Transition Education

at

Wendouree High Technical School

Prepared by
Barbara Cramer

Case Study No. 8

Transition Education
Case Study Project

Transition Education Advisory Committee
Victoria

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BARBARA CRAMER

Transition Education Advisory Committee
Victoria
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The views expressed in this case study do not necessarily represent the views of TEAC.

A CAUTION TO THE READER

The data for this case study was collected between April - May, 1982, and the situation described is the one prevailing at that time.

Since that time, the project, project workers and the context in which the project operated may well have changed, as will the perspective of those involved. Readers should exercise their judgement in drawing generalisations from this study to their own or other situations, or in drawing conclusions about the project as it is described in this study.
THE TRANSITION EDUCATION CASE STUDIES PROJECT

In April 1981 the Transition Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) commissioned the Deakin Institute for Studies in Education to prepare a number of case studies of selected projects within the Victorian Transition Education Program, to be completed by December 1982. The evaluation was to be conducted according to a brief established by the Evaluation Steering Group approved by TEAC, and employed the Transition Education Case Studies (TECS) research team to prepare a folio of case studies of projects which will serve as a source of information, guidance and inspiration for other projects being proposed or put into operation within the Transition Program. Most of the case studies are being prepared by the appointed team, and an additional small number are being contracted to independent workers who can inject some special insight into the case study (i.e. someone with specialist or localised knowledge).

During the term of the Project a series of 'discussion papers' will be issued, and at the end of 1982 a final report on the work of the project will be published including a synthesis of issues related to Program administration and the operation of projects. The TECS research team has been contacting many Transition Program projects and personnel in both the secondary and TAFE areas to gather views about the work of school and further education projects in Victoria. The TECS project is not an evaluation in the sense of assessing the worth of any project or personnel, but is designed to represent and communicate the work of the Transition Education Program by case studies which recognise the perspectives of project and Program participants.

THE PROJECTS STUDIED

The projects studied have been selected as potentially significant for the development and growth of transition education in general. Understandings generated by these studies are suggesting directions and practices for Transition Education personnel and projects in the future.

Apart from a search for projects whose understandings can be effectively transferred to other settings, the selection has attempted to represent fairly a range of situations, client groups, and educational strategies currently employed in TEAC projects in both schools and TAFE colleges.

The selection has been undertaken by the TECS research team initially on the basis of information provided in project submissions, and on recommendations from Regional Transition Education Officers, the Transition Advisory Committee, the Secretariat, and Special Education personnel. Projects studied have been selected only after initial negotiation with project personnel, Regional Transition Education Officers and others.

METHODOLOGY

A combination of research techniques have been used. Interviews, observations, and the examination of documentation have been employed as tools to enable each project's story to be told accurately and fairly. Negotiation between those involved in a transition project and the TECS team has been a basic principle of the case study design. Access to projects, the boundaries of the study, the preparation of reports and the eventual release of case studies for publication are all subject to negotiation.
The case studies are descriptive and non-recommendatory and should not be seen as pre-empting decisions regarding the future of projects.

On publication, the case studies are providing the 'host' school or college etc. with an account of its own work, and will assist TEAC personnel to gain insights which should help promote the design and implementation of effective transition projects.

Finally, the case studies will become public information, as a relevant source of information and experience for a wide range of groups wanting understanding or guidance in the area of school to work transition.

THE TEAM

Stephen Kemmis: BA(Hons), EdM, PhD: Graduated from the University of Sydney (1970) and was appointed as a tutor in Educational Psychology. From 1971-74 studied at the University of Illinois in curriculum evaluation and the methodology of educational research and evaluation. In January 1975 was appointed as Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia, working on a major independent evaluation of the British National Development Program in Computer Assisted Learning. Returned to Australia in March 1978 to work briefly as an evaluation consultant to the Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra, and was appointed to Deakin University's School of Education in October 1978, where is he now Associate Professor in Curriculum Studies.

Interested in methodology of educational research and evaluation, especially case study and action research; also school-based curriculum development and evaluation.

David Dawkins: BA(Hons), Dip Ed: Has worked in a variety of manual and clerical positions before being appointed to the Papua New Guinea Education Service as a secondary school teacher in 1973. Appointed as a lecturer in Sociology at the State College Geelong in 1974 and to Deakin University in 1977 where he is currently a lecturer and chairman of Sociology of Education course teams.

Interested in schooling as a social and educational system, and the relationship between education and industry.
Terry Reilly: BA(Hons), DipEd, BEd, MS, PhD: Between 1974-77 was a primary school teacher in Coburg and Brunswick. In 1978 was Curriculum Co-ordinator for 'Upward Bound Program' (a program for economically disadvantaged youth) at the University of Oregon. From 1979-81 was an instructor in Education, University of Oregon.

Interests include positive youth development, issues of schooling and gender and field methods.

Barbara Cramer: BA: Since late 1977 worked in the research section at the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education in projects looking at transition, the effects of school-based assessment, and employers and school-based assessment. With 18 months special leave from VISE she has taken up a position as research assistant with TECS with interests in the relevance of education throughout the schooling process, structures and venues for education and student-teacher relationships.

Lynton Brown: BA, DipEd, DipApp Film & TV: Began teaching humanities at Noble Park Technical School in 1974. In 1975 became a foundation member of the Sunshine Technical School Annexe where he remained until it closed. In 1979 taught humanities and media at Sunshine Technical School and in 1980 was seconded to the Access Skills Project Team (Curriculum Services Unit). Since 1977 he has engaged in film and television production and consultancy in a variety of contexts.

Alison Austin: BA: Took a clerical position with a religious educational publisher at age 15 and eventually became editor of children's publications and publication production supervisor. Became a full-time mature age student in 1976 and has since worked in various secretarial and information positions.

A Note to the Reader

All names of students and ex-students appearing in this case study have been changed to ensure their anonymity. Each name has been used to refer to only one student to allow the reader to connect references in different parts of the report.
# WENDOUREE HIGH TECHNICAL SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

Wendouree High Technical School, one of Ballarat's youngest secondary schools, established in 1978, stands at the fringe of Ballarat's new housing development, Wendouree. The standard 15 acre block is on a slight rise exposing the school to the extremes of Ballarat's weather. The few trees that have been planted are not established enough yet to offer protection.

The visitor becomes aware of the portable classrooms dotted around the school's somewhat stark landscape, as well as the newly built technical wing, canteen and humanities block located at the centre of the school buildings. The 'portables' one soon discovers are really 'relocatables' and likely to stay. Walkways linking the rooms add to their permanency. The school's P.A. system, relied upon as a means of communication, has not yet been connected to the more recently acquired classrooms. One teacher complains about the frequency with which the system is used to page him despite the fact that the classroom he occupies is not connected.

Wendouree HTS is a new and developing school (in the now Central Highlands-Wimmera Region, formerly Ballarat Region), and in many ways is still establishing its identity. This case study was conducted in April, 1982, a time when the school was in the throes of deciding on its Year 12 curriculum. (The school offered Year 11 for the first time in 1982, and 1983 will be the school's Year 12 debut.) It was also a time when transition education had established some status in the school, and when a number of projects were getting underway as a result of the then newly formed Transition Committee at the school.

The following projects had begun at Wendouree with TEAC support, some of them being funded as part of regionally initiated activities.

- Resources Assistance Group (RAG, a Youth Action Project). Funded $500 annually. Funds administered by students for support of small-scale student initiatives.
2.

(i) Horticulture Elective (approx. $5000)
(ii) Transition Orientation Elective (approx. $3000)
(iii) Student Bulletin ($450 integrated with model office).

- Transition Orientation (subject integrated) $4000, 1982.

- Transition Committee ($5000 suggested to employ part-time teacher's aide; was used to employ emergency teachers and fund experience-based initiatives with Regional approval).

- Experience-Based Curriculum (part of a Regional initiative; five projects funded to a total value of $1800).

THE PROJECTS

Resources Assistance Group

The concept of student based Resources Assistance Groups (RAG) originated at Wendouree HTS in 1980. Community Education Officer, Gary Whittaker and Pupil Welfare Officer, Peter Harrop had read about Youth Action Projects and shared their interest in the concept with some Year 9 students (the school's most senior students at that time). The students and staff members concerned were enthusiastic about initiating some Youth Action Projects at Wendouree, when in September that year Graeme Kent, member of the Ballarat Task Force\(^1\) visited the school as part of his brief in conducting a Schools Commission study on youth activity in schools. Peter Harrop and Gary Whittaker, introduced Graeme to a group of students.

