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EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE CAMPS

FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

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Some interest has been shown by schools in the guidance camps currently conducted jointly by members of the Queensland and Commonwealth Departments of Education for Year 11 Aboriginal students. This article outlines the philosophy and content of these programs, and emphasizes that their effectiveness is, in part, determined by follow-up activities and support from the participants' schools.

The objectives of the camp were, briefly:

1. to enable students to meet and share common problems and experiences in coping with further study;
2. to explore the value and implications of further study;
3. to provide students with decision making skills necessary for effective career choice;
4. to encourage students to develop effective study skills;
5. to assist students to develop socially appropriate, positive, outgoing behaviour.

To meet these objectives, a staff consisting of a guidance officer, a teacher and 9 Aboriginal school counsellors (Community Education Counsellors) from the Queensland Education Department, together with a social worker from the Queensland Health Department, and 2 Commonwealth education officers, was employed. Where possible, activities were presented in small group format, with each group led jointly by a qualified teacher and paraprofessional Aboriginal counsellors.

A detailed outline of the program is presented below. The structured activities were interspersed with group recreational activities such as volley ball, beach games and dancing.

Session 1 (1½ hours):

"Getting to know you" group exercises, for example, introducing the person sitting next to one; relaxation exercises.

Session 2 (3/4 hour):

Students explored styles of decision making (accidental/ impulsive compared with long term planning) through workbook activities from the Centre's publication, *The Future and You*, (p.2-5).

Session 3 (3/4 hour):

The importance of knowledge of self to career planning was discussed after viewing *SQUINKA*, a film produced by the Commonwealth Government Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. The film is designed to help students clarify work and personal values.

Session 4 (3/4 hour):

The theme of understanding self was reinforced by an activity which enabled students to build up a composite image of the type of life style they felt they would like in the future. Students, working in small groups, cut out magazine pictures and produced individual charts that illustrated various aspects of an envisaged life style. The following instructions were provided to students:

MY FUTURE - CHOOSING THE SORT OF LIFE YOU WANT TO LEAD

As you choose your pictures ask yourself the following questions:

1. Where do I want to live? (e.g. country, city, settlement).
2. What kind of house do I want to live in? (e.g. small house, large house, flat, new house, old house, no house).
3. What kind of family life do I want to have? (e.g. will I be married and have children; will I live with someone and have children; will I raise children by myself; will I stay single and have no children; will I live near my parents and relatives and see them often or will I move away and not see them much?)

4. What kind of job do I want? (e.g. unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, professional, working with people, making things with my hands, working in an office or outdoors, or no job)
5. What kind of qualifications do I want to get (e.g. senior trade ticket, teaching diploma, university degree).
6. What kind of activities will I enjoy in my spare time? (e.g. sports, music, art, parties, movies).
7. What kind of person do I want to be? (e.g. happy, sad, friendly, shy, bored, lonely, afraid, satisfied, lazy, hardworking, angry, moody, nervous, happy-go-lucky, understanding).
8. What things will be important to me? (e.g. money in the bank, lots of friends, doing exciting things, a happy family life, a successful career, helping people, security, independence).
9. Do I want to carry on studying? (e.g. part-time, full time, correspondence study).
10. What do I want to look like? (e.g. fat, thin, tired, healthy, well-dressed, scruffy).

REMEMBER - *You can choose* the kind of future you want, its up to you.

After completion of the activity, each student interpreted his/her picture to the group.

Session 5 (1/2 hour)

Having created an image of how they would like to see themselves in the future, the program focused on the student's belief in his ability to control his life to reach that objective. The activity requires students to identify features of themselves that could and could not be changed by conscious effort (Hopson and Hough p.82). The following activity sheet was provided to each student (see next page).

It becomes apparent through this activity that students do have a certain amount of control over their lives and are in a position to make choices.

GETTING THE KIND OF LIFE YOU WANT

For each of you there are some things which you can change about yourselves and your lives. You can probably change more things than you think. List all those things that you think you can change about yourself or your present situation.

Things I can change

How?

Do you *want* to change any of these things? Why?

Now list all the things that you think you cannot change.

Things I cannot change

Why not?

Learning to live with the things we cannot change is hard but not impossible.

Session 6 (1 hour)

Students studied in small groups the case history of a hypothetical Aboriginal student. They were required to bring together the skills and information gained in previous sessions to decide through group consensus the most appropriate career for "Tracy". The following information was provided about "Tracy".

CHOOSING A CAREER: Tracy is having difficulty deciding between three different careers - primary teaching, nursing and commercial art. Read the following information about Tracy and the jobs she has chosen.

