

The Development of an Approach to Learning Within the Middle Schooling Paradigm

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Summary. In this chapter, the key elements to facilitate success of an educational shift to learning within the middle schooling paradigm have been discussed. The aim of middle schooling at Kings Christian College is to provide a balanced and holistic education that meets the spiritual needs of all students as they grow to take their place in society. Effective middle schools provide a safe, supportive learning community and pastoral care is the umbrella under which all of the positive outcomes of middle schooling are achieved. This nurturing of young people according to an asset promotion paradigm, helps them to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and the capacity to contribute to the community. Since students at the middle level of schooling are working out who they are, their values, interests and abilities, they need a curriculum and learning activities that cater for this. If teachers and others involved in curriculum development organize middle years curricula so that there is a focus upon socially-relevant issues, then students are able to construct the views, attitudes and values that will lead them to behave as good citizens displaying socially-responsible behaviour. Thematic units in the middle years curriculum build students' values and interests while developing their understanding, giving them areas of particular expertise. The unified approach to teaching by using thematic units also connects learning with the real world and allows students to use skills from across the traditional curricular areas when solving problems. In our technologically advanced digital society, adolescents are substantially different from what they were in previous generations and this has profound implications for teaching and learning. Middle years students need interactive information, interactive communication and interactive resources as they process information and construct their understandings by being actively engaged in doing complex tasks. In order to use technology effectively

to achieve positive learning outcomes, administrators need to prioritize the need for professional development and support for teachers. Teachers have an indispensable role to play in evaluating the use of technology in the classroom so that its use is pedagogically sound.

1 Introduction

The middle years is an important time of great change when students are developing out of childhood and undergoing substantial personal growth as they develop the skills, understandings, views, attitudes and values necessary for effective citizenry in the twenty-first century.

The seeds of success are sown during this developmental stage and therefore the years of education up to year 9 are important. As reported by Heggen [1], a study by the Australian Council for Educational Research showed that strong academic performance in year 9 was one of the keys to a successful result in year 12.

In middle schooling holistic education provides the building blocks upon which our students will build their values and understandings for the rest of their lives. A person's beliefs and then views and attitudes, form the basis of their thoughts, then emotions, which lead to actions. False beliefs trigger destructive thoughts [2]. In Christian schools such as King's Christian College we aim to "educate students in Christian leadership for tomorrow's generation". Therefore, we have a great need to replace false, potentially destructive beliefs with God's truth (as revealed to us through Jesus Christ).

The nature of beliefs, views, attitudes and values is a vital consideration for teachers. The eminent researchers Bloom, Krathwohl and Masia [3] questioned whether humans ever thought without "feeling" and emphasized the importance of the views and beliefs students bring to the classroom upon the understandings constructed by these students.

The aim of middle schooling is to provide a balanced and holistic education that meets the spiritual needs of all students as they grow to take their place in society. Effective middle schools provide a safe, supportive learning community. Within this community, pastoral care groups and curricula founded upon solid Christian values enables students to develop the optimism, views and understanding necessary to shape a sustainable future by dealing responsibly with the issues which will affect their lives.

Establishing middle schooling is not a search for an end point but rather an ongoing process of examining all school practices in light of the developmental needs of early adolescence. There are many ways of providing