\(^1\) Graeme has been employed as Youth Action Project Officer within the Ballarat Regional Office with TEAC funds since the beginning of 1981. The Ballarat Task Force is a five member team which has been actively supporting transition in the Ballarat region since November 1979. The Taskforce is jointly funded by TEAC and the Regional Office of the Education Department.
One of the early things that I discovered was that there's a bunch of kids at Wendouree saying 'we've got an SRC, that's all very well ... but we need something else, something that we can stimulate programs, that we can take some initiative ourselves - we need some money, we need some resources'. After some debate and after a number of meetings, we decided, or they decided, that the name would be 'assistance group'.

(Graeme Kent, Ballarat Task Force)

A Year 11 student recalls the first contact with Graeme Kent.

We started in October or November, and I think Mr Harrop asked ten of us to come along and they explained what it was and the sorts of things we could do, and Graeme and Gary gave us a few games to play - you know, working through how you go about doing a project, and then we spent most of the rest of that year planning things that we could do and getting other people to know what it was ...

(Pamela, Year 11 student)

The Resources Assistance Group was initially funded by a grant from the Youth Council of Victoria, though TEAC later gave $500 grants for each RAG established.

RAG groups now exist in twenty-seven secondary schools in the region, seventeen of these being government schools. Graeme gives considerable credit to Wendouree for the development of the RAG concept.

It helped me in formulating a concept of trying to help the schools get programs to help the kids ... it provided me with the whole basis for putting together a program for use around the region ... so this was a program that was fairly exciting and new.

(Graeme Kent, Ballarat Task Force)
Experiential Learning in a Transition School System

In 1981 the school's priority was in developing its first Year 11 curriculum. The school's Education Committee and the staff it represented believed there was a need to offer an alternative course of study for those students who did not want to do an academic course. Teachers and students made a series of visits to other schools which were already offering Year 11 alternatives. Two or three members of the Committee and a couple of students visited one such school, Kangaroo Flat Technical School. This school had created an alternative for students who would otherwise have either left school or repeated Year 10. Tom Gould, Technical Vice-Principal, described the course:

They still did maths and English and woodwork etc, but they were all tuned in on this experiential stuff which was solidly based on horticulture ... It seemed to me, and I was most impressed when I went up there, that they had gone the whole hog if you like ... we were all highly impressed with the motivation of the kids.

(Tom Gould, Technical Vice Principal, WHTS)

Bronwyn was one of the students to visit Kangaroo Flat.

Last year we went to other schools, some students, to have a look at what their alternatives were, and another boy and I went to Kangaroo Flat, and they had something on a much larger scale working than the horticulture group (at Wendouree). It was really good, everything was based into the horticulture group ... it was really, really good.

(Bronwyn, Year 11 student)

This exercise convinced many staff that a complete alternative based on horticulture would cater for a group within the school who were not academically oriented. The school was unable to support a complete alternative Year 11, though the variety of subjects offered is wider than most schools on account of its technical and secondary components. Meanwhile, a working party of the Education Committee had been evaluating the school's needs and was in the process of developing a submission for TEAC funding. Horticulture was the theme chosen for the proposed project, a choice some claim to have been influenced by the Education
Committee's investigations of alternative courses in other such schools. (Gary Whittaker disputes that such a relationship existed, believing the submission was prepared in isolation from the Year 11 investigations.)

In mid 1981 Gary Whittaker prepared a TEAC submission for a three-pronged integrated approach to experiential learning. The three facets of the submission were a Year 10 Horticulture Elective, a Year 10 Transition Orientation Elective, and expansion of the Model Office program. A total grant of $5000 was approved in the middle of second term, with $450 of that allocated to the Model Office for the support of a student newspaper. The project was described as action research because it was felt to be of a developmental nature and therefore subject to modification.

**Transition Orientation**

Transition Orientation has been an adjunct to a Life Studies elective run by careers teacher Frank McCormick. During third term 1981 Frank recruited approximately thirty Year 10 students to participate in this unit each Tuesday morning. Conscious of the TEAC guidelines, Frank attempted to attract students from a cross-section of ability groups. The target group for the elective unit were those students who were not intending to continue through to Year 12, and a special assembly was called for this group of Year 10 students. Approximately fifty declined, and thirty decided to participate. These thirty students were comprised of a cross-section of students, though low achievers were well represented.

The highlight of the project in 1981 was the three day trip to Melbourne for approximately twenty-five students. These three days were spent in true urban familiarisation style, taking in visits to the VOC, tertiary institutions, restaurants, the Unemployed Workers Union and markets. Other activities during the term included visits to local hospitals, a Youth Training Centre, law courts and a CES, and the group played a simulation game on unemployment.

The rationale for the program was to prepare the participating students for the situations they were likely to face upon leaving school, and to
improve their knowledge of the agencies that they may encounter or need at some time in their transition.

THE CONTEXT

Wendouree HTS has responded to Transition Education policy in a number of ways. The bases of these responses is found in the context and nature of the school.

Buildings and Resources

Some of the senior students felt they had been short-changed by being foundation members of the school.

What happened was they found out their mistakes and they learnt by us - we were their guinea pigs. They saw what worked and what didn't work and what things on the curriculum would be possible and what ones just wouldn't be possible and now it's all sort of worked out for the Form 1's coming along.

(Jo, Year 11 student)

Pamela explains this sentiment.

We weren't able to do sheetmetal or woodwork for the first term because they just didn't have the grounds or equipment ... for the first two weeks we weren't even here.

(Pamela, Year 11 student)

Almost all staff interviewed for this study were bitter about the way in which the school's building program has been executed. Initially promised a school of brick and mortar to be built in four phases over four years, changed policy on the part of the Education Department in the school's first two years has reduced it to a 'core-plus' building program. Under this scheme the school is entitled to standardised core buildings for administration, library, music and drama, home economics, fabrics and art, science and stenography, trade, gymnasium and canteen functions, while the
remaining accommodation requirements are provided in relocatables. Now in its fifth year, the school is awaiting the construction of the library, music and drama, home economics, fabrics and art, science and stenography, administration and gymnasium buildings. The trade wing and canteen have been built, and a humanities block was built before the core plus plan was enforced (the school would not have been provided with this building in the new scheme). Clearly the building program is behind schedule, and many staff are concerned about the school's facilities and the uncertainty surrounding the building program.

Current projections are for a real growth in enrolments of around 100 students for 1983, and this has implications for the future of the building program. The school can expect one or two additional classrooms to cope with this growth, and unless there is significant growth beyond 1983 the school will have received its quota of classrooms for its estimated 800 students. The school understands it is entitled to four or five more teachers, completing its five-year expansion.

Wendouree is one of two schools in Ballarat offering technical and secondary education, the other being Mt Clear High Technical School, built to completion soon after Wendouree was established in 1978. Wendouree has a Secondary Division principal, while Mt Clear has a Technical Division principal.

Funding for such schools is channelled through the Education Department's Secondary and Technical Divisions, contributing to some tension within Wendouree HTS. There is some jealousy of the technical component's new and well-equipped building. Since occupying the premises last year the majority of the technical staff have ceased to use the nearby general staffroom, preferring to spend recess and lunchbreaks near their classrooms and valuable equipment. One trade teacher remarked that the staffroom was no longer large enough to seat the fifty-nine members of staff, an opinion apparently formed at the fortnightly Thursday morning recess breaks when all the staff congregate in the general staffroom to receive their pay cheques personally from the Principal (a practice introduced to bring all the staff together at least once a fortnight). The staffroom is far from fully utilised at any other time, most staff choosing to remain in their offices.
The students of Wendouree HTS are drawn from a range of socio-economic backgrounds ranging from rural areas, low-income housing commission areas and more affluent residential areas of the community. (It was this mix that prevented the school from qualifying as a disadvantaged school in 1982, despite its lack of resources.) Parents are able to nominate their choice of school in Ballarat within zoning areas, though the Regional Education Office makes the final decisions regarding placements. There is some overlap in zone boundaries of Ballarat High School and Wendouree HTS and some parents have notified the Regional Education Office of their preference of schools.

Tom Gould, Vice Principal responsible for the technical component of the school, claims that some parents send their children to Ballarat High School in preference to Wendouree.

