeding is having a broader view of things in life, constantly, ‘going in and out’, narrowing and widening the views of the different worlds we live in, enabling us to notice and learn things that often go unnoticed. [Student, Korumburra Secondary College]

Melbourne Precinct Learning Walks & MP3 Street Interviews

(a) Precincts Walks

The first part of this activity was an orientation exercise, providing program participants with the opportunity (a) to familiarise themselves with the general geography and topography of the CBD; and (b) to explore and discover less familiar features and aspects of the City. Students were split into working groups, equipped with two MP3 players, a map and written directions to different CBD precincts (legal, financial, arts, retail, government). A recorded tour of the journey was provided on the MP3s.

Teachers and students commented favourably on the experience noting that the walks had opened up parts of the City (including alleys, hidden streets and shops) they may never have found otherwise. One student credited the activity with having improved his knowledge of Melbourne. “I got a better sense of direction. I use this in my day to day life visiting the City” [Student, Fitzroy High School]

(b) MP3 Interviews

Having been sent out into different precincts (“worlds within worlds”) of the CBD, the students conducted three to five street interviews with members of the public on the theme ‘Success’ (specifically, “what skills are needed to succeed in the world of life and work?”). An exercise in confidence-building and analysis (comparing the responses of interviewees from within the legal and arts precincts, for instance), the activity was designed also to develop students’ interview skills and teamwork. Each group member was assigned a specific role/task (photographer, director, interviewer) with one person trained to work the equipment. Confronted by a glitch in the equipment provided, one group compensated resourcefully by using a mobile phone as recording device.

There were indications that some students found the MP3 Interview process intimidating while some experienced difficulty with the equipment. (The activity has been modified for 2008). Other participants clearly found hearing different perspectives on the meaning of “success” and “making what you want happen ... the idea of possibilities” resonant. [Students, Fawkner Secondary College]. Having expected simple ‘Yes/No’ answers, some students were pleasantly surprised by the responsiveness and expansiveness of some interviewees. “By going up to people, I feel more confident to go up to people and have a good conversation”, was one comment. Another respondent summed up the MP3 exercise as “a real treat”, one worth repeating at school - if possible [Student, Hillcrest Secondary College].
Welcome to my world

Having completed the WOW Enterprise Skills and Communication workshops (see below), students were required to locate and visit the first (of five) major workplaces and conduct small group interviews with employees.

Interviewees praised the openness and friendliness of the workplaces and employees (among them a journalist, representatives of Connell Wagner, Telstra and Cadbury, and “someone who ran sideshows”). “They respected us ... they were welcoming ... they weren’t snobby, they’re just people”, was one comment. One of the teachers expressed satisfaction at the way the ‘Welcome to My World’ activity nurtured the ability of students “… to think on the spot”.

... At the beginning, when groups were asked to generate questions, many could only come up with five. In the interviews [however] I saw students ask questions that were not prescribed or written beforehand ... The students talked about their interviews on the way back to the City centre. They were really proud and happy with what they had achieved.

Interviewing a civil engineer at Connell Wagner was cited as a definite program highlight by one rural student who described the process as:

... very informal ... rather than it being a question and answer session, it became more of a relaxed conversation. Dave explained that he hadn’t followed one direct path to get to where he is today. His story gave me insight to consider that there is more than one pathway to success [Student, Korumburra Secondary College]

One teacher suggested that role play interviews prior to the first workplace visit might have been useful in giving students an opportunity to practice asking probing questions and using the responses to generate further questions. “The more adults that we can involve with these young people on an ongoing basis the better” was another assessment.
Activities conducted to achieve this objective included:

- WOW enterprise skills workshop;
- Communication workshop on alignment and misalignment;
- Classroom to boardroom Lunch – Workplace exploration and boardroom lunch in major workplaces across Melbourne;
- I AM Star presenting – Each student identifies their distinctive elements of themselves. Students choose words to describe themselves and are filmed making their affirmative statements;
- Interview for success – Interview dress competition for student’s ideal job interview held through Myer. Students choose one candidate per group to be styled in their preferred career dress;
- Workplace breakfast - networking breakfast with employee interview panel in major workplaces across Melbourne. Students get the opportunity to put into action all WOW Enterprise and Communication Skills (see description under objective 3); and
- Inspirational Speaker – A speaker shares their journey and talks about this in regard to learning from the WOW program.

Survey responses

Survey responses indicated that: 86.9% of students felt that the program had expanded their sense of what was possible while 86.3% felt they now had a bigger picture view of the Global world of work. 84% believed that the WOW Workplace Activities had expanded their perception of workplaces and what went on there.

On the question of success, 89.4% of respondents now felt they had a better understanding of what it takes to succeed. 87.7% had discovered that there are many ways to think about and measure success, and 83.6% of students were thinking more about success than they had done.

By the end of the program, 85% of the students felt “more confident” about approaching and talking with successful people and 76% of respondents indicated interest in interviewing someone currently engaged in the type of work they might like to do.

Student & Teacher interview responses

Enterprise Skills

The central foci of this seminar-style activity were the concepts of Signature Strengths and Star Strategies for success.

Over the course of the session, students were encouraged:

- To identify and recognise 24 Signature Strengths (Seligman, M.E.P, 2002), (ranging from ‘Appreciation of beauty and excellence’ through ‘Honesty, authenticity and genuineness’, ‘Industry, diligence and perseverance’, ‘Love of learning’, ‘Perspective...
(wisdom), ‘Citizenship, teamwork and empathy’, ‘Judgment, critical thinking and open-mindedness’, etc, to ‘Self-control and self-regulation’ and ‘Modesty and Humility’) (See Appendix 3).

