

2012

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Dale Murray

**PROJECT AIM:** The aim of this project is to establish links with international education specialists and research teams who support education for young people outside mainstream education environments and at risk of social exclusion. The key focus of the project is to investigate new ways of learning and governance arrangements that develop in community settings as teams of professionals work together around children and young people who are at risk of social exclusion and disengagement from education.



# **THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA**

Dale Murray  
2011 Churchill Fellow  
54 Celia St Ashgrove  
Queensland  
4060  
[dalemurray@ereflc.org.au](mailto:dalemurray@ereflc.org.au)  
0417640566

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, cost or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation of any other private right or of any law.

Signed: Dale Murray

Dated: 29/7/2012

## **PROJECT AIM**

The aim of this project is to establish links with international education specialists and research teams who support education for young people outside mainstream education environments and at risk of social exclusion. The key focus of the project is to investigate new ways of learning and governance arrangements that develop in community settings as teams of professionals work together around children and young people who are at risk of social exclusion and disengagement from education.

# INDEX

• <b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
○ <b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
○ <b>The National Landscape</b>	<b>7</b>
○ <b>The Policy Setting</b>	<b>8</b>
• <b>Sites visited</b>	<b>9</b>
• <b>Recommendations</b>	<b>22</b>
• <b>Bibliography</b>	<b>26</b>

## INTRODUCTION

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Churchill Trust for the opportunity to visit the researchers, activists, teachers, youth workers and young people discussed in this report. I also thank all those people who gave of their time and knowledge; your generosity, your commitment to advancing debate and practice with regard to equality for young people is to be admired.

I am currently the Director of Edmund Rice Education Australia Youth+. EREA Youth+ operates nationally and supports thirteen Flexible Learning Centres, a number of specialist reengagement programmes, a Registered Training Organisation and a number of research and advocacy projects. The services support over one thousand young people in remote, rural and urban settings that are disenfranchised from mainstream education settings. Youth+ represents the nation's largest non state school systemic response to this community of young people and has its foundations in the ethos of Edmund Rice Education.

For much of my professional life I have been privileged with a vocation that has been inspired by the vision of socially inclusive participatory education. This vision embodies my personal reflection on democratic educational practice within inclusive learning communities and has formed the educational leader I am today. I have a clear and ongoing commitment to work with those disenfranchised, to advocate for those caught in structural poverty and to stand in solidarity with those on the margins. I take very seriously the philosophy of "walking with" as guest in the lives of the people I work with and for.

I would like to acknowledge the Edmund Rice Education Australia Council, Board and Executive for their ongoing support in the provision for educational services for marginalised young people. I also acknowledge and give personal thanks to my referees for this Churchill Fellowship, Professor Sue McGinty and Dr Wayne Tinsey.

I also acknowledge the young people and staff who commit to working together on "common ground" in Youth+ education settings across the nation

Finally I would like to acknowledge and thank my wife Michelle and our beautiful family Portia, Kira and Arakai for the love and care given to me.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our nation, like many other minority first world cultures, faces ongoing challenges in engaging an ever increasing number of young people that for complex social, historical, political and economic reasons are outside mainstream schooling environments. The following collection of research and practice descriptions are the result of interviews conducted over April and May 2012 as part of this Churchill Fellowship.

With some 60,000 young Australians currently engaged in flexible or alternative educational environments and potentially many other thousands disengaged from learning altogether, the nation faces complex challenges to fulfil one of the essential goals of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational goal for young Australians (2008) that is; “*A Commitment to Action, Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds*”. This paper draws on international research and service delivery practice frameworks to encourage continued reflection and action directed towards the fulfilment of educational equity. In all minority first world nations, hegemonic factors of capital, competition and class structure play a determining role in educational equity and success. The starting place for success on the educational landscape is not so much personal ability but rather socio economic habitat. Consequently some young Australians are not given the same chances as others; clear examples include urban, rural and remote indigenous young people, young people experiencing degrees of homelessness, young people in the juvenile justice system and young people in the care of state and territory systems. Many of these young people and a wide range of others disenfranchised have the common predominate factor of experiencing marginalisation from mainstream educational environments. Whilst Federal, State and Territory governments responses to this crisis of engagement have included a range of targeted programmes, e.g. Youth Connections Programmes, Positive Learning Centres, Non State Flexible Learning Centres, Care Schools, ICAN Funding streams, State alternative programmes, these responses are, in the main, fixes at the edges. And while to some degree these responses have provided frameworks for re engagement, the problem remains complex and endemic. This summary of research and practice frameworks points towards a reimagining of the educational landscape to provide egalitarian and flexible spaces that offer all young citizens equity of access and in turn positive life trajectory.

The key findings from this research point to a range of fundamental characteristics that promote educational engagement and success;

- Holistic approach to education catering to the young person’s spiritual, social, emotional and intellectual needs
- High quality staff – multi discipline backgrounds.
- Clearly defined and established programme goals – strategic vision
- Group (young people and adults) dynamics managed by a common held set of principles and values
- A strong emphasis on positive relationships rather than punitive/authoritarian behaviour management.
- A focus on well being

- A student centred approach to learning combined with space that promotes participatory democratic voice for young people
- Family/carer involvement.
- Community linkages.
- Interagency collaboration.
- Flexible delivery of curriculum
- Appropriate resourcing
- Non linear in terms of age cohort grouping.