> We should be able to offer here anything that any technical or high school can offer, which should make it very desirable. It hasn't worked that way - we've got problems with buildings and facilities, and that puts people off, and to some extent we haven't really quite got our act together yet, to have the confidence of all the parents ... We are still getting parents from just across the road sending their children to Ballarat High because they think that's a better academic school.

(Tom Gould, Technical Vice Principal)

Apart from the inconvenience caused by the building program, the staff of Wendouree HTS regard themselves as disadvantaged in terms of resources. Pam Waugh, the school's librarian, illustrated this claim by estimating that the library has only 40 per cent of the books it needs.

The resources problem is clearly tied to the school's youth and developmental nature. Because the school is new, it doesn't have a history of fund-raising. In addition, the school began at a time when staff cut-backs reduced ancillary and teaching staff levels.
Remediation

Wendouree HTS has been using the ACER Progressive Achievement Test to determine the need for remediation amongst students for several years. The outcome has been a remedial program involving the removal of small groups of students from normal classes to receive remedial help. The school has two remedial teachers who spend the equivalent of just over one full-time allocation on remediation, and a number of other teachers have remedial allotments. However, it is only the students with the most serious problems who receive remediation. Early this year sixty per cent of Years 7, 8 and 9 students were 'remedial' in comprehension skills according to the statewide ACER test, though many claim that this is an inaccurate and exaggerated result. Nonetheless, there is a remedial problem in the school, and the staff feel greater resources are needed to cope with it. Of approximately 120 Year 10 students in 1981, twenty-five to thirty were in the remedial maths program. Neville Speedie, one of the teachers responsible for Year 10 remedial maths, illustrates the extent of the problem at Wendouree:

These kids were remedial. We were trying to get them up to Year 9 standard; one of them wasn't even Grade 6 standard.

(Neville Speedie, Technical Teacher)

Streaming has been an issue of contention at Wendouree, with the majority of staff opposed to it. The Education Committee recently adopted a policy formally opposing streaming based on a staff vote, though the Principal, Frank Collishaw, allowed mathematics to be streamed. This 'aberration' of policy occurred as a result of pressure from the mathematics faculty.

A different approach to remedial English has been piloted in second term with a group of forty Year 7 students chosen from the test results. In place of the existing remedial program, remedial teachers, in conjunction with two non-teaching members of staff, will be endeavouring to teach parents how to give their children reading lessons through home visits.
Non-Teaching Positions

The creation of three non-teaching positions has in many ways been instrumental in the introduction of transition education to the school.

Before the school was established, a parental survey was conducted with a view to developing a philosophy and curriculum for the school. The school responded to the results of the survey by employing a Community Education Officer (prior to the commencement of the first school year), and a Pupil Welfare Officer. Three years later the school appointed an Outdoor Education Officer.

These three functions are based in the regionally funded multi-purpose Student and Community Services Block. The Year 11 students use the spacious meeting area as a common room, and the school's model office is housed in the building, along with an office, small study and interview room. Meetings of parents, community groups, teachers and students are conducted in this venue. Student and Community Services is an apt title for this building; it is a collectively owned and managed unit where students, teachers and parents are able to meet in relaxed surroundings away from the formality of the classroom.

Community Education

Gary Whittaker has been Wendouree High Technical Schools' Community Education Officer since the school was established. Prior to qualifying in community education, Gary had worked in industrial planning, an experience which has influenced an interest in the relevance of education to post-school life. Employed by, and a member of the School Council, Gary has been active in promoting the school as a community resource through a holiday program run in conjunction with the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation and the local council. Attempts to break down the barriers at the community/school interface have been made through the establishment of networks and programs with community and parent groups. At present there are no evening classes at the school, though it is hoped that a program will be offered at some future time.
Outdoor Education

The Outdoor Education Program replaces the school's camps program. Supported by the Outdoor Education Unit of the Education Department's Special Services Division, Outdoor Education programs exist in some form or other in all schools (school trips, camps). Wendouree HTS has for the last couple of years given one member of staff over full-time to the organisation of outdoor education, representing a significant commitment to the program (only a handful of schools have allocated staffing resources to this extent).

The outdoor education program at Wendouree HTS has evolved with the school. Jack Williamson volunteered to help run the first Year 7 camp in 1978 with only limited experience of camps, and has been heavily involved ever since. The program's rationale, aims and planned activities are described in a current paper on outdoor education.

At Wendouree HTS, outdoor education is about people - it focusses on the individual and the fundamentals of behaviour. The overall emphasis is on the enhancement of human relationships through the creation of interactions and situations that are natural, real and relevant to the immediate life situation, and it is the 'residential experiences' that make our outdoor education program the means for testing our behaviour and to observe others' behaviour.

(Wendouree HTS, Outdoor Education Program, 1982)

The activities have been planned carefully and refined over the five years of the program's life. Jack has been prepared to learn from the successes and the failures and with around two-thirds of the staff actively supporting the program, outdoor education has become part of Wendouree's tradition. Only a small percentage of students do not participate in the program, usually due to parental objection. The program is still developing, and the school's acquisition of Lonarch, a disused country primary school, has given impetus to the linking of the mainstream curriculum and the outdoor education program.

Jack Williamson's educational philosophy of experiential learning for both teachers and students is reflected in the organisation of outdoor
education. The program has 'grown up' with the students and the school. Input from students and staff in this program has possibly been facilitated by the program's subject matter: the development of skills such as survival, communication and cooperation. Jack describes his role as one of facilitator of outdoor education, allowing others to influence the program as it develops. The extent to which the program challenges the classroom is possibly limited by the lack of integration of outdoor education within the school. Groups of students are taken out of the school for a set period of time, and then returned to the classroom. The extent to which teachers can use strategies of the learning experience in outdoor education once back within the physical school surroundings is difficult to gauge, but seems not to have had obvious impact on classroom practices to date.

Pupil Welfare

Wendouree HTS is one of three Ballarat secondary schools to create a position for Pupil Welfare. Peter Harrop has been teaching at Wendouree since 1978, and took on the Pupil Welfare role in October 1979. His teaching load has been reduced to a level fluctuating around 8 - 10 twenty-five minute periods a week.

Much of the work defined as pupil welfare is associated with counselling of students and parents who are experiencing school related problems. In addition, Peter is a member of the School Council, is actively involved in the school's transition efforts, and is available to help out with routine medical visits such as immunization programs.

In many ways Peter Harrop does not fit the stereotype of student counsellor. Even though he spends a lot of time in the Student and Community Services building, he is visible in the school, both inside and outside the classroom. He is not formal in his approach to the job, yet he is serious about what he does. The experience of operating within a school as a teacher and a 'non-teacher' places Peter in the unique position of possessing a blend of educational perspectives. On the one hand, he admits that as a teacher there is a certain security in teaching a familiar, unquestioning curriculum within the physical bounds of a classroom. On the other hand, his pupil welfare
role allows him to maintain a different relationship with students, bringing him into contact with some of the problems experienced by many students in their school life.

Peter's involvement in transition education in the school began when the first submission was being prepared by Gary Whittaker. Both he and Gary see themselves as resources to the teachers actively involved in TEAC projects, making themselves available in the planning and early implementation stages and gradually withdrawing as projects take on a life of their own. Peter's understanding and sympathy for students and teachers is thus significant in the creation of appropriate projects.

Comments

Both Peter Harrop and Jack Williamson began specialising in their respective areas as members of the teaching staff and were subsequently released from their teaching allotments to develop these areas as full-time commitments. In contrast, the position of Community Education Officer was created and institutionalised by the School Council prior to the school's official opening.

The presence of three non-teaching professional positions within the school is indicative of the school's recognition of the importance of the roles designated to those staff members.
TRANSITION PROJECTS IN DETAIL

RAG at Wendouree

Just three weeks after the first Resources Assistance Group began at Wendouree, Angela, a Year 9 student, described the concept to fellow students.

The RAG will help anyone who wishes to start a group. The type of help we will be able to provide is getting somebody to help the groups with any problems they might have. This help might be with money, advice and resources to get started, making other students aware that the group exists or actually getting the whole thing off the ground. The RAG decides how the money and resources will be used, that is, helping anyone or group who wants to start a program that will benefit the other students or the community ... If the program will make a profit we would, over a period of time like the money or part of it back so that other groups could use the money, but this might not always be the case.


Each of the 27 schools involved in RAG have responded differently. Graeme explains that the emphasis for him is in teaching students a process of student involvement.