To acquire and begin to utilise nine Star Strategies, as devised and developed by R.E. Kelly in *How to be a Star at Work* (1995) and adapted (by WOW staff) for use with adolescents. (See Appendix 2)

Specifics of the training included (a) getting a message across effectively (Star Presenting); (b) effective team-building (Star Teamwork); (c) learning to examine situations from multiple viewpoints (Star Perspective); (d) productive co-operation (Star Followership); and (e) identification of goals and personal talents and strengths (Star Self-Management). “Now that I have a better idea about networking I am putting the skills into place”, reported one student.

One teacher felt that more emphasis might have been placed on the Star Strategies in follow-up activities such as using Youtube. The teacher in question argued that the students risked reverting to “old habits” unless the newly-acquired strategies were more fully “integrated into the task … ‘Learning is in the doing’ … the students need to experience the situation instead of [being told] what they will learn”. By way of example, he stressed the applicability of ‘Star Networking’ to the task of completing the Youtube activity.

**Communication Skills (Alignment) workshop**

Described as one of the building blocks underpinning the WOW program, the Communication Workshop provided students with an opportunity to learn skills needed for the week’s workplace visits. Darren Natale, a professional actor and Director of Verve Studios was employed to develop and facilitate this workshop. “In this workshop we learnt how to ‘align’ with people, hence how to start a conversation with a complete stranger or even your closest friend without being intimidating or unapproachable”, noted one student [Student, Korumburra Secondary College].

In general teachers and students deemed the workshop “excellent”, found the presentation refreshing and seductive (“I loved the way [facilitator] Darren came across”), and recognised the importance and practicality of the content: “If you can’t talk you look like an idiot … if you can’t speak you won’t get a job”. (One student described “the talk with Darren” as “the only part of the program that I found interesting”).

One teacher was pleasantly surprised by the progress he observed in the workshop: “By the end every student was listening very carefully to what Darren [facilitator] was saying … It was good to see [one student] follow exactly what the facilitator [said] about alignment not copying … trying very hard with his hand movements, his body gestures and facial expressions to align with his partner”.

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Other comments included:

*It was [all] about how people communicate ... eye contact, how to present yourself at interviews... Now I don’t sit fidgeting anymore*

*I use the body language and confidence I gained through this program to communicate with people [Student, Fitzroy High School].*

**Classroom to Boardroom**

This activity, aimed at imparting information about particular workplaces and their cultures, offered the students an opportunity to interact, interview, engage and mix (formally and informally), over lunch in boardrooms or committee-rooms, with representatives of a range of Melbourne workplaces, including Telstra, Myer, Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs, the Macquarie Bank and Melbourne City Council.

Student and teacher feedback indicated that some workplaces were more successful than others in engaging or inspiring the students. In one case, the physical size of the City of Melbourne committee room reportedly inhibited discussion or interactions. In another, students were mildly disconcerted by a speaker’s frankness about the difficulty she faced in balancing family time and the company’s demands.

Other speakers and venues were described more positively (“*really friendly, really approachable ... ready to answer questions before they moved on*”). Myer, for instance, provided the opportunity to talk about effectively balancing career and home life, and “*gave us all the [information needed] about success, about 360 degree confidence ... how to get your career out of it*” [Students Fawkner & Hillcrest Secondary Colleges] Goldman Sachs spokespersons demonstrated lucidly how “career paths are prone to change”.

Two teachers were particularly impressed with the students’ reaction to speakers from the Macquarie Bank:

… Fantastic. All students were able to align themselves and successfully interview participants. The thing that stood out the most in my mind was when all students introduced themselves and shook employees’ hands without any prompts [Teacher, Broadmeadows Secondary College]

*Macquarie Bank was fantastic, the students were mixing well and taking charge of themselves and the interactions. The students asked fabulous questions and demonstrated their new skills learnt during the week for example aligning themselves with others, and learning through the 360 degree feedback about their strengths [Teacher, Banksia Secondary College].*

One student described though some of the difficulties in regard to having the confidence to talk to the workers in the companies that they visited. The student commented:

*I think that when you go to the companies that there should be more one on one talking due to that fact that every one has questions but some people don’t feel comfortable asking them in front of people also it is*
harder to truly understand someone when your competing for their attention with 20 other students.

One group of students cited interviews with ‘big company’ people as the activity from which they had learned most.

*They told us how it was for them, [that] you don’t have to stick to one thing … have a back-up plan. Success is not just about how far you climb – it’s about being happy with yourself … Some of the people we met didn’t get where they wanted but found something else. A few of us thought a full-time [corporate] job would mean no time for [personal life] but they told us you can make time for family [and leisure] [Students, Fawkner Secondary College].*

Inspirational Speaker

This very popular program component enabled students to listen to, and interact with, one of several charismatic speakers brought in to share their personal histories of overcoming obstacles and achieving success. (Speakers included a Sustainability Scientist, a Futurist, a global businessman, the CEO of the Podcast network, an Online Marketer, a Para-Olympian and an Elite sportsperson). The rationale for the activity was to provide alternative perspectives on success.

The four student respondents at Fawkner Secondary College spoke most enthusiastically about Jo, an Elite sportsperson, who had advised them strongly:

... ‘Be yourself. Do whatever you can do. Don’t be shy’. Her story was good ... She had everyone saying ‘You can’t do that ... your body won’t be able to take it’. She’s laughing at them now ... She really got [us] thinking ... gave us her card so we could e-mail her ... Took a real interest... The sense that anything’s possible. Jo, in particular, made us realise that. All the speakers contributed [Students, Fawkner Secondary College].