It is at the “edges” of educational landscapes where we often find evidence of innovation. The spaces that cater for the disenfranchised are spaces that by necessity are experimental, challenge dominate paradigms and offer habitats of inclusions, justice and equity. All first world minority nations have these spaces as these communities are subject to the legacy of an industrial model of education that functions as a sorting mechanism and it is in these communities of radical practice and acceptance where evidence of access to equity may be found. As outlined by Jennifer Vadeboncoeur,

*“The purpose(s) of schooling is not widely discussed today; it is, rather, already assumed. It is assumed that the most recent incarnation of “social efficiency,” neoliberal economic rationality, should drive schooling; it is assumed that some form of consensus has been created; it is assumed that this approach will unite markets globally, resulting in a single capitalist market. Those who argue for the democratic ideal of public schooling—that public schooling should enable the development of citizens, that it should be a right, and a privilege, of democratic societies and that schools should form for youth a community within which to grow—may argue that alternative educational programs should not exist. Considering alternative educational programs as thirdspaces, as heterotopias, however, foregrounds at least two things: the possibilities they afford, and the risks entailed by participating in them. Alternative educational programs will continue to exist, not because youth “choose” an alternative program, and not because of the amazing epistemological, ontological and axiological work that is undertaken, but as a necessity wrought by capitalism.”* (29 May 2009 Spaces of Difference: The Contradictions of Alternative Educational Programs Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur. The University of British Columbia)

The outcomes of this Churchill fellowship include the following research and publishing developments;

- Australian Research Council linkage application: EREA Youth+, Brotherhood of St Lorraine, NT Dept of Education, VIC Dept of Education, WA Catholic Education Office, Centre Care NTH QLD and James Cook University, “The Value added-ness of Flexible Learning” ARC application 2013
- The author and Professor Jennifer. Vadeboncoeur will co edit the 2014 National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook. Working Title, Designing educational programmes with and for youth: Alternative and Flexible contexts for learning
- An international research team will develop a longitudinal study of young people’s life outcomes post flexible learning. (2013/4)

## THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The excellent 2012 Dusseldorp Skills Forum report authored by Kitty te Riele, *Learning Choices: A Map for the Future*, found the following: “the results from the Learning Choices National Scan show there are over 400 programs in up to 2000 locations nationally, working with up to 61,000 young people during 2011. The actual number of learning choices programs, and of young people attending these programs, is higher since the national scan is unlikely to have captured all programs”. Te Riele goes on to state that for the purpose of the paper we are able to discount the 61,000 number to 33,000 young people as this number represents those considered “disenfranchised from mainstream learning environments and not enrolled in State or Territory offerings which are considered as pathways of mainstream education”. Kitty te Riele, (April 2012) *Learning Choices: A Map for the Future*. In addition the paper went on to discuss another 4100 young people who were on waiting lists to enrol in programs. In terms of National data we are now aware that, “Retention to Year 12 has stabilised at around 75% since the mid-1990s (ABS, 2010). The retention rate for Indigenous young people continues to lag well behind at only 45% and the secondary school dropout rate is given as 14.7% for Australia compared to 12.9% for the OECD and 11% for the European Union (OECD, 2009). More than 16% of 15-19 year olds in Australia are not fully engaged and nearly a quarter of 20 to 24 year-olds: that is not in full time education or full time work” Kitty te Riele, (April 2012.) *Learning Choices: A Map for the Future*. There is clear evidence that early school leaving has been linked to increased likelihood of unemployment, underemployment, crime and ill-health and poor transition to active citizenship adult well being.

Edmund Rice Education Australia Youth+ Flexible Learning Centres located in 13 remote, rural and urban communities across the nation along with over 400 flexible learning service providers consistently record over subscription of referrals to flexible learning environments. This dislocation from learning communities represent large populations of young people in remote, rural and urban settings that are not participating in the prosperity of the nation and transitioning to meaningful economic and civic adult lives.

## THE POLICY SETTING

The Melbourne Declaration outlines the goals for national educational aspiration. In this context, one commitment to action states:

“For Australian schooling to promote equity and excellence, governments and all school sectors must improve educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians and encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations for their education.

Educational outcomes for Indigenous children and young people are substantially behind those of other students in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion. Meeting the needs of young Indigenous Australians and promoting high expectations for their educational performance requires strategic investment.

Australian schooling needs to engage Indigenous students, their families and communities in all aspects of schooling; increase Indigenous participation in the education workforce at all levels; and support coordinated community services for students and their families that can increase productive participation in schooling.

Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from remote areas, refugees, homeless young people, and students with disabilities often experience educational disadvantage. Targeted support can help disadvantaged young Australians to achieve better educational outcomes” (2008) Melbourne Declaration.