All we're doing is trying to say to kids I'll teach you a process, I'm not going to give you all the answers and the programs, but I'll help you understand the process of student involvement, the process of decision making as a group, the process of problem solving.

(Graeme Kent Ballarat Task Force)

Bronwyn describes the purpose and concept of the group:

A lot of it is just preparing to start some new activities. We've just given up the badge-making machine, we bought the badge-maker and now we've just
given that over to a home group. We started the idea and got the initial funding for guiding that and now we've given it up. We're about to start up something similar ... To try and get kids interested in doing things for the school, things that will benefit them and the school.

(Bronwyn, Year 11 student)

Kate explains the funding procedure employed by the Wendouree HTS RAG.

We've got an evaluation form, and they have to go away and fill it in with how much money they want and then they come to the meeting and we just discuss it from there, and then the RAG group decides whether we'll fund them or not.

(Kate, Year 11 student)

Bronwyn elucidates by pointing out that as a group, RAG had a responsibility for seeing that the money is spent on worthwhile causes.

Before we did that ... we had to know what they wanted, like how much money they wanted and who was involved, what other resources they had, things like that, before we would give them ... and that's what we based our sheet on, what we had to know before we could give them any money.

(Bronwyn, Year 11 student)

Since it began in October-November 1980, membership of RAG has fluctuated, with a current membership of ten to fifteen. Most of this group are Year 11 students with two Year 8 boys actively involved. RAG has supported a variety of student initiatives. A pantomime group needed some money for sweets to sell, the school play needed $400 for lighting and costumes (repaying all but $40 from the sale of tickets); the lost-property group needed a clothes rack; and a home group set up a coffee shop. In addition the RAG itself purchased a badge-making machine to generate funds, eventually donating the machine to a home group who are sponsoring a foster child. RAGE week was a novel way of publicising the group to the rest of the school, with activities like candid camera and the wandering Miss Lone Rager promoting RAG around the school.
Opinions vary with regard to RAG at Wendouree. One teacher, while supporting the concept, felt that RAG had become an elite, its membership made up largely of students with previous involvement and high standing in the school. Another member of staff claimed that RAG is generally regarded as a real 'Mickey Mouse', further arguing that the performance of two students had dropped off alarmingly because of their RAG involvement. Yet another teacher felt that only about half of the staff were even aware of RAG.

RAG's effect within the region generally however, was demonstrated by the Ballarat Youth Participation in Education (Y'PIE) Conference, organised by youth for youth in October 1981, a still talked about initiative of the RAG movement. Described by Graeme Kent as 'our most triumphant event'; the conference was inspired by the National Youth Participation Conference in Adelaide attended by eight students from Ballarat region (including one from Wendouree HTS), Sister Fitzsimmons (an interested teacher from Sacred Heart Middle School), Frank McCormick, Gary Whittaker, and Graeme Kent. The return journey to Ballarat became a brainstorming session of how Ballarat might better organise a Youth Participation Conference. The conversation was taped and transcribed by Graeme and sent to the students. Graeme describes the events that followed.

We had a meeting where we decided we needed some more people to help us do it, so we pulled out another two dozen people I suppose from school. We had a planning day - we arrived here (Taskforce offices) at 9.00 in the morning, and by 3.30 we had all the details worked out for the conference as far as we were going to do it and everyone went away with little tasks to do. I just played secretary to the group, kept in contact with them, rang them ... I had nothing to do with the day, and I'd thought along the way that I might have had to make a speech or give a talk - and it was great - I mean, I felt a bit put out at one stage, because I didn't have anything to do! But it was great! I had to really rap myself over the knuckles. My whole experience has been getting kids to do things, but all of a sudden I had to say 'slow down'! Because I was getting just as excited as they were, wanting to do things.

(Graeme Kent
Ballarat Task Force)

It is unusual for students to organise a conference such as this where only a limited number of teachers are invited as observers. Equally
unusual by adult standards was the production of a 25-page conference report available in multiple copies for conferees to take home at the end of the day; a well-organised and executed activity highlighting the enthusiasm of the conference organisers. The conference report (marked 'not confidential') itself is of a high standard including reports of workshops on topics such as student needs, RAGs and school administration/curriculum meeting procedure, promoting and enthusing students, program development, program ideas, etc. Peter Harrop and Gary Whittaker prepared a video of interviews with some of the 180 participants and organisers from the planning day through to the conference one month later, providing valuable feedback to the group.

The day's success is summed up by the following comment.

It was an incredible day, it really was. It's one that has fired up so many kids to do something this year, it just had so many implications as far as student involvement (is concerned) ...

(Graeme Kent, Ballarat Taskforce)

The conference report finished with this comment.

For those who remain uneducated due to a lack of attendance, we still welcome your participation in this worthwhile program.

Experiential Learning in a Transition School System

Horticulture Elective

Horticulture was first offered as an elective to Year 10 students in Term 3, 1981. Competing with home economics, graphics, English/building graphics, drama, textiles and music, the students who elected to do Horticulture, did so after surrendering the elective they had studied for
two terms. The elective was first presented to students in a Year 10 assembly and eleven students subsequently enrolled. The introduction of a new and different elective enabled students to opt out of a subject they no longer cared for, though many students found some difficulty in making the decision to switch electives (some twenty students chose to stay with their elective). Peter Waugh lost several of his music students to horticulture, and in jest reported that it 'decimated one of my classes ... half my class said "we're going to do horticulture!".' He had however advised a couple of his students to do horticulture given that they had spent six months doing music.

The horticulture students were a heterogeneous ability group and this can also be said of the 1982 Year 10 and Year 11 horticulture students. The School Council has supported the TEAC funded initiative by allocating the equivalent of one house block of the school's grounds to the project. Horticulture has centred around this land which is next to a house adjoining the school.

It should be noted that there would not have been a Year 10 class this year had the students not requested it. It seems horticulture was by-passed on the timetable. A group of students who had been looking forward to doing horticulture decided to approach the Year 10 Co-ordinator, John Minotti, about the issue, and within the first weeks of term the Year 10 students had an elective in horticulture.

Horticulture Staffing

Damien Kelly a teacher-librarian at Wendouree HTS, became involved in horticulture after the project was funded. He was approached for three reasons: first, he runs weekend courses in small farm management for adults, and second, he was studying for a Farm Studies certificate through TAFE, and third, he was free of teaching commitments for the periods timetabled for horticulture.

I was going to be the technical expert by default, because there was nobody else there and it interested me. And also because I worked half time in the library, a lot of people view that as free time, it didn't mess up any classes ... so when it finally went ahead they thought maybe I'd better run it.

Damien Kelly, Teacher Librarian
Robyn Stewart, commerce teacher and active in the school's transition effort, succeeded Damien who received a local transfer in 1982. She too has weekend farming interests. Neville Speedie, one of the school's 'Jack of all trades', has committed a considerable amount of his time to the project as well, advising students on building matters.

The philosophy of the subject is oriented towards 'learning through doing', and in many ways has been a test bed for experiential learning advocates in the school. The students' experience of building a cyclone fence around the block of land was a conspicuous example of experiential learning. A group of the horticulture students had reached the stage of setting the fence posts in cement and when the bell rang for recess, they automatically left, leaving the fence posts unattended. The result was a couple of poles firmly set at an angle, causing a kink in the fence. Teachers who witnessed this episode could have told the students that this might happen, but on this occasion chose not to, deciding that the advantages of experiential learning outweighed the minimal disadvantage of having an imperfect fence. However, there have been occasions when teachers have provided timely advice to prevent disappointment. Damien Kelly, former horticulture teacher, recalled one such occasion:

They had put a couple of (garden) beds in, which were in shade for most of the day, they had already laid them out. I could have let them plant their plants and find that nothing happened, but it would have been very frustrating. So I said one day when the sun was shining ... look at the shadow and think about it. So they were muttering and cursing, and had to shift it.

(Damien Kelly, Horticulture Teacher)

Horticulture is only very loosely structured, its biggest handicap being the limited amount of time students have. Staff look to students for ideas, and have at times, particularly in the beginning, been disappointed with the slow response. The teaching and learning approach is so different from what students and teachers are used to that there is almost a 'culture shock' to be overcome. Teachers and students alike have had to adapt to this program.
The first group of horticulture students were responsible for the difficult job of establishing the block of land, and because of the late start were unable to harvest their garden produce.