Another participant found that “the week concluded even better than it started off”, thanks to a Para-Olympian spokesperson.

*His positive attitude and outlook on life made us all [re]consider the little things that we get so angry [about] and focus on just living ... waking up happy, not wasting a minute of the day. This man is living proof that things don’t always turn out the way you want them but “who cares”, as you only get one chance to live and you have to take it while you have it.*

“He left me speechless and amazed by his achievements ... definitely my highlight of the week”, and “I wanted to ask questions but I was just so speechless and amazed by his positive attitude and outlook on life”, confirmed other participants.

One student spoke at some length about the impact on him of hearing Dan, a spokesperson for ‘Make Poverty History’. The speaker had clearly heightened the students’ awareness of the plight of people dying of AIDS in Africa, and had nurtured the realisation that “people were people” irrespective of “who they were or where they lived”. Other Hillcrest Secondary College students connected strongly with this speaker’s emphasis on persistence, resilience and “the need to keep trying”. [Students, Hillcrest Secondary College]
Interview for success

‘Interview for Success’ was a competitive fun exercise, (in the words of one student) “all about what you think success looks like”. Student groups were called on to think about dressing for their ideal job interview. One member of each group was selected to be styled as a lawyer, a surfer, a fashion consultant, etc. One participant noted that groups typically tended to dress up their shyest member - “to bring them out a bit”. (She cited the example of a fellow student, “a turtle in a shell”, who noticeably gained confidence from the exercise). “It was about freedom – having fun with friends”, assessed another student. [Students, Fawkner & Hillcrest Secondary Colleges]

Teacher feedback identified the “Myer dress up thing” as an undoubted highlight of the week. One respondent was “… amazed at the level of trust provided by Myer at the ‘brand me’ activity. The results for some groups were transformational”. Another noted the store’s good will: “No one had reminded Myer we were coming but they [accommodated] us without a problem. [Teachers, Fitzroy High School and Fawkner Secondary College]

Activities conducted to achieve this objective included:

- Balancing Me – physical fitness activity focussing on health management and concept of a ‘balanced life’;
- Workplace breakfast – networking breakfast with employee interview panel in major workplaces across Melbourne. Students get the opportunity to put into action all WOW Enterprise and Communication Skills ;
- I AM Star Presenting- Students explore their signature character strengths and how they can integrate them into school/work/life;
- Imagine me – Goal setting, dreaming to explore and identify an ideal working world for the future and pathway to reach it; and
- Presentations – Student group movie presentation of the program to peers, student’s special guests, workplace participants and parents.

Survey Responses

Survey results indicate that, as a result of their participation in the WOW program, 82% of students are now thinking more about the kind of work experience they would like to do, 79% now believe they have a clearer view of how they would like to work in the future while 77% feel more confident about the prospect of job interviews.

75% of students had discovered what it meant to be enterprising during the program. 85% of them had discovered their own enterprising skills; 83% wished to develop more enterprise skills for use in school, work experience and work.

As a result of the WOW experience, 75% of students were more likely to work harder to succeed in school; 71% were more likely to stay at school longer; and
76% planned to consider further (or different) studies after leaving school. 78% of students now took more responsibility for their learning than they would have done previously.

82% of students now felt they had a stronger sense of themselves; 81% had a better understanding of their key strengths and skills (and how to develop and use them); 83% believed themselves more likely to use their skills and strengths to help achieve their goals.

**Student and Teacher Interview Responses**

*Workplace Breakfast*

Like Classroom to Boardroom, Workplace Breakfast provided a meal-based opportunity for program participants to network with, and to listen and respond to, the varied professional and personal experiences of panels of employee representatives, chosen from all levels of the organisation(s). The activity was designed specifically as a means of “learning to communicate with strangers in that setting”.

One teacher respondent expressed satisfaction at the effective and sensitive way students generalised alignment skills in a panel interview with DEECD employees:

“[The students] ... showed respect and interest in the process ... [They] behaved in a socially acceptable manner in a semi-formal setting ... They found that workers have various career paths and will change jobs and many times. It was a good eye opening exercise [Teacher, Korumburra Secondary College]

Another teacher was strongly impressed by a Smith Family breakfast workshop where:

*Staff ... talked about similar issues, journeys and life experiences. This was great for the students because each person reinforces ‘you can do it’ to the kids. There were different journeys and starting points but [they were] going to a place they loved. The students identified with this [Teacher, Broadmeadows Secondary College].

**Balancing Me**

Balancing Me, a fun physical fitness activity, convened (weather permitting) at the Flagstaff Gardens, was judged “fantastic” by more than one respondent. Students acknowledged the potential importance of such physical considerations as “learning to breathe properly” and “relaxing the mind” in the attainment of all-round success. “Make the exercise program with Dean harder, much harder”, recommended one student.

Noting that “all the kids participated in the physical activity despite hot and humid conditions”, teachers described the fitness component of the WOW program as: “... a really good way to get students thinking about the benefits of respecting and looking after your body in order to achieve success in the world of work” [Teachers, Broadmeadows Secondary College].

**Dreaming workshop / I AM ‘Imagine Me’ Workshop**
Responses to this workshop diverged considerably. Where one teacher described it as “…great. The kids respond well to this type of visualisation”, one student bluntly declared it his “least favourite activity ... I didn’t get anything out of it”. “Not that good” was another assessment.

