

## Co-curricular activity

### ***Kaniva Chicks: An enterprise-based approach to applied learning: Kaniva P-12 College***

The *Kaniva Chicks* program at Kaniva P-12 College in rural Victoria provides Year 8 students with an opportunity to integrate all domains of learning (Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)) into a real-life situation that focuses on the resources of the local community. The *Kaniva Chicks* business is based on chickpeas, a product that is grown locally, so students are motivated by the fact that it relates closely to their background and to a possible future in rural agriculture. The Year 8 students are responsible for the growing of the raw product, its production into a healthy alternative snack food and its marketing.

#### **Year level**

The program is directed at Year 8 students but could be adapted for middle or senior school students.

#### **Explicit values focus**

- Doing Your Best
- Freedom
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Responsibility

#### **Key learning areas**

- English
- Health and Physical Education
- Studies of Society and Environment
- Technology

#### **School profile**

Kaniva College is a P-12 government school, situated in far-west Victoria. The student population is around 210, with 125 students in the primary section and 85 in the senior school. The school services a large area of the West Wimmera Shire, an agricultural area renowned for broad acre cropping and production of sheep, cattle and wool. The area, like many rural communities, is struggling to maintain its population due to the drought, and the drain of young people to the city seeking further education and greater employment opportunities. Kaniva College's motto is 'Access, Innovation, Excellence'. It is the school's aim to value ourselves, each other, our community and the environment.

#### **Reasons for co-curricular activity**

The *Kaniva Chicks* program was established to:

- increase motivation and relevance to students, as a large percentage (particularly males) yearn for the day they can leave school and go to work on the family farm
- relate education to the future needs of the students by providing experiences and promoting skills (eg food hygiene and safety, the identification of diseases in legumes, and speaking to the general public) that will be used long after secondary schooling is complete
- combine the strengths of the community with the enthusiasm of youth to learn from and with each other

- take learning outside the formal classroom.

*Kaniva Chicks* is an integrated subject that relates to all of the three VELS strands: Physical, Personal and Social Learning; Discipline-based Learning; and Interdisciplinary Learning. Across the broader curriculum, students are encouraged to develop independence and confidence in a variety of situations, individually, in teams and as part of a whole group.

*Kaniva Chicks* also encourages students to work in partnership with their local community. The students are involved in all facets of the program: planning, production, marketing, selling and evaluating. The program received initial funding from the Education Foundation and the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal to establish the business in the school but for the past twelve months it has been self-funded.

*Kaniva Chicks* aims to provide a relevant, engaging experience for each student that develops the Values for Australian schooling in conjunction with the seven key competencies identified in the Mayer Report (collecting, analysing and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; solving problems; and using technology).

The students are given responsibility for the production process and the freedom to develop the product in the direction they think best. For example, students initiate ideas for new flavours to produce, develop a range of packaging and advertising strategies and decide where they are going to market the produce. The complete process is based on the trust established between the members of the group. Students and staff are required to be honest in their opinions without creating negative attitudes. Communication is vital, as is the belief that everyone's opinions are valued, even if they are not adopted.

The key competencies have been identified by employers as skills that lead to success during and after life in the classroom, just as the above values are vital to the positive character-building of the students.

## **Implementation and development**

The *Kaniva Chicks* program is implemented through a team teaching situation, allowing work in different areas to progress simultaneously. For example, one group can be producing the *Kaniva Chicks* while another group is working in the classroom or attending to the chickpea crop at the school farm. The Year 8 class is timetabled for a two-hour block each week and all activity occurs within this time. During this block, the class has access to the computer classroom, a working classroom and the chickpea kitchen. The kitchen is in an unused junior school canteen which has been modified to house their venture.

The *Kaniva Chicks* program operates over one year, training students in the skills required to take the chickpeas from 'paddock to plate'. These skills include:

- occupational health and safety
- food hygiene
- meeting procedure
- the requirements of setting up a business
- roles and responsibilities within the business
- growing chickpeas
- business planning
- advertising and the media
- packaging

- creating new products/varieties.

Students begin the program by completing certificates of achievement in Occupational Health and Safety, and Food Hygiene.

The students are actively involved in the process of cooking chickpeas and turning them into a healthy, alternate snack food. This involves packaging, marketing and selling the product. The students also undertake to grow their own chickpeas at the school farm, learning farming methods and skills from local farmers and agronomists. Contrasting methods of farming (eg organic versus conventional) are studied, with trips to local properties to observe and record the differences. The students identify the dietary qualities of chickpeas, comparing them to other 'snacks' and learning how to make better food choices.

Advertising is studied and the students promote their product via a range of different media. They develop their own range of posters, information leaflets and order forms and create advertisements for the school newsletter. Some students have also been interviewed about the product by the local paper and radio station. *Kaniva Chicks* is promoted within the immediate school and the broader community. The product is sold at the school canteen and the local show and fete. At local trader promotion days (events where the shire is promoting produce of the local area), and via word of mouth, the business is steadily becoming known throughout the Wimmera and has raised the profile of Kaniva. Tourism is considered as another important aspect of the product.

Throughout all the areas covered in the program, various tools are used to promote a wide range of thinking skills. Bloom's 'Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives', Gardner's 'Multiple Intelligences' model and Costa and Kallick's 'Habits of Mind' all provide strategies that are used to promote a diverse range of thinking in the students. The use of information and communication technology is also encouraged to aid this learning. Word processing skills, the use of computers for design purposes and the development of a website are all part of the program.

## Outcomes

The *Kaniva Chicks* program has encouraged:

- student responsibility for their own learning and the directions they wish to go in the future
- independent thinking skills
- greater confidence on the part of the students, both inside and outside the classroom
- greater understanding of the values needed as an individual and member of a community
- the ability to communicate, share, include others and feel part of a group which achieves something tangible
- an understanding that, if they wish to achieve an outcome, it is up to them to put in the effort and not expect someone else to do it for them
- enthusiasm for learning, and
- greater interaction with the local community.