

# **Learning Legends Project: Engaging Young People in a Creative Learning Context**

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**Conference Paper & Presentation**

*Fresh Thinking Pilot Project -  
Learning & Assessment Forum*

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## **Abstract**

The 'Learning Legends' project conducted by Swan TAFE in 2002 and 2003, sought to engage young people aged between 15- 25 years in a program that offered a range of creative learning experiences, including inclusion in aerosol art events, website design and a life skills program. The program was carefully embedded with the key elements of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) and was designed to address the needs of clients accessing services delivered by Swan City Youth Service in Midland, Western Australia. This paper has been developed in point form as a question / answer format for the purposes of the Fresh Thinking Pilot Project Network: Learning and Assessment Forums Presentations in 2004 and will be accompanied by a multimedia presentation that showcases the action learning experienced by the young people who engaged with this program.

## **Keywords**

education, training, aerosol, art, technology, internet, TAFE, vocational, network

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## Introduction

The 'Learning Legends' project, aptly named by one of the participants of the first face-to-face student group at Swan City Youth Services in 1993, was a 'reintegration' program for young people experiencing alienation from mainstream on-campus service delivery.

In 1993 there were many young people appearing before the local court charged with wilful damage to property such as graffiti, trespass as they sought shelter to sleep or charged with break, enter and stealing to sell for drugs or food. Seeing an opportunity to re-engage these young people in meaningful life-skills activities and offering them an opportunity to complete their school leaver certificate led Alexander Hayes to approach Swan TAFE College and the Swan City Youth Services to conduct an aerosol art program, heavily disguising an integrated Certificate for General Education for Adults.

As a practising professional artist, educator, entrepreneur and researcher, Hayes set about engaging young people through SMS messaging and numerous 'real-world' daily activities. This experiential learning model enabled students to participate in learning activities whilst also receiving direct one-on-one mentor support with non-curriculum issues such as accommodation advocacy, counselling or medical services from youth workers at Swan City Youth Services. Learning experiences then expanded to large aerosol art murals, an exhibition of art work, public sculptural art works, cooking lessons, Spanish language lessons all as part of a comprehensive life-skills program.

Young people engaged in the program were able to attend in a flexible arrangement with access to their portfolio, certification and skills acquisition for employment preparation. The principles of inclusive pedagogical learning practice coupled with a non linear 'Connectivist' methodological approach resulted in a project oriented framework for assessment, which in turn enabled students to return to studies at any point in the program, where they too could clearly identify and negotiate their own learning and assessment processes. This project extended in scope to national mobile learning research, film and animation workshops as well as international engagement with the project processes through the SCYS website.

*“... Engaging young people in the learning process for creative projects that showcase talents whilst simultaneously embedding non explicit learning methodologies enables students to engage in learning at their own pace, return to studies after extended absences and embrace learning experiences with the assurance that services that they would otherwise access in isolation are available in a partnership arrangement. This experiential ‘real-world’ framework has the potential to be used in a wide variety of contexts for a number of different audiences, particularly those ‘at risk’ students or the 15-19 year old age group.”*

*Alexander Hayes, ‘Learning Legends’ Course Coordinator,  
Midland, Western Australia*

## **1.0 Program Delivery**

The program was delivered in a flexible learning context utilising a range of blended teaching delivery strategies including online learning, m-learning task oriented activities and team building learning experiences. Students were each encouraged to negotiate projects of interest and to maintain a comprehensive folio that provided evidence of the outcomes for each task assigned. This folio contains enrolment details, the induction process undertaken, task content, surveys and exit plans upon graduation from the program.

## **2.0 Stakeholders**

This program was managed by Swan TAFE, Midland Campus, Western Australia and training activities were conducted in conjunction with Swan City Youth Services (SCYS).

## **3.0 Curriculum Framework**

The 'Learning Legends' project embedded the key elements of the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA) program with that of artistic and creative enterprise outcomes including aerosol art form and life skill training as well as a cooking program and a Spanish language program.

## **4.0 Funding**

This 'Learning Legends' project was funded from February 2003 until December 2003 by the Building Diversity program accessible through the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET WA).

## **5.0 Target Group**

The predominant age range of clients who access services through the Swan City Youth Services was 15 to 25 years. This project was designed to meet the needs of any interested clients of the Swan City Youth Services who were 15 years and above or who had permission from guardians to attend this program.

## **6.0 Client Experiences**

Clients who took part in this program had often been early school leavers who presented with:

- Negative past experiences in education settings;
- Low literacy and numeracy skills;
- Poor primary and secondary school results;
- Left school at an early age;
- Mental health issues related to trauma;
- Mental health problems relating to alcohol and illicit drug use;
- Continued exposure to verbal, emotional and physical abuse;
- Juvenile Justice and social services system contact;
- Referred from government and non-government agencies.