Australian governments must continue to support all young Australians to achieve not only equality of opportunity but also more equitable outcomes as clearly defined in the above policy action. Policy outcomes from the Melbourne Declaration and now enshrined as policy settings has seen the federal government establish; *The Compact with young Australians*. As a response to the almost 15% of young Australians’ not being retained to Grade 12 this policy action attempts to respond to this “third space”. The *Compact* promises young people a government-subsidised study or training place as long as a place is available and subject to admission requirements. Indeed the Youth Connections funding agreement states, “Youth Connections Providers must ensure that at risk young people have access to education or training through an alternative learning facility. This should be through an appropriate facility that already exists in the region or through a facility established by the Provider. Where no appropriate alternative learning facility exists, Providers must establish a facility” (DEEWR, 2010, p.12) It is this landscape of National policy framework that has fuelled recent action for the development of appropriate facilities and responses for those outside mainstream education legislation. In addition to Youth Connections, the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions has also set up School Business Community Partnership Brokers. These aim to foster a “strategic, whole of community approach by building partnerships between and among schools, business and industry, parents and families and community groups to support student engagement and improve education and transition outcomes” Kitty te Riele, (April 2012) *Learning Choices: A Map for the Future*

This paper brings together 25 years of professional educational experience in flexible learning landscapes and the results of an international investigation of flexible learning spaces and international research.

## **Research initiatives visited and Sites of Practice visited**

The following discussion will be in two sections

### **Sites visited**

In April/May 2012 visits to the following services and Universities were undertaken.

<b>Canada. (Vancouver)</b>	
University British Columbia	Jennifer Vadeboncoeur <b>Research</b>
The Global Lounge	Peter Wanyenya <b>Practice</b>
The UBC First Nations Longhouse	Ryanne James <b>Practice</b>
The UBC CEDAR Program	Ryanne James
SACY	Art Steinman <b>Practice</b>
<b>United States of America</b>	
<b>Chicago</b>	
Education Research and Activists	Sue and Michael Klonsky <b>Research</b>
Uni of Illinois at Chicago	David Stovall <b>Research</b>
	Erica Meiners <b>Research</b>
School of Arts Institute Chicago	Therese Quinn <b>Research</b>
<b>Washington DC</b>	
American Youth Policy Forum	Besty Brand <b>Research</b>
<b>New York City</b>	
Department of Education NYC	Tim Lisante <b>Practice</b>
Urban Academy	Ann Cook <b>Practice</b>
Manhattan Free School	<b>Practice</b>
The Door	<b>Practice</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	
Education Consultant	Julian Sefton-Green <b>Research</b>
WAC	Camille Curtis y Van Dyke <b>Practice</b>
University of Bath	Harry Daniels <b>Research</b>
	David Spicer <b>Research</b>
University of the First Age	Sarah Burgess <b>Research</b>
Summer Hill School	Zoe Neill Readhead <b>Practice</b>
Urban Collective	Harry Leckstein <b>Practice</b>

## **CANADA.**

### **Research**

Jennifer Vadeboncoeur  
Associate Professor University British Columbia

Jennifer's research draws on studies of programs designed to reengage disengaged young people. More broadly, her research also includes work with young people and teachers in flexible learning settings, such as alternative programs for completing high school requirements and youth organizations. Through ethnographic research, she explores a set of socio cultural research questions that examine the relationships between young people and adults; the social languages and discourses they take up, employ, and transform; as well as the ways in which flexible settings for learning are structured for and with young people.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Socio cultural ethnographic approach to research
- Socio cultural approach to research of resiliency
- Social spaces in a flexible learning centre: Negotiating successful learning through participation. Research in the literature across Australia and the US highlights the barriers to success in mainstream schools for some young people. This research captures the "positive thesis," or what works for many young people excluded from schools. Recommendations and a model of flexible learning centres, including principles for operation and governance, leadership and staffing, professional development, and four curriculum strands, is being generated (with co-investigator Dale Murray)
- Curriculum must be enquiry based – participatory action research
- Schools that teach democracy give voice to active citizenship
- Small schools create communities that have participatory voice, that is, places where young people and adults are treated with dignity and fairness, a place where young people and adults are on a common ground and have access to equity
- Professional development video link EREA Youth+ staff days (July 2012) Socio cultural approach to resilience.

### **Practice**

#### **University British Columbia**

The First Nations Long House

The First Nations House of Learning is located in the First Nations Longhouse (also known as the Longhouse). The Longhouse is a unique building that reflects the architectural traditions of the Northwest Coast. The Longhouse:

- serves as a "home away from home" where Aboriginal students can study and learn in a surrounding that reflects Aboriginal traditions and cultures.
- brings together a wide variety of services, including Library, a computer lab, counselling, advising, and other student resources.
- houses the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP), Faculty of Education; and the UBC First Nations Student Association.

- enables Aboriginal peoples to share their knowledge and culture with one another, with the University community, and with the wider community as a whole.

Every year hundreds of Aboriginal young people participate in summer camps offered by UBC Long House, after school programs, and sports activities run by UBC. This includes the CEDAR program out of the Faculty of Science, the Native Youth Program, and the Summer Science Program offered by the Institute for Aboriginal Health. This program re-inforced the attraction of sport as an engagement and relationship building focus as an integral component of success in tutoring, homework, literacy and numeracy support. It also demonstrated utilising university students as volunteers to support these programs and the value in opening this to faculties beyond education.

CEDAR, Cross-cultural Education through Demonstration, Action and Recreation provides aboriginal young people with opportunities to share experiences of being on campus at UBC, learning and socialising with UBC students. Young people are encouraged to attend each year during their secondary school education recognising that building aspiration, familiarisation with higher education systems and the confidence to engage requires ongoing support structures. The key focuses of this two week immersion are the Faculties of Science, Land and Food systems and the First Nations Long House. The CEDAR program has established culturally appropriate pathways for young aboriginal people to aspire to higher education and is successful in raising the enrolment of aboriginal young people at UBC.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Culturally appropriate transition pathways for aboriginal students
- Transition and mentor partnerships

## **University British Columbia**

The Global Lounge.