There were indications that response to the activity was largely determined by students’ previous exposure to abstract and speculative exercises of this type. Undoubtedly familiarity with the process helped the students make the most of it. (“We do some of this type of stuff in first term as we build the year 9s into a cohesive group”, noted another teacher).

Presentations)

Student responses suggested that this activity had less impact for the program participants than most of the others. One student described the activity as “a waste of time ... just ... like another boring school assignment”.

Where some groups (the Fawkner Secondary College interviewees, for instance) experienced little difficulty in successfully co-ordinating the time available (“Every day we would do little segments ... On the last day we had two hours to add music and do the finishing touches”), other groups reportedly seemed unsure of “what they were doing when developing their presentations”. One teacher suggested that either (a) seeing examples by other schools, or (b) additional workshopping / training for at least one member of each group, might have been useful in this regard. In some instances shortage of equipment seems to have been an impeding factor. For instance:

> Although the kids had one laptop per group not all them were able to contribute to the presentation. Perhaps other students could be contributing to visual aids? [Teacher, Broadmeadows Secondary College]

One teacher participant noted that successful preparation and completion of the Presentation was a test of each group’s self-management skills. Faced with a 1.45pm deadline, one group juggled the work and lunchtime (something he believed they would not have done as readily back at school) [Teacher, Broadmeadows Secondary College].

Enjoying and learning from the activities

In the survey conducted at the end of day 5, students were asked which activities they had enjoyed and which activities they had learnt from during the WOW program.

Students identified the inspirational speaker (86%), the alignment activity (85%) and the first visit to workplaces where they conducted interviews with employees (85%) as the activities where they learnt the most. Students also enjoyed these activities (Inspirational speaker 82%, Alignment activity 85% and to a lesser extent the interviews in the workplace 76%). While the most number of students enjoyed the Eureka tower activity (92%), the least number of students (60%) felt they had learnt from this activity. A similar response was found with the Classroom to boardroom lunch and Workplace breakfast where approximately 84 % had enjoyed the activity but 74% of students felt they had learnt from the activity. The least
number of students (49%) enjoyed the MP3 walks and interviews about success. This was also one of the activities where fewer students (67%) felt they had learnt from the activity.

**How the activities will affect students in the future**

Overall there was a lower response to whether the activities will affect the students in the future. In general, the greater the number of students who responded that they learnt from the activity, the greater the number felt that the activity would affect them in the future. For example 85% of student said they had learnt from the alignment activity and 80% of students said this activity would affect them in the future. The figures were similar for the inspirational speaker. While many students enjoyed the Eureka Tower, fewer students (60%) felt they had learnt from the activity and only 47% felt that that activity would affect them in the future.

**Student recommendations for activities to remain in the program**

In general students recommended all the activities remain in the program with a very positive response for the Eureka Tower (90%), Inspirational speaker (90%), Workplace breakfast (84%), Classroom to boardroom lunch (85%) and the Alignment workshop (84%). The strongest link was when the students had enjoyed the activity. If they had enjoyed the activity, they were also likely to recommend it. This link was less strong for students learning from the activity.

The activity that the least number of students recommended remain in the program was the MP3 street walks and interviews (68%). This activity had some of the lowest ratings also for enjoyment, learning and affecting students in the future. The activity with the next lowest set of rating was the 360 degree feedback tool. While 72% recommended it remain in the program, 61% of students enjoyed the activity, 68% learnt from the activity and 57% said the activity would affect them in the future.

**Developing reflective processes**

Teacher respondents expressed surprise and pleasure at the work capacity and complex levels of thinking displayed by students during the WOW Pilot. (“I didn’t know what they would get out of it – they got much more than I expected”).

One teacher identified a need to raise her own expectations at the classroom level, noting that some students had “been allowed to ‘cruise’ at school” and are obviously “capable of much more” [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College]. “School still doesn’t ask enough of them in any sustained way”, echoed another teacher.

“One of [the kids] have talked with me about how much they are working”, reported one teacher. Students, too, recognised their own (a) increased application / enthusiasm and (b) evolving perceptions of both work and success during the Pilot program. They noted how, over the course of a week interacting with people in workplaces, they had typically moved away from defining success simply as “lots of money” to recognising the need for achieving balance in life. One example cited was of a high level executive unable to spend time with his children because of his inability to achieve balance between work and family [Students, Hillcrest Secondary College].

One teacher interviewee argued strongly that the WOW Program needed to incorporate a daily component for explicit reflections in the future. [Teacher, Fitzroy High School] Noting that, students were being taken outside comfort zones
and “learning about adaptability” (thanks to WOW and like initiatives), another teacher respondent identified:

... [an] opportunity for deeper conversations connecting work and what they want for life’s journey not just career. At present there are not many spaces in the classroom to explore these deeper conversations but would like to have them. It is important that experience of WOW integrates with what it means for the young people in their lives, and their life’s journey.

Developing Social Skills

Student interviewees cited the value and importance of the WOW experience in (a) nurturing confidence; (b) promoting interpersonal skill development through social interactions; and (c) expanding social networks.