## **7.0 'Learning Legends' Program Focus**

The primary focus of the 'Learning Legends' program was to re-engage youth (ie. young women and men) from socially & economically disadvantaged backgrounds by providing positive learning experiences and encouraging them to engage in a range of creative activities with positive feedback for their achievements.

## **8.0 Program Priorities**

Priorities for curriculum design and facilitation of the 'Learning Legends Project' included:

- Delivery of Introductory, Certificate 1, 2 & 3 in General Education for Adults (CGEA) through flexible and negotiable 'art' and life skills activities;
- Development of a trusting relationship between course facilitators and course participants;
- Provision of a familiar, consistent and safe environment;
- Encouragement by program facilitators and mentors for students to take ownership and responsibility for aspects of the project and course;
- Flexible and responsive delivery schedule;
- Literacy and Numeracy support;
- Learning experiences encouraging social contact and positive interaction;
- Team and individual work programs and negotiated projects;
- Team participation in production of works through creative enterprise.

## **9.0 Flexible Mode of Service Delivery**

Achievements of this group include students gaining;

- Employment with various organizations in the local community;
- Entry to TAFE and Higher Education
- Experience building a website showcasing project results;
- Volunteer tutor / educator roles with local council projects;
- Access to funding to conduct activities with arts government agencies;
- Public acclaim as they contributed creative works to an exhibition coordinated by Alexander Hayes in September 2003 at Swan TAFE, Midland campus opened by the Minister for Police, Ms Michelle Roberts.

## **10.0 Challenges of Blended Delivery**

Difficulties arose at times engaging with students who were also subject to Juvenile Justice and Ministry of Justice court orders often involved;

- Violent and aggressive behavior;

- Erratic attendance
- Lifestyle issues which precluded them from access to TAFE;
- Intervention from government and non-government agencies.

## **11.0 Methods to engage and retain students**

The continuation and development of a skills oriented program engaged students through;

- *Aerosol art* - Advanced skills with noted national and international artists;
- *Music Appreciation* - Hip hop classes, DJ classes;
- *Language Classes* - Everyday Spanish;
- *Life Skills* - cooking, cleaning, garden maintenance;
- *Computing* - Typing, data management, general navigation, business office;
- *Employment* - CV building and interview practice

## **13.0 Swan City Youth Services Assistance**

The Swan City Youth Services is a fully equipped facility which offers learning experiences and pastoral care specific to the young people's recreational and lifeworld needs. The presence of Youth Workers who offered lifeskills advice and assistance allowed the TAFE Program Coordinator, Alexander Hayes to refer issues that were out of the scope of their experience or core business.

The Swan City Youth Services also supported the 'Learning Legends' TAFE program by offering access to administrative support, sporting facilities and equipment specific to the program facilitator's needs.