The Global Lounge offers young people on campus with a technological interactive 'lounge' space to connect with the world. Young people associated with the lounge are also instrumental in developing a range of clubs that support international advocacy. This Lounge provides young people with a space for activism and action while promoting international inclusive justice focused debate.

This program re-inforced the design of non-traditional young people spaces to encourage young people to participate, be comfortable and feel safe.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Culturally appropriate transition pathways for international students
- Transition and mentor partnerships

## The Vancouver School Board

Art Steinman

SACY

“Connection is Prevention”

**SACY** – School Age Children and Youth substance use prevention initiative - SACY is a partner project of the Vancouver Board of Education and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority in collaboration with the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Police Department, the University of BC and the Centre for Addictions Research of BC. The services offers young people, families and education communities a whole school approach to encourage open dialogue and healthy communication about drug and alcohol issues. The services focus is on health promotion and strengths based positive youth development; always seeing young people at the centre and recognising their intrinsic value. Innovations in this program include the empowering of young people’s voice, supporting and empowering parents in relationship with their child, young person’s identification of a significant person at school who can support the young person.

SACY achieves its success by reaching out across 18 High Schools to support young people, teachers and families. The program provides a long term 3 day a week service that keeps young people connected to their school and family. The “wrap around” service recognises that substance use is usually symptomatic of wider social and cultural issues and must be treated in this context. A key focus is for young people to remain connected to teacher, school, community and family. The service boasts wide ranging success with relation to re engagement, substance misuse minimisation, continued health promotion and most importantly personal ownership of behaviour.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Holistic support structures for young people with substance misuse issues
- The use of a multidisciplinary work force support for young people with substance misuse issues

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### Research

#### Chicago

##### **Mike Klonsky and Sue Klonsky**

Mike Klonsky is one of the leaders of the modern small schools movement which has been instrumental in transforming the landscape of secondary school education in the United States. Dr Klonsky’s research on issues of school size and its impact on student achievement, school violence, and dropout rates, has paved the way towards the development of new small and charter schools across America. His academic work focused on small school size as a solution to the problems of inner city schools. The end result of this innovative work is the Charter School movement, the Small School movement and a large number of interconnected small flexible/alternative schools providing options for young people outside mainstream education.

Mike and Sue Klonsky have published numerous books and articles related to a reimagining of the educational landscape; “Small Schools” M & S Klonsky (2008)

Routledge) models a new kind of public school system that was fair and equitable and that encouraged new relationships between teachers and students.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Curriculum must be enquiry based – participatory action research
- Schools that teach democracy give voice to active citizenship
- Small schools create communities that have participatory voice, that is, places where young people and adults are treated with dignity and fairness, a place where young people and adults are on a common ground and have access to equity.

### **David Stovall**

Associate Professor University of Illinois

David Stovall is an Associate Professor of Educational Policy Studies and African-American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). His work covers four key areas, Critical Race Theory, concepts of social justice in education, the relationship between housing and education and the relationship between schools and community stakeholders. In the attempt to bring theory to action, he has spent the last ten years working with community organizations and schools to develop curriculum that address issues of social justice. His current work has led him to become a member of the Greater Lawndale/Little Village School of Social Justice High School design team, which opened in of 2005 where he also serves as a volunteer social studies teacher. David is a strong advocate for community focused interventions that give voice to the local inhabitants.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Intersection of research and youth advocacy
- Youth participation in community development
- Local activism as mechanism for change
- The effect of public housing on learning spaces – urban planning, community organizing and equity to public funding for education

### **Erica Meiners**

University of Illinois, Dept of Education

Professor of Education and Women's Studies

Erica is a teacher and a coordinator, of an alternative high school for men and women who have been incarcerated, St Leonard's Adult High School. This school has operated on voluntary work force for many years and today continues to support people leaving prison and seeking to gain High school diplomas. Erica co-authored the first LGBTQ audit of teacher education programs in the U.S. "Visibility Matters" and has collaborated to develop Women and Prison: A Site of Resistance and TAME: Teachers Against Militarized Education. Erica has also authored a number of books: Right to be hostile: Schools, prisons and the making of public enemies (Routledge 2007), Public acts: Disruptive readings on making curriculum public (Routledge 2004), and with Therese Quinn, Flaunt It! Queers organizing for public education and justice. Other articles in a range of publications including AREA Chicago, Re Thinking Schools, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Meridians, and Upping the Ante.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Intersection of youth policy research and youth advocacy
- Advocacy for LGBTQ young people in education
- Advocacy for people leaving the US prison system
- Advocacy and practice development for Volunteering within Education

### **Therese Quinn**

Art Institute of Chicago

Therese Quinn is Chair and Associate Professor of Art Education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). She was a Fulbright Scholar in Finland during 2009 and has written about Finnish education for Rethinking Schools. Her most recent books are *Sexualities in Education: A Reader* (Lang, 2012) and *Art and Social Justice Education: Culture as Commons* (Routledge, 2011). She co edits the Teachers College Press Series, *Teaching for Social Justice* and writes a bi-monthly column for *Yliopisto*, the magazine of the University of Helsinki. Therese's work centres on the following activities.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Advocacy for LGBTQ young people in education
- Youth participation in community development
- Local activism as mechanism for change

### **Washington DC**

#### **Besty Brand**

#### **American Youth Policy Forum**

Betsy Brand is director of the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF). Betsy started her career in education policy on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor and subsequently served on the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, where she handled all education and workforce legislation. From 1989–1993, Ms. Brand served as assistant secretary for vocational and adult education at the U.S. Department of Education. From 1993–1998, she operated her own consulting firm, Workforce Futures, Inc., focusing on policy and best practices affecting education, workforce preparation, and youth development.