All they could really do was all the fencing - they spent all their time doing these jobs, and never really got into the other, more pleasant side of it. They really set it up, got water pipes and taps, and built the hot-house, and did the fence and so on, and never really got to the point where they could see the benefit. They did plant a lot of stuff but of course we've got the benefit of it; they haven't even seen it.

(Robyn Stewart, Commerce and Horticulture Teacher)

The 1981 group, as described, spent most of their time establishing the block of land. They did soil tests to establish the pH level, top soil was delivered and a rotary hoe hired to break up the earth. The fence was built and garden beds prepared. In addition to this work, woodwork teacher Trevor McDougell advised a group of students on the construction of a brick barbecue in the school's courtyard. One student took to hand the landscaping of a garden area, surprising his fellow students and teachers with his determination and workmanship. Most people agree that the garden would have been vandalised if a paid gardener had completed the work; but the student concerned kept an eye on any potential trespassers. Other students have likewise protected student landscaped areas elsewhere in the schoolyard.

A passing comment from a student critical of horticulture highlights the difficulties new programs experience in establishing credibility amongst their client group.

Last year's was a big shambles, I mean it took them all year to do that attempt at a barbecue out there. It's still not finished. And that garden, the only person last year that took any notice was Bruce, and his attempt at a little thing, otherwise I don't think it was much.

(Tracey, Year 11 student)

This criticism was made in an informal lunchtime discussion and caused an instant reaction from students, some defending horticulture as being valuable and new, and others claiming it was a bludge where one or two people did all the work.
Neville Speedie spoke about one student whose improved motivation in horticulture surprised everyone. Described as one of the laziest people in the school and a well-known truant, the following account provides an insight into this issue of student motivation.

He was unreal when you got him going ... He saw my father's hothouse and thought it was great, got stuck into that shed and built it in three sessions.

(Neville Speedie, Technical Teacher)

An anecdote about this same student is conveyed with amusement.

Two of them did the garden in front of the hothouse. Over Christmas they came back and kept that one weeded and watered - it was a picture! Bugger the others, that wasn't theirs ... He used to come back at weekends and have a look around, weed the garden. I used to come in and the soaker hose would be wrapped right around his garden, and all the others would be bone dry, but his would always be nice and wet. I'd come up over Christmas and have a look - none of the other kids bothered to come in.

(Neville Speedie, Technical Teacher)

One of the students involved in horticulture last year described the subject.

It was quite interesting actually - just learning about gardens and plants, and the vegetables we'd plant and stuff like that. They sort of assisted us; they'd say you'll find the information here and here, go and find it and learn about plants. It wasn't like they were teaching us ...

(Jo, Year 11 student)

This year the horticulture elective has been chosen by eleven students in both Years 10 and 11, and in addition, an unemployed ex-student, Andrew, joined the Year 11 group after making a social visit to the school. Having been retrenched from an apprenticeship, he told Gary Whittaker that he was bored and Gary asked him if he would be interested in helping out with horticulture. After establishing that such a commitment was within the Department of Social Security regulations, Frank Collishaw (Principal) agreed to the proposed arrangement.
Robyn and Trevor were quite happy with this arrangement, feeling that both the Year 10 and Year 11 students could benefit from some direction from a young person. Andrew demonstrated the hoped for leadership qualities almost as soon as he arrived, and was accepted into both groups without problems. It was hoped that some of his commonsense approach to the work would inspire some of the students who were a little slower in adjusting to the opportunity to contribute to the planning of the program.

The students were invited to develop projects for themselves in horticulture. One of the projects underway is the design of a fish pond for the school, involving library research, plan preparation and submission to the Principal and School Council and a trip to Melbourne to look at similar ventures. The four Year 11 students involved are cooperating with another group of horticulture students who are developing paths in the same area. Another two students were making wire hanging baskets in the sheetmetal workshop, while other students were spending their time constructing a shade cloth area next to the hothouse. Andrew, the ex-student, saw the need for a cement floor in the hothouse which was approved and promptly completed. Some students were concentrating their efforts on the gardening aspect, both on the horticulture block and around the school. An impressive compost bin has been constructed of timber by some students. There was talk of a plan to paint the hothouse, though discussions with the students revealed that the idea was first mooted to test their power with teachers whom it was speculated would disapprove. Students had been briefed at the beginning of term that they were to develop projects of interest; this group of students were apparently a bit cynical of just what they would be encouraged to do. They were quite surprised to receive support for the idea and began collecting colour charts from paint stores and discussing patterns and colour schemes. Further discussions reveal that this too was the motive behind the fishpond idea. Robyn and Neville are prepared to take students seriously, and in return these students have begun to take responsibility for developing their ideas.

This same group of students were observed whilst discussing the fishpond idea with the Principal, Frank Collishaw. The four girls involved were nervous about seeing the Principal; more out of fear of discouragement than fear of authority. Frank asked to see the plan which one of the students held,
proceeding to ask questions firstly about the actual plan, and later about their intended strategy. They were asked how much they expected the project to cost, who would fund such a project, who would need to be consulted? The students had thought about some of the issues raised, and had not considered others.

They left the interview feeling pleased that their idea was endorsed by the Principal, but worried about consulting the School Council. Frank had told the students that they would need Council's approval, and had suggested that one or two of them give a verbal report at the next meeting. Later one of the girls explained her nervousness about going to the School Council with a submission:

They might say 'you're not allowed to have it' ... they might say something that we don't know how to answer. We'd have to have someone like Mr Speedie or Mrs Stewart to back us up and help us.

(Ann, Year 11 student)

The exercise of constructing a fish pond started as a bit of a joke for the students involved, who never expected to get the idea past Robyn and Neville. Once Robyn and Neville responded positively, the students had either to suddenly change their minds and think of something else to do, or take the project further. They chose to put their minds to the fishpond idea, and found themselves reading books in the library, ringing staff of other schools which had fishponds, arranging to visit such schools, approaching the Principal with their apparently 'outlandish' idea, subsequently receiving support, and facing the prospect of going to School Council with the idea.

The process of planning, designing, organising and executing the project took precedence over the physical reality of a fishpond, the fishpond was the purpose of the exercise but it was the process that the students pursued that was the main source of their learning from the experience.

The horticulture elective is still very much in an evolutionary stage, adapting to the needs of its participants. Efforts are being made to integrate horticulture into other subjects, such as home economics. Some of
the horticulture produce has been used in Home Economics, and teachers and students have indicated an interest in expanding this arrangement. Robyn Stewart is hopeful that with sufficient warning the horticulture group will be able to take on informal contracts with the home economics faculty to meet expected demand. This is perhaps one strategy that may reduce the isolation of horticulture from the mainstream school.

The Model Office

Two things led to the creation of a model office at Wendouree. First, a group of students, in conversation with Gary Whittaker, had arrived at the conclusion that the school needed an information centre - a central meeting place where students feel comfortable and where there is access to relevant information. An adoption program of young or new students could be an aspect of the Centre's activities. Second, Robyn Stewart, a commerce teacher with previous experience of the model office concept, saw the potential of the information centre having links with a model office in the school. Gary and Robyn felt that the two functions could logically be combined, and the model office was designed around this understanding.

The model office was in a position to start in April 1981 when the submission for TEAC funding was being written. Delivery of an electric typewriter at this time made it possible for the first students to have work experience in the model office prior to news of TEAC's refusal to fund the model office for more than the Fordigraph duplicator (the school applied for $6,490 to purchase the following: electric typewriter, memoscriber, switchboard, duplicator, bus hire, 6 months hire of word processor).

The model office, located in the Student and Community Services Block, was able to go ahead without the support requested of TEAC, though on a much lower scale than planned. The model office serves as a reception area to the unit, providing work experience to Year 10 and 11 typing students and aiming to promote responsibility and provide practical help for staff and students. It has enjoyed considerable success, and seemingly universal acceptance from all quarters of the school.

Typing students are rostered to work in the office in pairs for two days at a time in the interests of continuity and are kept busy with the ever
increasing workload, a growth attributed to the student's production of quality work and subsequent credibility amongst the staff. Robyn Stewart was conscious of the need to establish the model office as a viable service to staff, and worked very hard in the program's early months to establish and maintain a high standard of student work.