Personal Profile:

Name:	Tracy Martin
Age:	17
Address:	13 William Street, Cairns
Family details:	3 brothers aged 6, 10, 12 and one sister aged 15. Parents separated, father alcoholic. Tracy lives with her mother and brothers and sister.
School:	Cairns High School

School

achievement: Rating for 1st semester Grade 11
English 5
Modern History 4 Junior results,
Ancient History 5 average of 5 from
Economics 3 academic course.
Geography 5
Art 6

Interests: Sports, particularly athletics and swimming,
dancing, music (plays guitar), painting.
Also helps at a playground run for young
children after school.

Personality: Outgoing, friendly, thoughtful, hardworking,
but gets bored easily.

Appearance: Medium height, short curly hair, keeps up
with fashion but tends to be casually
dressed and not always very tidy.

Personal values: Independence, helping people, particularly
her own Aboriginal people, friendship,
family life.

Rewards wanted Variety, job security, a chance for prom-
from work: otion, regular hours, a chance to meet
people.

Job Information:

1. Nursing requires a science subject at either senior or junior level for entry.
2. Generally a higher standard of education is required for primary teaching than for nursing or commercial art.
3. Training for teaching will require going to Townsville.
4. Training for commercial art will require going to Brisbane.
5. Training for nursing is available in Cairns.
6. Job opportunities for commercial artists are not good in Queensland.
7. Opportunities exist for teachers of Aboriginal children in North Queensland.
8. Job opportunities for nurses are quite good in Cairns.
9. Artistic and musical abilities are an asset for a primary teacher.
10. Commercial Art sometimes involves repetitive work and does not always allow for the use of creative talent.
11. Teachers and nurses should have a real interest in people.
12. Nurses should be able to get along with people of all ages, not just children.

Think about the information above and fill out the following sections:

I think Tracy should choose _____ because _____
(job)

I think _____ would be unsuitable for Tracy because _____
(job)

A recorder for each group presented the decision reached about the most appropriate career for Tracy and their reasons for that decision.

Session 7 (2 hours):

Students completed a survey on study habits and on the basis of that survey worked through activity sheets dealing with note taking, assignment writing, examination techniques and preparing for examinations.

Session 8 (3/4 hour):

Students viewed the film cartoon "Citizen Harold" which depicts a "Norm" type character who alternates between inhibited frustration and outward aggression in trying to express to City Hall his concern at the council's cutting down trees on his footpath. Students were asked to identify situations in the film where Harold was aggressive and where he was inhibited, with a view to determining ways in which he could have acted more effectively with neither aggression nor inhibition.

Session 9 (3/4 hour):

Lecturette on the differences between 'aggressive' and 'non-assertive' behaviour and an explanation of 'assertive' behaviour, a socially more acceptable way to handle problem situations.

Students then composed, in small groups, assertive statements that Harold could have used in the various situations in which he found himself, for example, "I feel upset because council workers are cutting down trees in front of my house without discussing it with me. I would like to see the appropriate person please."

Session 10 (3/4 hour): Students practised making assertive statements in role play situations, for example:

Person 1 - You have a new, expensive pair of shoes and you are wanting to exchange them or get a refund. You have only worn them three times and the sole is coming apart from the upper part of the sole.

Person 2 - You are the manager of a shoe store and this person has approached you with a broken shoe that has apparently been worn only 3 times. No other shoes in this range have been faulty and you wonder if you are being "taken for a ride." You are also conscious of your firm's good name.

Session 11 (1 hour):

Students viewed the Department of Aboriginal Affairs film *The Land of My Mother*, which explores the attachment that exists between traditionally oriented Aborigines and their land, and discussed in groups the attitudes, values and beliefs that urbanized and traditionally-oriented Aborigines share and those in which they differ.

The first objective, *to enable students to meet and share common problems and experiences in coping with further study*, was met largely by the physical process of bringing Aboriginal students together in the camp situation. Few state high schools would have more than one or two Aboriginal students in Year 11, most having 'dropped out' by the end of Year 10. This can heighten the sense of isolation as a minority member of a body of students and places the student in a situation where he is exposed to strong negative peer pressure to drop out from school or spend much of the time, that should be devoted to study, involved in recreational pursuits. The aim of this guidance camp was to evoke positive peer support from students sharing similar situations. As well as the recreational activities, Session 11 enabled Aboriginal students to consider issues affecting Aborigines in Australia today. Although only a single session, it did provide an opportunity for students to consider their relationship and identification with Aborigines leading different life styles.

The second and third objectives, *to explore the value and implications of further study and to provide students with decision making skills necessary for effective career choice*, were met

through the series of activities (Sessions 2-6) designed to encourage students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to plan and work actively towards their futures. The next step, and one in which schools can play a major role, is to encourage the students to carry out systematic and comprehensive investigation of their career interests. This can include reading career literature, arranging visits to the Career Reference Centre if possible, discussing particular jobs with people employed in those capacities locally, and if possible, arranging work experience in the areas of interest.