## **14.0 Vocational Education & Training Delivery Practices**

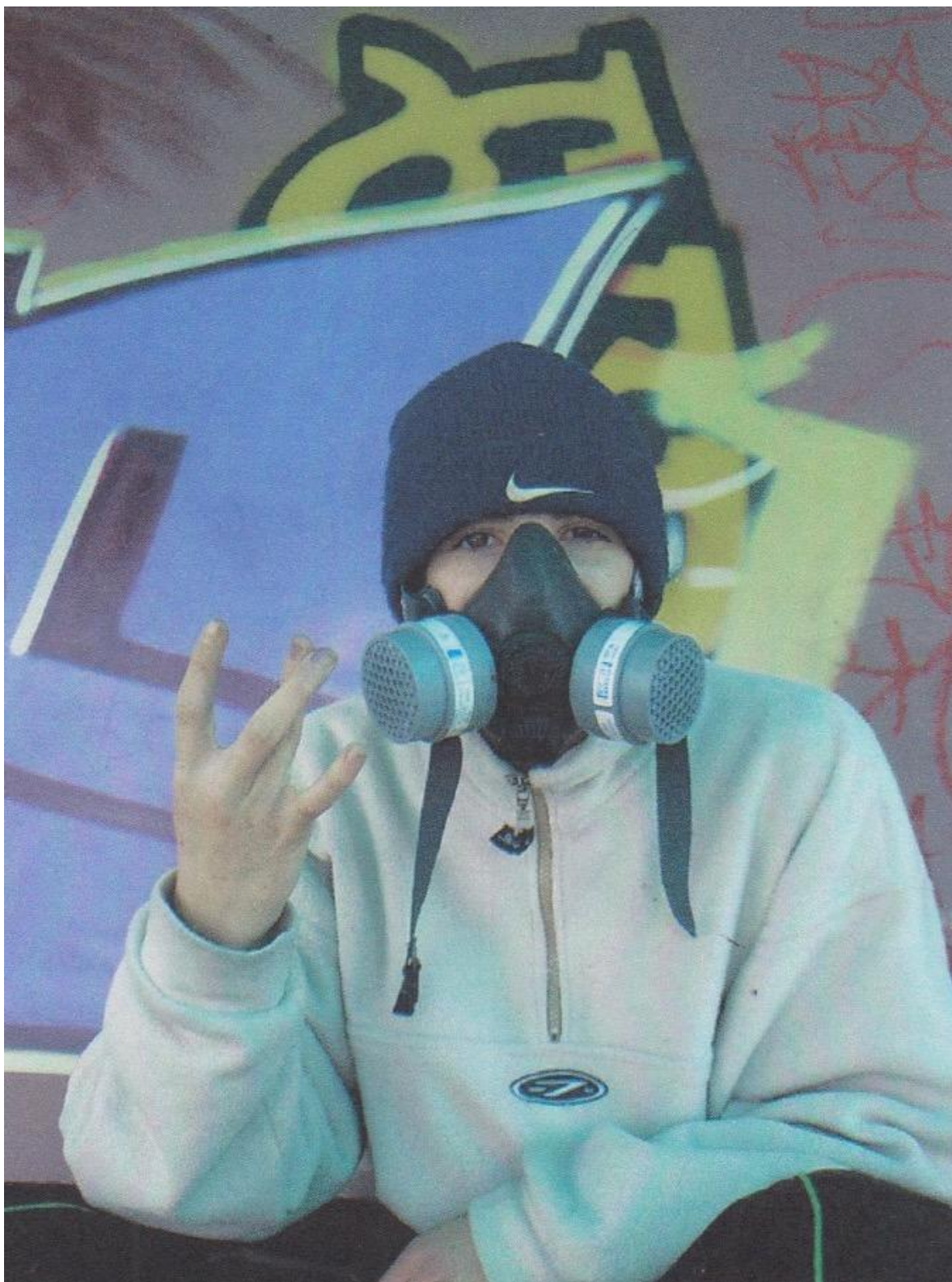
Considering the differing needs of the client group was the most important consideration when developing this program. Service delivery methodology used to assist in this development included:

1. The course facilitator was given time to 'engage' with client group in an informal manner before seeking enrolments;
2. The attendance schedule for this group was a monitored 'sign in sign out' arrangement and students were allowed to leave the learning site at any time according to their needs;



3. A class timetable was not evident, however students were informed of the College's need to monitor and record attendance;
4. The Program Coordinator and facilitator is an experienced artist, educator and researcher developing a program in collaboration with the young people to meet their needs and cater for their disadvantaged backgrounds;
5. The program facilitator was responsive to the needs of each individual seeking assistance for issues not part of their delivery scope, offering advice and 'pointing' them in the right direction of services at Swan City Youth Services;
6. Students were enrolled and 'processed' without the need for students to go 'on campus';
7. Students portfolios were filed and retained for re-commencement at any time on site an accessible only through the Course Coordinator
8. Creative learning experiences pushed the boundaries of existing service delivery;
9. Students were encouraged to keep in contact with the course facilitator using e-learning and m-learning processes and facilities including emails and SMS mobile phone contact;
10. Students were encouraged to answer phone calls and deals with personal issues if they arose during the course of the service delivery;
11. Students had the opportunity to 'shape' the program in the manner they felt best suited their learning needs by expressing their views in focus sessions and individual negotiation consultations;
12. Timetables were adaptable and responsive to changes in response to students needs and interests;
13. Projects and learning experiences were developed that encouraged students to make contact with other individuals in the community;
14. Students were offered ongoing advice and feedback after graduation or in their workplace setting;
15. The development of learning resources immersed them in the numeracy and literacy learning domain by virtue of inclusion in the process and development of the selected content;
16. Students identified and generated training needs outside the scope of this project;
17. Students have assisted in the development of networks that extend the creative learning context leading to further employment.

## Appendix



Appendix 1.0 - Photo: '*Learning Legends*' student wearing correct PPE





Department of Education and Training  
Government of Western Australia

## ***Fresh Thinking Pilot Project: Discussion Forums***

### ***Learning Legends: A project based approach to the CGEA Alexander Hayes - Swan TAFE***

The 'Learning Legends' project provides young people at risk of not participating in training or employment due to incomplete or inadequate school performance, an opportunity to complete *Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA)*.

Alexander Hayes has developed an experiential learning model where students participate in activities in which CGEA learning outcomes are embedded whilst they are offered direct one-on-one mentor support with non-curriculum issues such as accommodation support, counselling or medical issues. Learning experiences have included a large aerosol art mural, an exhibition or art work, public sculptural art, cooking and life-skills program, and participation in film and animation workshops.