Some respondents found the program empowering or maturing. Instances were cited of “very shy” participants who felt able to “talk more in group sessions now”. One student “… who used to muck around a lot [at school]” reportedly “focused [on WOW] and you saw another side of him. He doesn’t muck around as much ... much better now” [Students, Hillcrest & Fawkner Secondary Colleges]. “Some of the kids have really grown over the week”, reported a teacher. “Some of them who have been fairly socially inept in the school setting are finding their feet possibly for the first time’. “Everyone built up confidence”, noted one student, who was a “talker ... always out there ... By the end of the week I was talking so much I just couldn’t stop. I didn’t want it to end”. [Student, Fawkner Secondary College]

For some students, sharing WOW time fostered the development of peer relationships within their own schools. For instance:

Half of us who went into WOW hadn’t spoken to other Fawkner people [there]. We found we had lots of things in common. The relationships still exist ... we talk to them more now. It’s a good way for a new kid to get to know people.

In other cases, students felt that WOW had given them more positive attitudes towards school or schooling in general. One student, who “missed a lot of days” after transferring from the country at the start of Year 9, confided:

I used to be a leader at my last school ... [but] I didn’t know people at Fawkner ... I didn’t like school ... now I want to go to school and see all my friends ... [Through WOW] I learned how to transfer my leadership skills [Student, Fawkner Secondary College].

For some students, a highlight of the WOW experience was clearly the opportunity to interact with teachers and other adults in non-traditional learning environments. “I liked coming to WOW because I could have a proper friendship with the teacher”, was one response. One teacher felt that students typically displayed marked differences in their attitude to staff at school and at the City Centre. In his view, the WOW experience provided some students with their first recognition that their own teachers were actually “doing a job” and were not, in fact, “… part of [an] extended family” [Teacher, Banksia Secondary College]

Developing (or Widening) Networks
Teacher and student participants cited a range of instances in which they have utilised skills learned and contacts made during the program to develop personal and communal networks. In 2007, for instance:

❖ Eight students from Hillcrest Secondary College volunteered to pack Christmas boxes at the Smith family after going there for one of their workplace visits. Some of these students have been given scholarships by the Smith Family to help them stay at school.

❖ A student from Fawkner Secondary College has completed work experience with one of the companies visited and will complete another program of work experience with the same company in 2008.

❖ Another Fawkner Secondary College student was awarded a scholarship to the Young Ambassador’s Conference, was involved in the Make Poverty History campaign and, in company with peers, addressed several school and community groups on the topic ‘WOW’.

> Since we did WOW we have been asked to be more involved in things outside school, like Minter Ellison … Spoke about activities over lunch … Mr L [teacher] would say ‘This is going on. Would you be interested?’ or he asked me to do a presentation. ‘We say ‘Yeah .... We’ll come’ … Our confidence has grown.

In 2008 students from a number of different schools have been able to draw on contacts they made while visiting the various workplaces to organise Year 10 work experience placements (including a Journalism stint) at those work places.

In the case of one school, from a socially and economically disadvantaged area, this was one of the first times that a student had tackled work experience outside the local area. The teacher commented that, without the WOW program, the student would not (a) have been aware of the possibility of work experience in the City, nor (b) have had the chance to make the necessary contacts. “The most useful aspect of WOW was definitely the contacts … Now [the kids] know they can ring the person whose number or e-mail they got. They would never have thought of work experience in the City before”, confirmed another teacher.

This contrasted strongly with the experience of students from an inner city school undertaking the program. In this case the students were from Year 10 and some had already had been able to draw on personal networks to arrange Work Experience at the ABC and other professional organisations.

Other notable outcomes of the Pilot Project have been:

❖ An invitation to the 2007 group from Broadmeadows Secondary College (now Hume Central Secondary College) to present their experiences at the Classroom to Boardroom session (with reference to their findings about the meaning of Success) to the executive leadership team at Department of Human Services.

❖ A couple of program participants have displayed their enterprising skills by successfully lobbying for work experience placements at the City Centre itself.

> One of our students networked with the staff. On his own initiative he spoke to the staff and asked for the work experience coordinator and got their email contacts [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College]

Other students were reportedly considering following up clerical or beauty therapy opportunities in the City.
Two interviewees noted that the WOW experience had given them sufficient confidence to successfully approach local workplaces (a carpentry firm and in aircraft maintenance at Essendon Airport) for work experience in their chosen areas.

One student, who hopes to be a motorbike courier or motorbike mechanic, noted that chatting with one of the Inspirational Speakers resulted in his being able to contact Young Australian of the Year Casey Stonor. This contact led to a meeting with Stonor at Phillip Island, an invitation to Stonor’s 22nd birthday party with Valentino Rossi (where he “felt shy at first, then remembered WOW and talked to people”), and the possibility of (a) work experience with racing veteran Mick Doolan and (b) post-school work with Honda. “Jo’s talk impressed me. She’s had a hard life. Now I’m practising. Trying to do my best”.

Provision of Role Models

An important aspect of the WOW experience for many participants was the opportunity to discuss career aspirations with sympathetic and informed adult listeners. “Our ideas about success changed over the week. Talks with the City Centre staff helped us along the way”, was one observation [Student, Fawkner Secondary College]. Other students described the WOW facilitators (and “guest people”) as “wicked, cool and really nice. Don’t change or swap them”.

You are all such supportive people that have helped me to become a better person. Bravo to you all ... I feel really privileged to have met you all.

I am grateful to the WOW team for the encouragement, positivity and making this week an experience that will help me throughout life, career wise and personally.

Rhondah, Kylie, Victoria, Natalie, Dean and Darren. You have all made me feel so happy and just really, really confident with myself in my class and on my own ... I thought we were going to have a boring time. I was 100% wrong.