Session 7 aimed at fulfilling Objective 4, *to encourage students to develop effective study skills*. Having had students think deeply about their working life, it was considered appropriate to assist them to develop study habits necessary to achieve their goals. The skills required for effective and efficient study, assignment writing and examination-taking are sufficiently complex to require a series of lessons, followed by a specialist program relating the material to each subject area. This can be undertaken most effectively by schools. Further, the role of parents in establishing a climate that enables students to develop appropriate study habits should be recognized, and where possible, programs instituted by the school to enhance parent understanding and involvement. A committee of guidance officers, including myself, are currently evaluating and developing suitable study programs for class and individual use. Assistance is available from this committee upon request.

Objective 5, *to assist students to develop socially appropriate, positive, outgoing behaviour*, was met in Sessions 8-10, where the assertion training aimed at increasing the social competence of students. Several authors (e.g. Duncan, 1972) have noted that effective prevocational programs for Aborigines should place considerable emphasis on their psychological and social development, to ensure the degree of self confidence required for satisfactory adjustment to urban society. All of us who have worked with Aboriginal students, I am sure, will be able to identify behaviours indicating a higher than normal level of under-confidence and embarrassment in stressful social situations. Such behaviour restricts the individual's ability to perform satisfactorily in such tasks as job interviews and seeking assistance from a teacher when work is not understood. Sue (1977) advocates the use of assertion training with minority groups to help overcome these restrictions. The school can again play a role in ensuring the student effectively assimilates assertive behaviours by:

- . encouraging good eye contact;
- . asking the student to rephrase an aggressive comment into an 'assertive' format;
- . encouraging withdrawn or inhibited students to express themselves using *I messages*, for example, "I think..." or "I feel...".
- . setting tasks of increasing difficulty that require the student to accept more responsibility, for example, asking a person in authority for advice.
- . conducting role plays that enable students to try out alternative ways of handling difficult situations, for example, resisting peer pressure to drink or participate in sport rather than study.

At the completion of the camp, students were administered an evaluation sheet. Students rated each of the activities as follows:

	Very useful	useful	of no use
Getting to know you	6	22	5
Types of decision making	17	13	2
The film <i>Squinka</i> and discussion	8	17	7
Planning your future	24	9	-
The "Tracy" case study	(exercise not completed by all groups)		
Recreational activities	10	21	-
Study skills	18	12	1
"Assertiveness" course	14	15	2
Issues facing Aborigines today	15	15	-

Quite apparently the great majority of students claimed the camp was helpful to them. In particular, "planning your future", types of decision making" and "study skills" were rated by over half the students as being "very useful". Few exercises were considered of no use and even with the film *Squinka*, a number of students voiced opposition to the image of the "typical Aussie youth", rather than to the message of the film.

Given the open-ended opportunity to express their feelings about the camp, students listed the following as most important issues to them:

- 1) The opportunity to meet with other Aboriginal students and share experiences of group identity;
- 2) the opportunity to find out about other Aborigines, and about aspects of Aboriginal culture;
- 3) the encouragement to think about careers and where they themselves "are going" and to plan for their futures;
- 4) the assistance with planning study routines.

Significantly, many students suggested that the camp needed to have been longer - that even with the 10 hour working days, more time was needed to get through the amount of work required. None suggested less work, more recreation.

References

- Duncan, Q.T.: Aboriginal participation in an industrialized economy.
Human Consequences of Technological Change, 1972, 7:17-31.
- Sue, S.: Psychological theory and implications for Asian Americans.
Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1977, 55:381-389.

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ERRATA - Vol.7 No.4, p.17, para 2, line 8.

It is regretted that in transcribing B. Chamber's article for our last issue, a line was omitted. Please substitute the following:

I see very little evidence of re-socialization through Aboriginal Studies, whether it be at the tertiary, secondary or primary level of education. On the contrary, what I do see is an unexpected, or unplanned, outcome whereby the child is encouraged to see his/her personal identity in terms of ethnic identity - specifically in terms of labelling the 'out-group' - and is unwittingly part of a social change process that will foster cultural pluralism, with its separatist, stereotyped and static aspects, rather than cultural diversity. Children are not being encouraged to equally appreciate "the values of diverse cultures and denigrate none, so that there could be continuity in synthesis and resynthesis of the identities of pupils" (Falk, p.14), nor is there any evidence in the education system of planning for "shared values expressed in a 'stable symbolic canopy' for the whole society" (Falk, p.14), except where the status quo is maintained through forced compliance.