



The YLF team from Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus with volunteers and their mentor

Young Leaders Foundation

An exciting partnership formed between a management consultancy with high profile CEOs and senior business leaders as its clients and a public education region in Sydney is providing a unique opportunity for young student leaders to learn about contemporary leadership theory and then put this into practice within their schools and in their wider communities.

Most exciting and quite unique is that this program focuses on aspiring leaders in Year 9 - students who are 14 and 15 years old.

You may well ask, 'Why 14 – 15 year-olds?' The Alignment Partnership (TAP) and Sydney Region, the partners in this ground-breaking initiative, believe this is a critical stage in the development of personal beliefs and attitudes towards leadership. The Young Leaders Foundation (YLF) program, as it is known, is designed to teach young people to impact positively on others and to lead change by understanding the types of beliefs, thinking and values required by a 21st Century leader. The program focuses on researched-based interactive workshops about leadership tools and theory and combines these with inspirational presentations from practicing senior business leaders who articulate their personal leadership journeys. It also provides these aspiring young leaders with the opportunity to work on a real project with a current senior business leader. The YLF experience has proved highly engaging for students, principals, teachers and YLF volunteers and staff. In fact, everyone involved is energized and inspired by the initiative.

TAP, which funds this initiative, sees the YLF as a purposeful way of contributing to Australia's future.

The YLF aims to teach the next generation the art of leadership from a professional viewpoint while exploring the personal values that will enable young people to navigate successfully through an ever-changing world.

In 2011, the initiative involved five schools: Sydney Secondary College, Balmain and Leichhardt campuses and Georges River College, Hurstville Boys, Peakhurst and Peshurst Girls campuses. These schools, which are the Year 7-10 campuses of multi-campus colleges, were selected as the sites for the YLF program.

Sydney Region Director, Dr Phil Lambert, sees the development of young leaders as crucial to the success of our schools and our future.

"We see the contribution from TAP as a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to the participating schools and others what it means to be a contemporary leader... with the emphasis on serving rather than acquiring status. What I particularly like about the YLF is that it is based on solid research."

Students selected to participate in the program are being given access to world's best leadership practices and original research conducted by TAP's Founder and Principal Dr. Peter Fuda; research which has been published by Harvard Press and is now required reading at universities from Taiwan to the USA – including at Harvard. As part of this initiative, these students are also paired with an inspirational senior business leader as mentor. This important component of the YLF is valued by the students, as Lawrence Marychurch, Sydney Secondary College, Leichhardt Campus student attests:

"Talking to our mentor, Owen Vassie, was fascinating. I related to his story and he was liberal with his time and clever in helping us plan our huge project: a whole school international talent quest. His generous donation for prizes was an added bonus!"

The program has three specific aims. Firstly, to equip student leaders with the values and tools that will enable them to positively implement leadership initiatives throughout their schools and communities. Secondly, each YLF project group identifies a major project where they can put into practice all they have learnt about leadership. Thirdly, the current YLF students are entrusted with the role of 'leaders of leadership' by passing on leadership theory and skills to other students.

The participating business leaders and school principals are excited by the opportunity to inspire and support the groups of young people as they develop important skills, knowledge and values about a sustainable, service-centric model of leadership which will serve them well now and into their future.

Twenty five student leaders from Year 9 in the five schools were selected as the participants. The YLF program was conducted over six months with the students participating in three workshops based on the themes: Leadership of Self; Leadership of Others; Leadership in Action.

Beyond the workshops students are expected to initiate and lead projects, with the guidance of their business leader mentors. The program culminates in a celebratory event where the students report on the progress of their projects while reflecting on their newfound insight into leadership and the skills required of a successful leader. Genevra Prins, one of the team of Year 9 students from Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt Campus, provides some insight into this:

“The blend of theory and practical application really worked for me. You learn about leading yourself and others from the challenges you face in delivering a whole school project like ours, on time and within budget. I sprained my ankle on the morning of our international talent show and as well as performing I was an MC, my team were relying on me - so I just did it. Leaders don’t limp!”