American Youth Policy Forum:

AYPF's mission is to broaden the awareness and understanding of policymakers and to strengthen the youth policymaking process by bridging policy, practice, and research. AYPF achieves this by identifying high-quality information on youth issues and providing a forum for prominent leaders in government, programming, and research, as well as youth, to share their viewpoints and expertise about the policies and practices that improve outcomes for all youth.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Intersection of youth policy research and youth advocacy

## Practice

### **New York City**

#### **New York Department of Education – District 79.**

The New York City Department of Education has the responsibility to ensure that all students have the opportunity to earn a high school or General Education Development (GED) diploma. The NYDE recognize that many students need additional supports to succeed in their current school or require alternative pathways to attain a high school or GED diploma. District 79 was established to help students succeed by providing diverse and innovative educational opportunities that combine academic instruction with meaningful youth development.

The superintendent of District 79, Dr Tim Lisante, provided the following information. In essence D79 operates within two major spheres, voluntary and involuntary.

#### **District 79 Demographics,**

##### **Overall**

18,000 students served annually

45% below the poverty line

42% Black, 40% Latino/Hispanic, 6% Asian, 5% White, 7% other

##### **Voluntary**

Adult Ed 21 years and over

Urban Academy and other alternative state school provisions

Young Parents

Career and Technical Ed

Diploma – Learn to work, transition to work

##### **Involuntary**

Substance rehabilitation – residential programme (in a hospital) + day programme

Correctional – two settings (16 – 21 years about 1,000 young people, under 16 about 400 young people)

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- The use of a multidisciplinary work force support for young people with substance misuse issues
- Wide range of community based programmes to cater for difference
- Mentor and internships to support transition programmes

#### **Urban Academy**

Ann Cook

UA has 120 students who are a multicultural group of young people coming from all over New York City. Some have been marginalised from their previous schools; some are seeking the personal attention of a small school community; others have been out of school for a period of time.

The staff, many of whom have been with the school for an average of 10 years, are deeply involved in planning curriculum, administration and strategic development of the Academy

Urban Academy courses are focused on critical-thinking and problem-solving and students are allowed to ask, research and answer their own questions. This whole school approach to inquiry based learning is a key feature to the success of UA in as much as young people are consistently engaged in questioning and defining.

Inquiry-Based Teaching Inquiry teaching requires the teacher to frame questions in a way which challenges students to examine often conflicting evidence, draw conclusions and support these conclusions in thoughtful discussions with others who, using the same evidence base, reach divergent conclusions. A goal of inquiry-based learning is to develop the students' skills of critical analysis, to become life-long learners able to confront any topic, research it, and have confidence in their ability to defend what, in some cases, may be minority opinions.

UA has also created a physical space that feels more like “home” than school; fish tanks, couches, music, photos etc play a very important part of creating a comfortable atmosphere.

The ultimate goal is to produce independent, thinking, and articulate citizens.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Curriculum must be enquiry based – participatory action research (subsequent professional development in-service for EREA Youth+ staff – July 2012 staff days)
- Schools that teach democracy give voice to active citizenship
- Small schools create communities that have participatory voice, that is, places where young people and adults are treated with dignity and fairness, a place where young people and adults are on a common ground and have access to equity.
- Processes that support new staff induction and training into an enquiry based learning framework.

### **The Manhattan Free School**

The Manhattan Free School is an independent school for people from ages 5-18. The school's fundamental premise is based on the resolution constructed and adopted at the 2005 International Democratic Education Conference, which states: In any educational setting, young people have the right:

- to decide individually how, when, what, where, and with whom they learn,
- To have an equal share in the decision-making as to how their organizations—in particular their schools—are run, and which rules and sanctions, if any, are necessary.

Manhattan Free School holds strong to the belief people are born curious and because of this can trust in their desire to learn and their enormous capacity to make sense of the world on their own terms. The school promotes a very strong democratic participatory voice by developing practice that ensures young people are involved in all aspects of the decision making process of the school.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Curriculum must be enquiry based – participatory action research

- School promotes giving voice to young people as active participants of their learning
- Small schools create communities that have participatory voice, that is, places where young people and adults are treated with dignity and fairness, a place where young people and adults are on a common ground and have access to equity.

## **The Door**

The Door provides holistic wrap around services for young people across New York City. The services represent a suite of individual and group responses for young people seeking support. In offering these services The Door has created a Youth Hub, “a one door” or point of access to service provision for a very diverse range of young people.

The Door’s mission is to empower young people to reach their potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment. Since 1972, The Door has practiced a holistic and human approach to helping each individual member dismantle the complex barriers that often stand in the way of success.

### **Programs & Services**

The Door provides a wide range of services to meet the needs of New York City youth aged 12-21. See below for a list of program categories, Program Categories:

#### **[College Advisement & Tutoring](#)**

The Talent Search program provides the support and guidance needed to make way to high school graduation, college and beyond.