The principles of inclusive practice coupled with a non linear project specific framework for assessment have enabled students to return to studies at any point in the program and clearly identify and negotiate their own learning and assessment processes.

#### ***Application:***

Engaging young people in the learning process for creative projects that showcase talents whilst simultaneously embedding non explicit learning methodologies enables students to engage in learning at their own pace, return to studies after extended absences and embrace learning experiences with the assurance that services that they would otherwise access in isolation are available in a partnership arrangement.

This framework could be used in a wide variety of contexts for a number of different audiences, particularly to the 'at risk' students or the 15-19 year old age group.

Find out from Alexander how he has made this work and how you may be able to develop strategies for your practice.



# Fresh Thinking - 25th June 2004

Full Event Name

## Confirmed Delegates

23-Jun-04

Name	Organisation	E-Mail Address
Ms Heidi Astbury	C Y O'Connor College of TAFE	astbuh@northam.training.wa.gov.au ✓
Mr Dave Baker	Central West College of TAFE	bakerd@grdton.training.wa.gov.au ✓
Ms Elise Clegg	Central College of TAFE	clegge@lvile.training.wa.gov.au ✓
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Ms Cheryl Galloway	West Coast College of TAFE	galloc@grdton.training.wa.gov.au
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Ms Lauri Grace	Deakin University/3CM Corporate Development	jandlgrace@iprimus.com.au
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Mr Tim Riessen	Central College of TAFE	riesst@lvile.training.wa.gov.au
Ms Chelsi Roberts	Central College of TAFE	RobertC@lvile.training.wa.gov.au
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Mr Ray Tuckey	Great Southern College of TAFE	tucker@albany.training.wa.gov.au
Ms Sue Winchester	Kimberley College of TAFE	sue_winchester@westkct.training.wa.gov.au

25 People Listed

## **Fresh Thinking Pilot Project: Learning And Assessment Forums**

### **1.3.2 Rated Criteria**

#### **1. The development of a solution to improve the quality of either teaching, learning or assessment methodologies**

The 'Learning Legends' project primarily provides socially disadvantaged youth with an opportunity to complete the Certificate of General Education for Adults offered by Swan TAFE, Western Australia. A specific target group of clients were identified and the feedback gathered from these clients indicated that the completion of a Year 10 secondary qualification was of the highest educational priority.

The majority of the targeted client group have left school at an early age, have low literacy and numeracy skills and often present with mental health problems relating to alcohol and illicit drug use. These issues often preclude this client group from traditional delivery settings.

The opportunity to engage this client group and to provide them with opportunities to engage in creative and innovative community based projects centres upon flexible delivery in an alternative and appropriate setting with youth work support, in this instance offered by the Swan City Youth Service.

Clients participate in activities imbedded with learning outcomes whilst offered direct one-to-one support with non-curriculum issues such as accommodation support, counselling or medical issues. Learning experiences have included a large aerosol art mural, an exhibition of drawings and paintings, a public sculptural art work, a cooking and life-skills program, extensive mosaic works through the youth facility and participation in film animation workshops.

The principles of inclusive practice have extended to include client contributions to learning resource development and direct contributions to the electronic profile of this project online.

#### **2. How the new solution has improved the quality of teaching, learning and/or assessment**

The 'Learning Legends' project has enabled trained educators to use project driven curriculum within which students participate according to their needs and re-negotiate extensions to learning activities upon learning outcome completion.

This experiential based model for learning has enabled a 'mentorship' facility to develop, in turn allowing the educator to offer support to those students who require extra attention and encouragement. The development of a non linear project specific framework for assessment has enabled students to return to studies at any point in the program and to clearly identify their achievements to date.





Department of Education and Training  
Government of Western Australia

Your ref:

Our ref:

D04/03258

Enquiries:

Becky Saunders  
9264 4662



*Spoke with Gaynor Patchett.*

*- DETTA*

*3/5/04*

Alexander Hayes  
Swan TAFE  
PO Box 1336  
MIDLAND WA 6936

Dear Alexander

**FRESH THINKING PILOT PROJECT: LEARNING & ASSESSMENT FORUMS**

Thank you for your response to the Expression of Interest for the Fresh Thinking Pilot Project: Learning & Assessment Forums for the Department of Education and Training – Expression of Interest 2111.

All Expressions of Interest were carefully assessed under the established program selection criteria.

I am pleased to advise that your submission has been recommended for funding.

Becky Saunders is the Project Manager for this pilot and will contact you within the next few weeks to discuss the next phase of the project. If you have any questions in the interim she can be contacted on 9264 4662.

Congratulations on your achievement. I wish you well with your project.

Yours sincerely

KATE GUTHRIE  
A/MANAGER VET PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT

22 March 2004

151 Royal Street, East Perth, Western Australia 6004