In some cases student-adult interactions at WOW and in the various workplaces facilitated the development of mentor relationships, providing the students with contacts, awareness of options and sources of advice. One student, keen to access a career in forensics, was given useful follow-up guidance by one of the Inspirational speakers. Another found talking with an ex-journalist at one of the workplaces “a real eye-opener”, and an incentive to study journalism herself. Another student credited WOW staff with giving her sufficient confidence “to stand up to my parents and tell them not to force me to be a doctor when I have no sincere passion to be one”.

In a couple of instances, teacher respondents stressed the importance of potential role models being “in tune” with what the schools were promoting. At some of the workplaces (it was noted), students encountered workers who had not completed year 12 but had still been successful. This proved problematic for teachers trying hard to reinforce the value of completing VCE at schools with low retention rates. (One teacher suggested that particular emphasis needed to be placed by speakers on the message that “success takes hard work and application and that it is always necessary to have another plan”). Another teacher identified an imbalance in the number of workplace role models who were university graduates. Given that 50%
of students at that particular school would not go on to university, he felt it was important to emphasise other non-university pathways such as trade areas.

**Connections to School**

Teachers and students recognised that much of the appeal of the WOW Pilot program lay in its “difference to school”. One teacher lamented that many of her peers regarded learning as happening only “when kids are in the classroom”. WOW, by contrast, “modelled a different way of working with kids that used community resources” [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College]. “In the classroom the students are told what to do”, observed another teacher:

.... [Whereas] at WOW they were taught skills and a chance to use some of these skills such as leadership, team work, showing initiative and taking responsibility. It was a chance for the students to operationalise these.

Student respondents generally found the experience more conducive to learning than school:

... more hands on instead of books and writing ... you just write and listen to teachers at school. At WOW you listen and learn.

The WOW program opened up new thoughts and understandings about the work place. The work place can get across different messages to those of school.

I felt that I had more freedom in the City Centre.

You were not just sitting listening, you were doing it yourself ... more interactive, better than interactions at school, plus we had an hour [for lunch] at Melbourne Central.

WOW was a real experience, I developed more life skills and think about different pathways, school, TAFE, uni... [Students, Hillcrest & Fawkner Secondary Colleges]

The prospect of greater choice and being able to “do things my way” at WOW were welcomed. For example:

In the business interviews I chose what I wanted to ask and I found we talked more about their personal life than about the business side of things. In the classroom I get forced to do stuff.

At the same time, interview data demonstrated clearly that students exited the WOW Program with a renewed sense of the importance of achieving at school. For example:

You realise you have to have school. You can’t expect to leave at Year 8 and get a job over someone with Year 12 and College. As soon as you can
you need to know what you want to do, know what you need to do. At Year 10 you need to think about what subjects you’ll need. School is really, really important.

Or:

Before I used to think ‘Oh no. School!!’ Now, in the last year, I’ve set my mind to work. Education only comes once. It’s important. [Students, Fawkner Secondary College]

Students recognised that success at both school and WOW depended on how much the individual was willing to put into the process: “You have to participate ... Some kids don’t join in ... so you don’t get much out of it” [Student, Hillcrest Secondary College]. One student credited the WOW experience with getting her back on track: “WOW gave me a better attitude about school and what’s ahead ... now I come home happier. Mum is pleased” [Student, Fawkner Secondary College].

Integrating WOW into School Structure

Some of the schools linked the WOW program to their own work experience programs. At Hillcrest Secondary College, for instance, WOW was offered as part of the overall Year 9 syllabus. In this case, Terms I & II were devoted to LEARNING JOURNEYS, a series of workshops and excursions in which 15-18 kids at a time visited a variety of settings (e.g. Monselvat, street art, National Gallery). In Term III, following five weeks of preparatory activities (such as constructing hypotheses, writing and presenting research papers, and other group-based team exercises), the “whole Year 9 cohort” (87 kids plus staff) undertook the City Centre program (“in one go”).

In Term IV, the students were offered the alternatives of volunteer work in a variety of settings, or participation in either the STEP UP or WOW programs (both EFA initiatives). Hillcrest Secondary College’s careers teacher noted the importance of long-term preparation and parent education (“We needed to tell the parents about it in Year 8 ... get them used to the idea”) as well as the crucial importance of staff consistency and commitment (“It works best if you have the same two staff for the whole week, or at a minimum one. It’s all about transforming ... the kids need to feel witnessed by someone who can see where they have come to by the end of the week”). Participating teachers were typically required to arrive at school by 7.30 am and, in order to allay parental nervousness, travel in by train with the students.

There were indications of significantly less student and parental enthusiasm or support for WOW (and for work experience initiatives generally) at schools where the Program was offered “in isolation” and not as an integrated feature of the curriculum [See responses under the heading ‘Program Selection’, p.5-7 of this Report]. Noting that WOW was the only EFA program currently on offer at Fawkner Secondary College, other EFA initiatives like ruMAD? having been attempted unsuccessfully, the school’s careers teacher noted that the school’s careers-related Personal Social Learning (PSL) Program had recently been “scrapped ... [because] the majority of the staff felt it didn’t work” and that an elective subject World of Work (run through the school and local businesses) “… is gone this year in favour of more focus on Maths and English. Currently nothing is replacing it” [Teacher, Fawkner Secondary College]
Conclusion

Students stressed the importance of: (a) “keeping WOW running in order [for] kids my age to have more confidence in what they want to be when they grow older”; and (b) ensuring that WOW “continued for years to come so that other students can have the same opportunity to broaden their horizons …”

Occasional individual students were critical of specific aspects of the program (one found the guest speakers ‘uninvolving’, for instance; another was unimpressed with the workplace lunch; several respondents had reservations about the value of the Dreaming workshop or the final day Presentation). One teacher (as noted above) felt that the Enterprise workshop might have been extended further while others would have welcomed additional time for reflection.