The day's routine begins with the preparation of the student bulletin; a news-sheet production of notices distributed to all students during home group meetings held daily before lunch. (TEAC supported this aspect of the model office function by allocating $450 for the purchase of a fordigraph duplicator.) Immediately after lunch the rostered students, currently all girls due to the composition of the typing class, can be found in the canteen where they are responsible for stocktaking and money counting. Apart from these routine tasks, the students assist the main office out with excess work, type work submitted directly by teachers, administer some fund-raising efforts, sell tickets for school theatre productions and discos, and answer the student and community services telephone.

Kate, a Year 11 typing student, describes the advantages of having work experience within the school.

I think it's good ... it's two days in a row, so there's not much to catch up on, and you can get the schoolwork and do some that night and then go to the office the next day. Because you're at school you can always see kids at lunchtime and discuss things - it's not like a week's work experience, away from everyone.

(Kate, Year 11 student)

A teacher attests to the value of the model office, representing a typical staff view:

They've done a marvellous job in terms of giving those kids real work, not 'make' work ... They really look forward to their time in the model office, there's a lot of respect for actually being there, there's a lot of pride taken in what they do there. They also do some very useful work. It's great!

(Barbara Poley Remedial Teacher)
It is generally agreed that the model office is as much about the development of confidence and maturity as it is about gaining secretarial skills. Staff have observed noticeable changes in student behaviour and general conduct during work experience in the model office, a change attributed to the fact that students dress as if for a normal work experience placement, and the acceptance of the school staff of students as fellow workers. Students have demonstrated their ability to work responsibly and with confidence; and the staff seem convinced that the model office provides highly valuable experiences.

Comments

Model offices have been attempted by a number of schools, and many have failed. The success of Wendouree's Model Office program has been a result of hard work and thorough organisation on the part of Robyn Stewart, with the support of Gary Whittaker and Peter Harrop. The Model Office has been effectively marketed to the school; students, teachers and administrators, and with strong evidence of acceptance and support has every chance of survival. The school's commitment to the program is evidenced by the allocating of a subject equivalent time allowance to Robyn Stewart for the organisation of the Model Office.

It is perhaps a little premature for the Model Office to have had any tangible and visible impact on the total school. However it may be useful for this school and others to reflect on the experience of the Model Office. Are there characteristics about the Model Office strategy that can be isolated and applied to other aspects of the school? For example, how does the integration of the Model Office into the mainstream curriculum compare with the establishment of contained electives such as horticulture? A new initiative has not necessarily reached its conclusion merely by the measurement of its success or failure at a given point in time; indeed that may mark the first of many phases if the learnings of the first phase form the basis of the next.
Transition Orientation

An important aspect of Transition Orientation was the requirement that students organise their activities, including the selection of places to visit, transportation and accommodation arrangements where necessary.

Transition Orientation did not receive widespread support from the staff who tolerated the disruption to classes but would probably resist a similarly organised program if suggested again. One Year 11 student felt the program was launched at an unfortunate time of year when students were preparing for assessment.

It probably came at a bad time, because it was towards the end of the year and kids wouldn't go because the ones that were interested wouldn't go because they had exams and stuff like that. It could have been better organised as well.

(Bronwyn, Year 11 student)

Frank McCormick is well aware of the problems it created (some students missed their entire allotment for particular subjects that coincided with the time scheduled for Transition Orientation) and has modified the program accordingly. This year (1982) faculties have been invited by personal approach to submit proposals for money to be spent on Transition Orientation in their subjects. Frank made himself available to spend time with teachers looking at their curricula and helping them develop excursions and transition related material. The money had all been allocated by the end of first term - hardly surprising given the school's resources needs and the perceived need for more excursions than parents were prepared to support. Frank has thus acted as facilitator to the participating faculties with the overall objective of developing a curriculum that is relevant to students.

1982 funds have been alloted principally for two overnight trips to Melbourne one of which was a trip for forty Year 10 and 11 trade students and five trade teachers to attend apprenticeship week. The remaining funds are allocated to a trip to Geelong for Home Economics/Needlework students, local excursions and a destinations survey of Wendouree ex-students.
In August 1981 Gary Whittaker and Peter Harrop prepared a submission for a full-time project officer to coordinate and extend transition projects in the school for the next twenty-seven months. The Regional TEAC agreed to fund the school $5000 for the employment of a part-time teacher's aide.

The school however, did not employ a part-time teacher's aide with the funds it received, rather it has established a Transition Committee, informally convened by Peter Whittaker. (Regional TEAC approved of the school's decision to use the funds for curriculum innovation.) In the process of negotiating the submission for a project officer with TEAC (a costly project), the school administration offered one of its eight Special Duties Allowances to the project. Peter Whittaker, who had just transferred from Ballarat High School, was successful in applying for that SDA. (An SDA is a salary bonus made available to teachers on a classification lower than senior teacher for special responsibility such as subject coordination.)

The decision to allocate an SDA to transition is generally regarded as a 'real victory' by the staff committed to the program. The transition SDA was accompanied by a six period time allowance (a special arrangement negotiated with the school administration) though Peter only managed to secure two periods (about one hour per week) due to a timetabling oversight. Needless to say, even that time allowance is regarded as a bonus by Peter who was not aware of the provision until he had accepted the offer.

Peter, who was instrumental in Ballarat High School's TEAC program, was charged with coordinating the various transition projects and promoting new developments. Wednesday afternoons became a regular time slot for transition meetings. Numerous faculty and committee meetings run during the week, and teachers were in the main reluctant to commit themselves to yet another, particularly given the demands of curriculum development in a relatively new school. Hence the meetings began with a core of staff members with a previous interest in transition, and a few additional teachers whose interest could very often be traced to previous work commitments related to the issues of transition. Indeed a major concern of the group was to devise strategies for projects that might involve more staff. There have been as many as fourteen attend one of the transition meetings (about 25% of the staff); however, the problem seems to rest in attracting a diverse range of staff members.
Many people at Wendouree HTS felt that the school was fragmented and needed 'something' to pull it together. In many ways the Transition Committee was oriented to this task of coordination, though its energy is largely spent in the transition arena of school life. The first few meetings were used to debate philosophy and strategy, a process that has given the group a sense of direction and purpose. Peter Whittaker had in his mind a rationale of promoting a wider view of the curriculum in terms of questioning subject boundaries and structural constraints. The promotion of experiential learning was at the core of the group's thinking.

**Experience Based Curriculum**

In February 1982, Ballarat Transition Taskforce member Alan Marriage approached the Region's schools with an invitation to prepare submissions for small-scale, subject integrated projects based on experience based curriculum (EBC). The Transition Committee at Wendouree in turn asked the staff to prepare brief notes on possible projects within their faculties. Within the two weeks designated, the Committee had received seven or eight ideas, mostly from teachers who were not attending the meetings. Only one or two of the ideas were represented by the submitting teachers at the meeting which was devoted entirely to the EBC project ideas.

The group discussed the potential of each idea, and agreed to submit five of them (after some polishing), filing two or three ideas away for possible development later in the year. The projects submitted and subsequently funded were:

- Physical Growth and Change $275
- Business Research Assignment $225
- Model Office $200
- Fibreglass Workshop (canoe building) $800
- Garden Furniture Construction $300

The way in which the EBC projects were funded warrants mention. Alan Marriage, who was preparing the package for regional approval, called a meeting of teachers who had submitted statements of need. Collectively the group required double the available funds of $9000, subject to submission approval. Rather than exercise discretionary power, Alan
suggested that the group discuss some basic funding principles upon which to base decisions. The group agreed to this suggestion, and arrived at a set of principles which allowed all projects to receive funding. One such principle was that any student travel necessitated by projects would be subsidized but not covered entirely. This strategy proved very effective; all projects were funded within the projected $9000 budget.

What was impressive was the way everyone treated it as a team thing - all striving for EBC and not wanting to see anyone miss out.

(Alan Marriage)

Once these projects had been funded, the Committee directed its attention to a larger scale curriculum project. After lengthy debate it was agreed that a Year 7 group of students and teachers would be a feasible target group for a thematic curriculum based on experiential learning. Apart from the fact that Year 7 has a core curriculum, the rationale for choosing this level arose from the growing concern that students had contact with up to 12 teachers in Year 7. '7e' was eventually chosen at random for the pilot study.