The team from Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus chose to revolutionise their ‘*boring performance space*’ and turn it into an exciting indoor-outdoor learning area. Their objective:

“We plan for this area to come alive with bright and vibrant colours to create a comfortable learning environment for our fellow peers. We would like to re-carpet, paint and refurbish this area with wireless internet provided for the students’ laptops. It (the project) includes school community involvement and caters for the whole school.”

Campus Principal Anne Ross had this to say about their project and how the students worked with their mentor Vicki Doyle from Suncorp:

“Over the last six months the project has snowballed beautifully. Under Vicki’s guidance the students’ enthusiasm and newly acquired leadership and organisational skills enabled them to build a substantial community partnership to ensure that their vision became a reality by attracting sponsorship, enlisting community volunteers and harnessing “expert” advice from both TAFE and school.”

Carol Spittles, College Principal from Georges River College, stressed the importance of the relationship between the mentor and the principal, and the early involvement of parents so that they understood the nature of the project and the commitment that their young people were required to undertake.

Vicki Doyle, an Executive General Manager at Suncorp and mentor for Penshurst Girls offered the following observation:

“The students received an experience that will have left a differentiated imprint on their mind and futures, their confidence and what’s possible.

They will have learnt through direct experience how working as a team, creating a vision, and enlisting others generates a ‘force’ (snowball) way beyond their widest dreams or aspirations. they will undoubtedly have gained a ‘role model’ that they can aspire to and probably breaks down their perceived views of CEOs –how a senior leader can interact and how a female can be ‘at the top’.

The young leaders from Georges River College Hurstville Boys Campus were extremely positive and enthusiastic about their project. As Year 9 student Steven Prasad confirms:

I personally enjoyed the whole program and am sure that anyone who attended would agree with me in saying it was an amazing experience.

The workshops were inspirational and were hosted by incredible people. The staff of TAP showed great enthusiasm while teaching and training us all. They connected with us.... cultivated our potential and contributed greatly to (the development of) leadership skills that we can apply anywhere. Overall ...amazing.

The participating teachers have also used their YFL experience and the resulting increased confidence in their own ability to assume leadership roles within their schools, with one commenting:

“I was particularly impressed by our CEO, Cassandra Kelly from Pottinger, whose inspirational work in staff leadership I have put into practice in my new role as Head Teacher Science in 2012.

Dr. Lambert sees the initiative as achieving a number of outcomes:

“The YLF hits many targets – it enables young people to think deeply about leadership and to put what they are learning into a real problem. It connects our students with business leaders and this in itself has a double benefit... our students engage with role models who practice the positive values underpinning what TAP stands for; and the CEOs get to engage with a sample of the fabulous young people that are part of the public education system and (if they are not already) become champions for the young people in our schools.”

Dr. Peter Fuda of TAP agrees:

“I’m very proud of our ongoing partnership with Sydney Region secondary schools, and our investment in the YLF. The students are inspirational, and I often think we get more out of this than they do.”

Is the project a success? Does it successfully foster young leaders?

The answer lies in the fact that members of the graduating 2011 YLF class are now the peer support leaders, prefects or captains of their schools in 2012.

The words Anne Ross uses to describe the impact of the YLF at her school sums up the overall impact of the program.

The TAP project has been so infectious that it has drawn the whole school community together to support the students manage and achieve their goals. It has involved students, teachers, parents, business managers, graphic designer, furniture manufacturers, community workers, partnership coordinators, Deputy Principal and Principal. There has been incredible interest at every level; school, local community and DEC regional level.

In an era of tighter deadlines and increased complexity, the project has been an innovative way to manage change and yet deliver something new. It is a delicate dance between creative thinking skills and the details of project management.

As a Principal from a creative background I embrace initiatives and have a passion for new ideas or projects. The challenges of fostering the creative talents of colleagues and students, as well as blending creativity with the project delivery process, always brings with it an exciting energy, engagement and positive outcomes for staff and student learning.

There is little doubt that the Young Leaders Foundation is equipping participating students to be outstanding leaders in their schools and communities, while engendering the knowledge that service to others is a key underpinning value of leadership.



The YLF team at Penshurst Girls makes their plans a reality

For more information, please contact:

TAP:

Johanna Jordan

(02) 9321-7000

johannajordan@tap.net.au

Department of Education and Communities:

Ros Trussler

(02) 9531-3932

ros.trussler@det.nsw.edu.au