Otherwise, teacher and student responses to the Pilot program were overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the survey results, and ranging from “It was fun and I didn’t think this would be any good but I did really enjoy it” or “It’s good in the long run so deal with it if it is boring”, to “[the] best thing that ever happened to me”. Time in workplaces proved to one [Lalor Secondary College] student that “people working in big buildings and high heels were [NOT] boring”. One teacher observed “Our kids generally think they’re no good … this Worlds of Work stuff gives them confidence in being able to do anything [Teacher, Hillcrest Secondary College].

Typical student assessments were: “It pretty much lived up to my expectations – something I’d do again”, “Loved it all … it was all good … I learned a bit from most things”; “It was a mad experience”; “I would like it to have been two weeks not just one because I really enjoyed the program”; “inspiring”; “a wickedly awesome week”; “the most interesting week that I had in the whole Year 9”; “an experience I will never forget”; “opportunity of a lifetime”; and “the second best week of my life ever (camp being the first one)”. “This experience has really made me feel there is much more to the world”,

The program provided valuable learning and self-awareness opportunities for both students and teachers. As one teacher commented:

…I had no idea these jobs were out there … and I’m a careers teacher…
There’s a whole world I didn’t have a clue about … and no easy way of getting a clue.

“The teaching and learning is [all about] kids interacting with people they wouldn’t normally get to know. I guess that’s true for me too”, acknowledged one teacher participant. “I’ve never been to places like I have been with City Centre and WOW. These worlds are as alien to me as they are to the kids.

In addition to new challenges, WOW provided teacher participants with a needed affirmation (a) of the meaning, purpose and value of their work: and (b) of themselves as professionals. One stated that it had been “the best week of my [working] life”.

Comments by workplace representatives echoed the enthusiasm of the student/teacher findings. “Fantastic experience”, “well formatted and well run”, “informative and enjoyable”, “I don’t think it could have been done any better”, were typical assessments of the program. Workplace visits and experiences were seen as mutually beneficial and rewarding, (a) as a demonstration of the Company’s social conscience (“… an opportunity for positively engaging with disadvantaged communities and individuals”); (b) as a means of “breaking down
“barriers” between community sectors or of changing perceptions of particular organizations (e.g. DHS); (c) as a potential aid to future recruitment (“they are our future employees”); and (d) for providing a reality check (and a reminder that “life is about more than work”) for older staff. (“Takes more than a few corporations to make the world go round!”) One workplace welcomed the interactions as a timely means of “reducing some ego … reinforcing that we do not have a monopoly on the key issues and ideas of the world … [On] occasion the students showed some panelist’s comments to be quite narrow … there was plenty of humble pie”.

One of the WOW Program’s Inspirational Speakers (representing Lonely Planet) welcomed the chance, as an industry spokesperson, to:

... convey to students the journey I went through ... [and] to provide students with advice and guidance that may assist them in determining which career direction to take ... I was pleasantly surprised by the genuine conscientiousness ... high level of engagement ... and demonstrated appetite to learn more [exhibited by the students].
Recommendations

For Students

The success of the WOW program in engaging and challenging the participants was confirmed by emphatic student, teacher and workplace recommendation

✧ That it continue, be offered to future groups as a matter of course, and (where possible) be expanded.

While survey data indicated that the Day One Program component ‘MP3 Street Walks’ was seen as less engaging or meaningful than other activities, there was strong consensus:

✧ That all existing program elements be retained.*

A number of students offered specific suggestions on ways to enhance future WOW programs. These included:

✧ Increasing the diversity of workplaces and speakers. (“It was fantastic but I would like to see different worlds of work rather just the business and corporation worlds”).

✧ Increasing the amount of time spent visiting particular workplaces or in “actually doing some of the stuff” described by company reps and guest speakers.

✧ Increasing program time to two weeks.

One student would have welcomed greater opportunities to mix with other schools on the program.

For Workplaces

Student calls for increased time at workplaces were echoed by workplace representatives who argued the case for:

✧ Half-day “hands on” placements in selected work environments;

✧ Longer interactions, in smaller groups, for parts of sessions such as Boardroom Breakfast.

✧ A fuller preliminary briefing on the backgrounds and interests of the students.

✧ Establishing a corporation-based Mentor program to guide students “through their desired career path ... This may attract talented students to our company”.

For Schools

In line with WOW’s overall aim of building the capacity of students from socially and economically disadvantaged communities to participate in future global worlds of work and in acknowledgement of the difficulties often faced by teachers in
engaging these students in the program (see section on ‘Program Selection’), it is recommended:

- That priority and funding be given to schools within these communities to assist student attendance
- That schools wishing to participate offer WOW as a compulsory part of the Year 9 or 10 syllabus, either within the work experience program or as part of a careers or SOSE subject.
- That schools provide follow-up programs and activities when students return to school.