#### **[Counselling](#)**

Counsellors are available to listen and help with a range of issues, including anger management, crisis intervention, gender identity etc.

#### **[Creative Arts](#)**

regularly scheduled, free creative arts classes include a range of performing and visual arts, music and dance.

#### **[English Language \(ESOL\)](#)**

The Door offers a flexible schedule of classes for young people who would like to learn English.

#### **[Foster Care](#)**

if a young person is in foster care, The Door can provide the additional support **[GED](#)** (General Education Development)

The Door offers a variety of programs to help you get your GED and move on to a career, college or a vocational/training program.

#### **[Health & Dental Services](#)**

The Adolescent Health Centre (AHC) offers comprehensive health and dental services to all Door members, regardless of ability to pay.

#### **[Jobs & Internships](#)**

The Door offers Jobs & Internships programs give young people the chance to explore different career paths and gain skills to help you find the right job and keep it.

### Leadership

The Door offers a range of opportunities to learn key leadership skills that will help young people in school, work and everyday life.

### Legal & Immigration Services

The Legal Services Centre provides different kinds of legal counsel, including support for immigrant youth. Services are offered in English, Spanish, Mandarin and French.

### LGBTQ

The Door provides a range of programs geared towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning (LGBTQ) members.

### Recreation

Games, workshops, and fitness and performance opportunities are offered on a daily basis.

### Runaway and Homeless Youth

Young people who are homeless or have run away from home can find support from The Door with regard to essentials like food, clothing and shelter, as well as help with your specific needs.

### Sexual Health & Birth Control

The Adolescent Health Centre (AHC) offers a comprehensive list of services to meet young people sexual health and birth control needs.

### Supportive Housing

In partnership with Common Ground, The Door opened The Lee, a supportive housing building located on the Lower East Side. The Lee currently houses 55 young people living in their own apartments.

### Charter School

The Door offers a Flexible education programme on site for young people outside mainstream education.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Youth support services and multidisciplinary practice
- Governance arrangements for complex youth support services
- Volunteer programmes to support service offerings
- Internships as a transition pathway

## **UNITED KINGDOM**

### Research

#### **Julian Sefton-Green**

London

Education Consultant

Julian is part time at the London School of Economics as a principal research fellow in the department of Media and Communications. He has worked at many levels of the formal and informal education systems. Julian is an honorary professor in the school of Education at the University of Nottingham and also holds a post as an adjunct associate research professor at the University of South Australia and is working as an independent consultant and researcher across a range of disciplines and subject areas;

- Youth, media and technology
- regeneration, community and education policy
- creativity, learning and arts research.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- innovation in digital multi literacy spaces and how these technologies provide equity of access to marginalised young people
- The development of an international research team with a focus on a longitudinal study of young people's life outcomes post flexible learning. (2013/4)
- a range of social inclusion projects in the arts and media for disaffected young people

## University Of Bath

### Professor Harry Daniels

Professor of Education: Culture and Pedagogy

Head of 'Learning as Cultural and Social Practice' Research Programme

Director of Centre for Socio cultural and Activity Theory Research

Research Interests include

- Socio-cultural and Activity Theory
- Innovatory Learning in the Work Place
- Education Governance and social policy
- Special Needs and Social Exclusion
- Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty including Exclusion from School
- Patient and Carer Information Seeking

### Dr David Spicer

Research Interests include

- Organisation of schooling and educational innovation
- Dynamics of authority and professional identity in educational settings
- Adult learning and development
- Collective inquiry with and through new technologies
- Qualitative research, multimodal discourse analysis

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- School renewal and teacher agency
- School structures, identity and innovation
- Mapping social exclusion
- Ideological implications of social exclusion
- Flexible educational response to exclusion
- Validating flexible educational responses for system compliance

## Practice

### **WAC Performing Arts and Media College**

WAC offers young people a diverse range of engaging arts based services in a community based space, these range from music production, dance, theatre, community development, art, creative arts and digital arts. Coupled with these programmes WAC supports the complex social needs of hundreds of young people who choose to be members of the service.

WAC is a registered charity and provides a range of affordable training opportunities for young people under twenty-fives, offering high quality activities and experiences for over six hundred members. WAC also offers a range of career and personal development projects for the eighteen-plus age group.

WAC's priority is to ensure that low income and disadvantaged young people can take part in the performing arts at all levels.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Access to performing arts as engagement and future pathways to employment
- Internships as a transition pathway

### **Summerhill School**

Westward Ho Leiston

Zoe Neill Readhead

“All crimes, all hatreds, all wars can be reduced to unhappiness” wrote A. S. Neill, founder of Summerhill School. According to Neill education is moving towards more and more testing, more examinations and more qualifications. He argued that assessment and qualification define education and that many educationalists and families are becoming uneasy with this restrictive environment. Neill promotes the answer as democratic or ‘free’ schooling. The oldest and most famous of these schools is Summerhill, on the east coast of England. Summerhill is a community of over a hundred people. About 95 of these are children aged between 5 and 18. The rest are teachers, house parents and other support staff. Summerhill is situated in a large Victorian house and grounds, two miles from the east coast of Suffolk.