Despite a degree of cynicism on the part of the Committee regarding the cooperation that might be expected, the response of Year 7 teachers was excellent. A planning day was organised, the TEAC funding being used to provide two emergency teachers at a total cost of $170 (drawing on funds allocated to the employment of a part-time teacher aide). The day was spent devising aims and brainstorming ideas, and the theme of 'bush environment' was eventually arrived at. The eleven 7e teachers left the planning day with the task of devising a six week unit applying their subject to the bush theme, with a view to starting at the beginning of second term, as this study was being written.

Organisationally the curriculum experiment is both workable and acceptable. Because all 7e teachers are involved, there is greater flexibility and opportunity for class interchange so that particular activities such as excursions can be arranged without upsetting other teachers. The TEAC funding will finance emergency teachers occasionally as well as make possible appropriate excursions. One teacher pointed out that experience-based learning can be a classroom activity as well! It is hoped that the common theme will break down subject compartmentalisation and establish cross faculty links and team teaching.
Peter Whittaker expects the curriculum experiment to form the basis of a larger scale proposal for next year. The experiment will thus undergo considerable evaluation at its completion by all concerned. According to Peter Whittaker, 'What we have to do is to make this model or experiment - a genuine model - for what we would like to do in the long run'.

THE ISSUES

Communication

The school has been in a state of flux since its beginning, and such times are inevitably fraught with problems, communication being one of them. The growth and size of the school was mentioned by several teachers as one of the explanations for the school's poor communication.

John Minotti, who returned to Wendouree after two years working with the Ballarat Taskforce, spoke of the school's change.

I guess the thing that I am most amazed at is the way the staff have grown, more so than the kids, and the difficulty in communications. In the first year, seventeen staff were in one staffroom ... I think people tend to go off in their own staffrooms, or stumble around the school, and they rarely get together. I'm sure you've seen them Thursday pay days ... and there are still some people in the school that I may not have spoken more than three to four sentences to in a year, because I don't see them. I think that's a problem for all sorts of reasons, it's difficult trying to find out about kids for example; trying to track down the teachers is a slow process.

(John Minotti
Year 10 Coordinator)

Regular staff meetings are one of the few opportunities to communicate to the staff, but the agenda is always long and therefore only limited time is spent on each item. Meetings are conducted after school when most of the staff are tired and anxious to go home. Peter Whittaker has not found staff meetings a satisfactory venue for publicising the transition effort. 'It's a waste of time, in the sense that you have to condense what you have to say so much that you can be misinterpreted'. (Peter Whittaker)
The lack of awareness of the Transition Committee at Wendouree is considerable. Some teachers interviewed were unsure of whether it was an open or closed committee, though enquiries apparently had not been made. Casual conversations with teachers in the staffroom evoked a series of similar responses, such as 'I must admit, I don't really know much about what they're doing...', and 'I haven't really become involved in that'. One teacher told me that he felt the Transition Committee had not sufficiently promoted its **philosophy and concept** to the staff. The Transition Committee is in some ways seen as an exclusive clique. Another teacher told me that many teachers were not interested in the transition aspect of the school while there were more immediate concerns.

The school has recognised this problem and last year conducted an in-service day tagged 'communications day'. One teacher said that he and others he knew of found the day an academic exercise which intimidates a lot of people. Several teachers commented that the day produced lots of good ideas, but typically nothing ever happened. The ability to leave seminars with the enthusiasm and rigour generated by a collective group of people is apparently thwarted since teachers as individuals return to the constraints and demands of their jobs.

**Decision-Making**

Dennis Bolster, Chairperson of the Education Committee, believed that there was some concern amongst staff regarding the haste with which the TEAC proposal for the action research project was devised. Because of impending deadlines, the normal decision making procedure was by-passed, i.e. recommendations to the Education Committee, Education Committee recommendations to staff, staff vote. (The Principal supports the majority vote as a rule and rarely exercises his right of veto.) It seems likely that some staff may have felt left out of the TEAC development, though this argument is countered by the observation that many choose not to involve themselves in 'extra-curricular' activities, despite opportunity to participate.

There is some evidence too, that the staff are disillusioned with the procedure as a result of a staff decision not being carried through. The issue was a contentious one: streaming. The staff debated this issue at an
in-service day and arrived at a decision rejecting streaming as a matter of policy. Mathematics has however, enjoyed the privilege of streaming, a concession which contradicts the policy endorsed by the staff. This is one of the few examples of the Principal exercising right of veto.

A decision regarding Year 12 curriculum has been a priority for the Education Committee as the school prepares itself for its Year 12 debut. Many members of staff were cynical about the influence they could exert on this decision, feeling the school has in many ways been destined for an academic VISE Group 1 Year 12 since it accepted its first intake in 1978.

The Education Committee organised an in-service day for all teachers, interested parents and student representatives. Essentially a time for information dissemination, the seminar was addressed by an STC representative, a VISE Liaison Officer, and a representative from a local secondary school which has an alternative Year 12 course. Workshops were arranged for discussion and questioning. The Education Committee's evaluation of the day formed the basis for staff debate with a recommendation then being taken to a parents and students evening. The final decision rests with the staff. The Education Committee seem likely to recommend a VISE Group 1 HSC and an alternative Year 12 based on a range of electives.

Student Governance

Evidence of student governance and empowerment are emerging in a number of areas in the school. Students organise school camps, trips to Melbourne, various excursions, and have played an important role in a regional student conference. Horticulture students have the responsibility of ordering materials for their program without being organised and reminded by teachers. Students in the model office are learning to assert themselves in dealing with teachers who occasionally make unreasonable deadlines for typing work. A music student was assessed on her organisation of a music festival for the school. A student active in RAG used the organisational process of the RAG concept to establish a rural youth group.
This year (1982) some of the Year 11 students have formed an outdoor education club. Calling themselves SOFT, the club members have been promoting themselves as a secret club, to the extent that what the title SOFT stands for is difficult to find out. The club represents an active student interest in the development of the outdoor education program, an interest which has been encouraged by Jack Williamson. It seemed logical to hand over some of the control and organisation of the program to senior students this year. The creation of the SOFT group is a student initiative, providing a forum for the collaborative and on-going development of the outdoor education program.

Some of the examples cited here can be directly attributed to the transition projects, while others stem from a school where student contribution to decision-making has always been valued and where individual teachers encourage student governance. When a group of students in RAG were questioned on the extent of their power in the school, the response was unanimous. They felt they had input in school decisions, and that with the support of a few students it was possible to get things done. The school's decision to allow a BMX track to be constructed in the school grounds with school funding was one such case where an approach by a group of students was successful.

**Land Sale**

Wendouree's horticulture elective operates from a corner of the school grounds which has been developed quite extensively by the students. The program is dependent upon the allocation of land for the continuation of the program.

The School Council had been negotiating with the Education Department to purchase some land adjoining the back boundary of the school, thus extending the inadequate playing fields. One suggestion put forward was that the School Council sell the equivalent of three housing blocks (one of which is occupied by horticulture) to compensate for the proposed land purchase. There was a strong reaction from Damien Kelly, who threatened to resign, and the horticulture students were very angry and upset about the prospect of moving to another block of land after investing considerable time, effort and resources in the present block. The School Council were reluctant to sell the land being used for horticulture, but were also conscious of the needs of the total school population who were being disadvantaged by the small playing fields. As it happened, the land sale was not necessary, and the Education Department has managed to purchase the additional land.
Though the school maintains that the proposed land sale was never more than a suggestion by the Regional Office, agreed to by the School Council, it is interesting to record the reaction of the staff and students who had made a commitment to horticulture, a program which was only months old and probably not very well known by the general school population. One teacher was deeply concerned at the potential for such decisions to be made without first consulting those most immediately affected. Even if the land sale had taken place it seems likely that the elective would have continued in a different location.

Selection/Recruitment

There has been pressure within the school to offer an alternative course at the senior levels to those students who did not want, for a variety of reasons, to do an academic course. Some of the staff at Wendouree saw the danger of such an alternative course catering for a group of predominantly low achievers.

A complete alternative Year 11 course did not eventuate at Wendouree. It was in this context that the horticulture elective was created, and both Gary Whittaker and Peter Harrop were wary of the potential of transition programs being used by low achievers. The strategy used in recruiting students for the elective, described earlier, ensured that a cross-section of students chose the horticulture elective.