It is recognised that the WOW program was a Pilot study, that workshops were trialled “until they hit the mark”, and that facilitators have completed their own in-house evaluations of the success or otherwise of the Program and its components. As a result, staff indicated that some aspects of the week have undergone revision and will be presented differently in 2008 For example:

- The Melbourne Precincts Walks & Interview activity has been modified to include a photographic component and omitting the use of MP3s in favour of other technology
- The week has been slightly reconfigured in a bid to avoid confusion over such key concepts as ‘Signature Strengths, ‘360 degree feedback’ & ‘Star Skills. (The Tuesday Workshop will focus solely on Signature Strengths in future).
- The Induction process has been changed with WOW staff now going out to schools.
- Daily Reflection and Recharge time has been increased.
### WOW Week Description

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<th>Day 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eureka Tower</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MP3 Walks, Interviews and street success conversations</strong></td>
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<th>Day 2</th>
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<td><strong>I AM: It’s About Me workshop (Also called WOW Enterprise Skills)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Communicating with WOW</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Welcome to my World visit</strong></td>
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<th>Day 3</th>
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<td><strong>Balancing Me Workshop</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Thank you</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Classroom to Boardroom (C2B) lunch</strong></td>
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<th>Day 4</th>
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<td><strong>Workplace Breakfast</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Imagine Me (Also piloted Goal Setting, Dreaming Workshop, My Dream Job)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Brand Me (Also called Star Presenting)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interview for success</strong></td>
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<th>Day 5</th>
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<td><strong>Inspirational Speaker</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Closing discussion</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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Appendix 2

WOW Enterprise Skills Model

Appendix 3

VIA Signature Strengths for Children

**Appreciation of beauty and excellence** - You notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.

**Creativity, ingenuity, and originality** - Thinking of new ways to do things is a crucial part of who you are. You are never content with doing something the conventional way if a better way is possible.

**Curiosity and interest in the world** - You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics fascinating. You like exploration and discovery.

**Spirituality, sense of purpose, and faith** - You have strong and coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit in the larger scheme. Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.

**Honesty, authenticity, and genuineness** - You are an honest person, not only by speaking the truth but by living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and without pretense; you are a "real" person.

**Humor and playfulness** - You like to laugh and tease. Bringing smiles to other people is important to you. You try to see the light side of all situations.

**Industry, diligence, and perseverance** - You work hard to finish what you start. No matter the project, you "get it out the door" in timely fashion. You do not get distracted when you work, and you take satisfaction in completing tasks.

**Love of learning** - You love learning new things, whether in a class or on your own. You have always loved school, reading, and museums-anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.

**Gratitude** - You are aware of the good things that happen to you, and you never take them for granted. Your friends and family members know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time to express your thanks.

**Capacity to love and be loved** - You value close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. The people to whom you feel most close are the same people who feel most close to you.

**Fairness, equity, and justice** - Treating all people fairly is one of your abiding principles. You do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.

**Hope, optimism, and future-mindedness** - You expect the best in the future, and you work to achieve it. You believe that the future is something that you can control.

**Perspective (wisdom)** - Although you may not think of yourself as wise, your friends hold this view of you. They value your perspective on matters and turn to you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and to yourself.
Bravery and valor - You are a courageous person who does not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain. You speak up for what is right even if there is opposition. You act on your convictions.

Citizenship, teamwork, and loyalty - You excel as a member of a group. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, you always do your share, and you work hard for the success of your group.

Leadership - You excel at the tasks of leadership: encouraging a group to get things done and preserving harmony within the group by making everyone feel included. You do a good job organising activities and seeing that they happen.

Zest, enthusiasm, and energy - Regardless of what you do, you approach it with excitement and energy. You never do anything halfway or halfheartedly. For you, life is an adventure.

Caution, prudence, and discretion - You are a careful person, and your choices are consistently prudent ones. You do not say or do things that you might later regret.

Judgment, critical thinking, and open-mindedness - Thinking things through and examining them from all sides are important aspects of who you are. You do not jump to conclusions, and you rely only on solid evidence to make your decisions. You are able to change your mind.

Social intelligence - You are aware of the motives and feelings of other people. You know what to do to fit in to different social situations and you know what to do to put others at ease.

Forgiveness and mercy - You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. Your guiding principle is mercy and not revenge.

Kindness and generosity - You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well.

Self-control and self-regulation - You self-consciously regulate what you feel and what you do. You are a disciplined person. You are in control of your appetites and your emotions, not vice versa.

Modesty and humility - You do not seek the spotlight, preferring to let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not regard yourself as special, and others recognise and value your modesty.

References

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Appendix 4

WOW Timetable

- Introduction
- Welcome to WOW
- Eureka Tower
- Work/Life Balance
- Workplace Breakfast
- Future Focus
- Inspirational Speaker
- Closing Discussion
- Lunch
- Break
- Travel
- Break
- Presentation prep
- MP3 Walks and Street Interviews
- Interview preparation
- C2B Preparation
- Presentation Preparation
- Break
- Presentation prep
- Interview for Success
- Reflect & Recharge
- Reflect & Recharge
- Reflect & Recharge
- Final Presentations
- Welcome to My World
- C2B - What did we learn?
- I AM Star Presenting
- Brand Me
- Presentation Rehearsal
- Break
- Break
- Break
- Presentation prep
- Presentation prep
- Presentation prep
- Presentation prep
- Break
- Break
- Break
- Final Presentations

What is Success?

- Communicating with WOW
- 360 Feedback Tool
- I AM: It’s About Me
- Signature Strengths

Introduction

Eureka Tower

Lunch

Classroom to Boardroom

Break

Welcome to WOW

Workplace Breakfast

Break

Future Focus

Workplace Breakfast

C2B - What did we learn?

Break

I AM Star Presenting

Presentation Rehearsal

Break

Presentation Preparation

Break

Presentation Preparation

Break

Presentation Preparation

Presentation Preparation

Presentation Preparation