The important freedom at Summerhill is the right to play. All lessons are optional. There is no pressure to conform to adult ideas of growing up, though the community itself has expectation of reasonable conduct from individual. Bullying, vandalism or other anti-social behaviour is dealt with by specially elected ombudsmen, or by the whole community in its daily meetings. Young people and adults accept the responsibility of the community through a variety of meetings.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Schools that teach democracy give voice to active citizenship
- Small schools create communities that have participatory voice, that is, places where young people and adults are treated with dignity and fairness, a place where young people and adults are on a common ground and have access to equity

## **University of the First Age Birmingham**

The UFA is a national education charity. Since 1996 UFA has worked with over 750,000 young people and 6,000 adults in 50 regions, to create inspiring learning for all. UFA has also worked with teachers and young people in Jamaica and Australia. Founded in Birmingham UFA works with young people aged 5 to 25 with a key focus on unlocking their potential and providing access to educational pathways. UFA raises aspirations across schools, homes and communities by creating transformational learning experiences. The UFA explores approaches to training in order to engage teachers and other professionals, parents, carers, community organisations and businesses in transforming their own learning practice. UFA has a range of pedagogic practice frameworks for professional in service development. UFA also offers a diverse range of youth focused services – including, Peer learning, Lead Learners, Team Challenges, Summer Challenges and Holiday Programmes, Young Researchers and Evaluators, Young People Lead, Young People Grow IT and Peer Tutor programmes.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- The development of mentor and peer learning programmes
- Resources that facilitate peer learning programmes

## **Urban Collective**

London

Harry Leckstein

Urban Collective is an international social enterprise. UC acts as a catalyst between at-risk youth and the mainstream music industry. UC creates a Collective of thirty aspiring artists and producers, chosen from open auditions and empowers them to write record and promote their original music for independent release under professional guidance. UC also build a self-sustaining community recording studio that remains as a project legacy and manage the 'best of' talent into the mainstream music industry within the local community they are currently working with.

Key practice initiatives discussed were;

- Arts/music industry education and pathways to employment
- International arts projects (Alice Springs beats meet London hip hop)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As the crisis of educational disengagement continues to spread across our nation emphasis on understanding and mapping the populations of young people outside mainstream educational environments is critical. The establishment of longitudinal data sets tracking engagement and attainment are essential for the development of responses. These data sets should not only include enrolment, geographic, gender, age, indiginity, connection to community agency data but should also attempt to map levels of resilience and well being indicators. These so called “soft” measures will support the continued development of appropriate pedagogic responses that promote authentic educational engagement and in turn more positive life trajectories.

As national governance and strategic planning visions outlined in the Melbourne Declaration gain traction in policy; Youth Connections and Partnership Brokers, combined with State and Territory interventions we have seen a widening of the social net of support. However it is important that these services remain validated and funded. Further research is required to establish the quality and success of these services. The establishment of a Charter of Flexible Learning may be a valuable tool for validation of services along with national compliance standards associated with re engagement programmes.

Continued support for appropriate governance frameworks that have a focus on flexible learning should also be encouraged. These governance designs should pay respect to local socio cultural conditions and as much as possible be populated with a range of community representatives; business, police, education, elders, health and social services personnel with families/carers.

The continued development of flexible education practice frameworks (as outlined above as common features of non traditional schooling) coupled with ongoing research activities that validate success and refine pedagogy has and will continue to add to the epistemology of this space. The author is currently aware of a number of research and practice activities building on this knowledge within the nation.

- Flexible Learning options/centres in the ACT. ACT Department of Education and Training project University of Queensland and Griffith University, Qld Prof Martin Mills, Dr Glenda McGregor  
Project Summary, This project will investigate the provision of alternative education in the ACT. By ‘alternative’ we mean schools/centres/options that are run differently from, or independently of, mainstream schools.  
Start Date: 2010  
Expected Finish Date: 2012
- Curriculum innovation and Big Picture Learning Origin Energy funded project, Big Picture Education Australia, Murdoch University, Sydney University, The University of Tasmania and Melbourne University  
Mr Chris Bonnor, Prof Barry Down, A/Prof Deb Hayes, Mr Neil Day  
Project Summary. This research will investigate the implementation of the model across a range of Australian sites with the aim of describing the experiences of those involved BPEA schools, and assessing early stage effects of the model. This research will be of interest to policy makers, education system personnel, school leaders, teachers and others committed

to highly quality equitable outcomes in public schools. BPEA Australia is committed to monitoring and tracking student outcomes over time, including their post- school pathways and outcomes. This initial research plan will establish the protocols for this long-term data collection process. Start Date: 2011

Expected Finish Date: 2013

- Ian Potter Foundation project

Victoria University (administering organisation)/A/Prof Kitty te Riele

Project Summary

This project explores 'alternative' education options for marginalised young people through 'innovative learning engagement' or 'flexible learning' programs. Despite the promise offered by such programs, both their practice and research on them have been fragmented. Our Australia-wide research will address this weakness by answering 'who gets what?' as well as 'what works and why?'. Funding will be used to 1) investigate access to alternative flexible programs across Australia, 2) analyse the diversity of programs, 3) analyse outcomes from promising 'good practice' programs, and 4) develop and share implications and resources for enhancing successful educational provision for marginalised young people. Start Date: 2012

Expected Finish Date: 2014

- Building futures for young Australians at risk: a coordinated measurement framework and data archive

ARC Linkage Project

University of Melbourne (administering organisation)

Partner Organisations Beacon Foundation, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Hands On Learning Australia, Social Ventures Australia Limited, The Foundation for Young Australians

Prof Johanna Wyn, Mr Gavan McCarthy, Ms Johanna Scott, Dr Lucas Walsh  
Project Summary:

This project will build a national data base of evidence about and for programs that address the needs of the 16 per cent of young Australians currently at risk of school non-completion. It will generate important knowledge for program improvement and sustainability and coordination of evidence across diverse and fragmented programs.