Recruitment for horticulture is likely to continue being an issue at the school, especially with indications that remediation is a serious problem in the school. Horticulture runs the risk of becoming a dumping ground for low achievers. The school has in the past couple of years commissioned students on a variety of gardening enterprises, that is, under the guidance of a volunteer teacher, students have worked around the grounds during class time. In at least one instance a student who had been 'kicked out of class' became involved in horticulture for the last half of the session after gaining permission from Neville Speedie and the teacher of the class he had disrupted. Horticulture has the potential of becoming an alternative 'punishment' for disruptive students; a practice which would contradict the intent of the project. While there are undoubtedly advantages for the
students and teachers involved in such disciplinary actions, such ad hoc recruitment procedures would threaten the credibility of the program in its attempt to include a cross-section of students.

Horticulture is not a dumping ground for low achievers, but the alternative Year 11 course that was originally sought would have served the needs of low achievers. In the view of several teachers associated with transition initiatives in the school, if horticulture is to continue contributing to the learning and development of the whole school, then it must not become contained and separate from the school, and must therefore ensure that all students have the opportunity and are encouraged to participate.

Of the other transition efforts in the school, the EBC projects and the Year 7 curriculum project are involving students of a cross-section of abilities, social groups and personal styles. This is more readily achieved due to the core curriculum studied by the Year 7 and 8 groups whom these projects are most affecting.

As noted earlier, it has been suggested that RAG is an elite group, comprised of students who are generally articulate and well-respected in the school. RAG's membership depends heavily on student interest and the ability of the group to promote itself. The group itself may not represent a cross-section of student abilities, social groups and personal styles, but the various student projects it has funded and assisted have managed to reach that cross-section. An important aspect of the RAG concept is that every student can join in and make a valued contribution to the group's activities. The extent to which this is happening at Wendouree seems limited. It has however, been suggested that the Resources Assistance Group is intended to represent students who are less able to articulate their needs to adults, reflecting government and management processes in a more personalised way. Certainly, the group has not actively sought to exclude students from its membership; rather it is similar to the school's extra-curricular activities which attract those teachers who are interested and motivated, not necessarily a cross section of philosophy and teaching style.

The model office has to date only involved the typing class and has thus excluded boys (with one or two exceptions), as well as students not learning typing. Whilst appreciating the value of the model office and its enrichment
of the typing course, the potential benefit to other students may be worth pursuing. For example, the information centre could expand its school bulletin to a larger student newspaper involving the model office workers as well as other students.

The Transition Orientation elective began by recruiting students who were likely to leave school at the end of Year 10 or 11. The group was able to attract a cross-section of students, though it ran the risk of becoming a program for low achievers. That risk has been overcome by a subject integrated approach this year.

Evaluation and Action Research

At this stage, the evaluation effort of Wendouree HTS's transition projects consists of an unfinished video of teacher-conducted interviews and occasional progress reports in the Community Education Officer's report to the School Council. Very little has been committed to paper, though this does not reflect the amount of thought which has been invested in developing the projects. A diary system has been set up for student and staff contribution, and while it has the potential of being a valuable aid in program development, it has only resulted in a minimal amount of feedback. The action research process is hamstrung by the absence of tangible data and regular evaluation meetings.

The regular conduct of transition meetings in the first half of the year may be an appropriate venue for an on-going evaluative effort, but to date there have been more pressing needs in promoting and expanding the educational philosophy of experiential learning in the total school. The Transition Committee has been in recess for most of second term to allow participants in the '7e' project to organise their curriculum, reflecting the group's primary concern.

Similarly, the Education Committee has been overwhelmed with the mammoth task of establishing Year 12, and has not facilitated the program's evaluation. Careful consideration would be needed before the school decided to establish yet another committee for the review of transition initiatives in the school.
The responsibility for establishing a new school has presented Wendouree with an urgent need to initiate and establish new projects and resources. The school's developmental nature lends itself to the process of action research which the school has committed itself to. Action research as a model of evaluation involves a spiral of steps of planning, action, monitoring review and replanning in the light of the review. The scope for such an evaluation has implications for whole institutions, allowing experiences to influence the on-going development of programs in the context of changing local conditions, client groups and their needs. The organisation of action research provides a forum for the debate and input on which the process depends.

The application of action research principles might begin by addressing questions which describe the process and experience to date. How did the school identify and subsequently define the client group for its transition initiatives? Who made up the client group once finalised? What process did the school employ to identify and define the needs of that group? What transition needs were eventually arrived at? How were appropriate responses constructed? What were the constraints that led to a choice of strategy? What values and ideals influenced the program? What resources seemed necessary to meet the needs of the client group and the chosen strategy? How effective have programs been in meeting clients' needs? What is the potential development for transition education?

Questions such as these play a key role in the development and evaluation of appropriate responses to local transition needs.

**Institutionalisation**

Wendouree HTS has taken steps to institutionalise some aspects of the transition initiatives. The school has made substantial resource commitments to the model office, horticulture, transition orientation and the coordination of transition projects in the school. Horticulture depends on its land allocation, and the model office on its office space. Horticulture and the Model Office have teaching allotments totalling eighteen periods;* transition

* Robyn Stewart has a 6 period (x 25 minutes) teaching allotment for Year 11 Horticulture and a 6 period time allowance for the organisation of the Model Office. The Year 10 Horticulture class, created subsequent to timetable allocations, coincided with the time of Robyn's Model Office allowance, hence the 18 periods she is entitled to is in practice only 12.
coordination has the support of a Special Duties Allowance and a time allowance, and transition orientation is possible through the services of the school's careers teacher.

The Transition Committee's attempts to include more teachers in the transition area has been a strategy of institutionalisation. The staff who have been closely involved with the program recognise that the philosophy behind the school's efforts needs to be shared and developed by the school. Without the understanding, contribution and support of staff, the transition program's future is threatened.

The question of institutionalisation is a complex one. Just what is being institutionalised warrants debate; is it the projects as designed and organised, or is it an educational philosophy? Can the institutionalisation question be extended to include the educational processes that serve to address the needs of the client group?

COMMENTS

Reform

Reform is an on-going process, not necessarily resulting in the transformation of practices, but very often reproducing existing practices. For example, new material may be introduced to a subject without changing the way teachers and students interact.

Alternatively, subject content may remain the same, but when presented in a completely different way may be said to have transformed practices. Critical reappraisal of teaching methods is part of the process of reform.

Reform is as much an issue at Wendouree HTS as it is in other schools. Despite its relative youth, Wendouree exhibits many of the characteristics of long established traditional schools. It offers similar subjects, taught in similar style, and conforms to familiar school structures in most aspects. One explanation for this is the school's responsibility for curriculum
The seminar began by working through a range of issues identified as problems in the school, gradually focusing on structural issues. By the end of the seminar a consensus had been arrived at and the outcome was a staff decision to implement a system of three vertical units of students, and a reduction in the number of faculties from approximately 30 to 3. The three faculties arrived at are Humanities, Mathematics-Science, and Creative Arts. The Principal and Deputy Principal have appointed Unit and Faculty heads from the school's existing Senior Teachers (a process agreed to by the staff). Each student and teacher will be allocated to one Unit in an attempt to develop smaller, more meaningful groups. It is hoped that the creation of three faculties will keep isolation of disciplinary areas to a minimum.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It is not possible to arrive at any firm conclusions regarding TEAC's influence over the school's structural development in 1982. However, it is certainly evident that TEAC funded projects have initiated a debate of educational philosophy and practices, through committee activities, in-service seminars, and individual involvement in projects. TEAC has been a catalyst in the school's reform process and natural dynamic of change. Many of the staff closely involved in the transition effort have attributed the interest in the Experience Based Curriculum funding to the impact and awareness created by transition projects throughout the school.

The transition effort at Wendouree HTS has been influenced and governed by a number of forces. The urgency and priority of curriculum development, the constraints of school routine and the conservative element in the school have worked both for and against the process of developing transition education in the school.

Wendouree HTS's use of TEAC funds does not represent a model of transition education available to all schools. What it does provide is an insight into a process of curriculum development and change in a newly established high technical school. The impetus for the school's consciousness of transition initiatives is clearly linked to various members of staff and the provision
of TEAC funding. Staff members who had not previously worked together outside their faculties to a great extent have begun to talk about curriculum links and to develop joint curricula.

Transition education is just beginning at Wendouree, and in the short space of one year, has developed considerably. The future of transition education in the school will depend on the extent to which the rhetoric of action research is applied to the substantial data base which has developed at the school, and the extent to which aspects of the school curriculum become established once Year 12 has been introduced.