Start Date: 2012

Expected Finish Date: 2015

- Marginalised students: enhancing life choices through engaging educational policies and practices

ARC Linkage Project

University of Queensland (administering organisation)

Partner Organisation the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

Prof Martin Mills, Dr Glenda McGregor

Project Summary

This project explores the provision of existing alternative/flexible learning pathways in Queensland for young people who have become disengaged from mainstream schooling. It seeks to assess educational principles and practices that work in such sites so as to develop a framework of educational

'best practice' that may inform this sector.

Start Date: 2012

Expected Finish Date: 2015

- School retention through alternative schooling: towards a socially just approach to education ARC Discovery Project  
The University of Queensland (administering organisation)  
Prof Martin Mills, Dr Glenda McGregor, A/Prof Deb Hayes, A/Prof Kitty te Riele  
Project Summary  
This project is concerned with how mainstream schools may become more socially just and inclusive of all young people through an analysis of alternative schools specifically designed for this purpose. Such a concern is critical for lifting school retention rates of marginalised young people and improving practices in all schools.  
Start Date: 2012  
Expected Finish Date: 2015

Access to the above international and national research teams and learning communities has provided the author with a vastly increased knowledge base that will be disseminated and implemented in the following ways,

- National Youth+ Staff conferences (2012 – 2013 )
- National Edmund Rice Education Australia staff conferences (2013-2014)
- Publications (National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook 2014)
- National Alliance for Inclusive Learning (Guest Speaker 2013)
- Publications – Churchill Report (Youth+ website 2012)
- Staff Professional development – inquiry based learning strategies (2012 – 2013)
- Staff Professional development (Flexible Learning Centres, Nationally)– Churchill Fellowship findings (ongoing)
- Australian Research Council Linkage grant applications;  
Australian Research Council linkage application: EREA Youth+ Griffith University; Getting Back on Track: A Longitudinal Study of Factors Influencing Life Outcomes of Marginalised Young People in Care.  
  
Australian Research Council linkage application: EREA Youth+, Brotherhood of St Lorraine, NT Dept of Education, VIC Dept of Education, WA Catholic Education Office, Centre Care NTH QLD and James Cook University, “The Value added-ness of Flexible Learning” ARC application 2013

A nation's most valuable resource is its young people. Young people represent our national future and embody national prosperity. All young people require equal access to educational achievement that befits their innate ability no matter if they are urban, rural or remote communities, no matter if they are from low socio economic backgrounds, indigenous, homeless, a refugee, in the juvenile justice system, a young parent or in the care of the state. This nation must rise with compassion and justice to the complex challenges of our history, deconstruct colonialism, challenge

hegemonic controls and provide equity of access. We will not only be measured by our response to these complex equity issues but will create a future educational landscape that is grounded in equality, justice and liberation. A future view of the nation I am sure we all hold dearly.

## THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

### Bibliography

- Melbourne Declaration. (2008) *“A Commitment to Action, Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians,*
- Kitty te Riele, (April 2012.) Learning Choices: A Map for the Future
- Jennifer Vadeboncoeur. [ecps.educ.ubc.ca/hdlc/jennifer-vadeboncoeur-phd](http://ecps.educ.ubc.ca/hdlc/jennifer-vadeboncoeur-phd)
- Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur (29 May 2009) Spaces of Difference: The Contradictions of Alternative Educational Programs Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur. The University of British Columbia)
- W Ayers, M Klonsky, G H. Lyon, (ed) (2000), “a simple justice” , Teachers College Press, Columbia University
- M & S Klonsky, (2008), Small Schools, Routledge New York.

### Websites

- University of First Age. [www.ufa.org.uk](http://www.ufa.org.uk)
  - Problem based learning.  
<http://www.innovationunit.org/sites/default/files/Teacher's%20Guide%20to%20Project-based%20Learning.pdf>
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum. [www.dsf.org.au](http://www.dsf.org.au)
- Edmund Rice Education Australia Youth+. [www.youthplus.edu.au](http://www.youthplus.edu.au)
- American Youth Policy Forum. [www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org)
- New York Department of Education – District 79.  
[www.schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District79](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District79)
- The Urban Academy. [www.urbanacademy.org](http://www.urbanacademy.org)
- The Manhattan Free School. [www.manhattanfreeschool.org](http://www.manhattanfreeschool.org)
- The Door (NYC). [www.door.org](http://www.door.org)
- Julian Sefton-Green. [www.julianseftongreen.net](http://www.julianseftongreen.net)
- University Of Bath. [www.bath.ac.uk](http://www.bath.ac.uk)
- WAC Performing Arts and Media College. [www.wac.co.uk](http://www.wac.co.uk)
- Summerhill School. [www.summerhillschool.co.uk](http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk)
- University of the First Age. [www.ufa.org.uk](http://www.ufa.org.uk)
- Urban Collective. [www.urbancollective.org.au](http://www.urbancollective.org.au)