Middle School Pathways

Information Booklet, 2016

Contents

What are the aims of Middle School Pathways?

The Middle School Pathways (MS Pathways) aims to provide students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make informed choices about pathways to work and further education.

The principles underpinning the MS Pathways are:

- new accredited pathways for secondary students
- tailoring a program to suit students' interests
- personal development
- development of work related and industry specific skills.

These principles are within the context of applied learning.

In the MIDDLE SCHOOL PATHWAYS these principles are shown through:

- the development of knowledge and employability skills that help prepare students for work and for participation in a broader society – family, community and life-long learning
- the development of knowledge and skills that assists students to make informed vocational choices and facilitate pathways to further learning and employment.

How is the Middle School Pathways structured?

The MS Pathways has four curriculum areas, called strands. These strands are:

- Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- Industry Specific Skills
- Work Related Skills
- Personal Development Skills.

These strands are in addition to Religious Education, the elective subjects (Year 9 & 10) and their Unit 1 & 2 study or VET Subject (Year 10 only).

A student's MS Pathways learning program must include studies in each strand.

Year 10 Work day

In Year 10, students go out to work one day per week. This work placement is an important part of the Pathways Program and could lead to possible future employment as a school based apprentice or employment after school.

In 2016, students in Year 10 Pathways will go out on a Tuesday.

Subjects studied

Year 9	Year 10
• Religious Education • English (Literacy) • Maths (Numeracy) • Personal Development • Work Related Skills • History • Science • Physical Education • Information Technology • Elective Units x 2 (Included with mainstream students)	• Religious Education • English (Literacy) • Maths (Numeracy) • History • (Structured Workplace Learning – 1 day per week - Tuesday) • Physical Education • Elective (Included with mainstream students) • VET or VCE Unit (Included with mainstream students)

What is applied learning?

Current understanding of the term 'applied learning' varies from state to state in Australia and from country to country. However, a number of recurring themes are consistent across all definitions and can be seen to be the underpinning principles of an applied learning approach.

First, applied learning is an approach that emphasises the relevance of what is being learnt to the 'real world' outside the classroom, and makes that connection as immediate and transparent as possible. This focus on a real-life application will often require a shift from a traditional focus on discrete curriculum areas, as students focus on learning and applying the skills and knowledge they need to solve a problem, implement a project or participate in the workforce.

Second, and a result of this, applied learning will involve students and their teachers in partnerships and connections with organisations and individuals outside school. These partnerships provide the necessary out-of-school context for students to demonstrate the relevance of what they have learnt.

Third, and of equal importance, applied learning is concerned with nurturing and working with a student in a holistic manner, which takes into account their personal strengths, interests, goals and previous experiences. Working with the whole person involves valuing skills and knowledge that may not normally be the focus of more traditional school curricula. It also means taking into account differences in preferred learning styles and ways of learning.

Finally, applied learning also acknowledges that part of the transition from school to work is being treated as an adult, and that moving students out of the classroom to learn also means helping them to make a shift to become more independent and

responsible for their own learning. This means that applied learning needs to be student centred and applied learning goals and outcomes should be negotiated with students, as well as other stakeholders.

These key concepts underpin the following applied learning principles:

1. Start where students are at.

2. Negotiate the curriculum. Engage in a dialogue with students about their curriculum.

3. Share knowledge. Recognise the knowledge students bring to the learning environment.

4. Connect with communities and real-life experiences.

5. Build resilience, confidence and self-worth – consider the whole person.

6. Integrate learning – the whole task and the whole person. In life we use a range of skills and knowledge. Learning should

reflect the integration that occurs in real-life tasks.

7. Promote diversity of learning styles and methods. Everyone learns differently. Accept that different learning styles require

different learning or teaching methods, but value experiential, practical and 'hands on' ways of learning.

8. Assess appropriately. Use the assessment method that best 'fits' the learning content and context.

Why use an applied learning approach?

Projects and initiatives in Australia, European countries and the USA have shown that applied learning has a number of benefits for students. These include:

- improved student motivation and commitment
- providing a context for learning the generic skills that are valued in the workplace, e.g. problem solving, working
- effectively with others and in teams, leadership and personal responsibility
- learning engages students
- improved self-esteem and confidence for those involved
- improved transition for students from school to work and/or further education
- a way of catering effectively for students with different preferred learning styles
- providing a meaningful context for learning both theoretical concepts and practical skills.

MS Pathways Literacy Skills

Purpose

The purpose of the MS Pathways Literacy Skills units is to develop literacy skills and knowledge that allow effective participation in the four main social contexts in which we function in Australian society:

- family and social life
- workplace and institutional settings
- education and training contexts
- community and civic life.

Literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening) occurs in all these contexts and different domains or areas of literacy practice correspond with these social contexts.

Social context	Corresponding reading and writing domain	Corresponding oral communication domain
Family and social life	Literacy for self-expression, which focuses on aspects of personal and family life, and the cultures that shape these.	Oracy for self-expression, which focuses on spoken interaction involving exploring story and life experiences and the culture in which these are staged.
Workplace and institutional settings	Literacy for practical purposes, which focuses on forms of communication used in workplace and institutional settings and in the communication with such organisations.	Oracy for practical purposes, which focuses on spoken interactions involving giving support, advice or expertise.
Education and training contexts	Literacy for knowledge, which focuses on sociological, scientific, technological, historical and mechanical theories and concepts relevant to education and training.	Oracy for knowledge, which focuses on spoken interactions involving presentations of information principles, explanations and theories.
Community and civic life	Literacy for public debate, which focuses on matters of public concern, and the forms of argument, reason and criticism used in the public arena.	Oracy for problem solving and exploring issues, which focuses on spoken interactions involving giving opinions, evidence and information.

Integrating curriculum

The Literacy Skills units are based on the concept that the application of literacy skills cannot be separated from the social context and that skills and knowledge are best developed when applied to real-life (social) contexts. In most real-life contexts we do not read, write, speak, listen to or complete mathematical tasks in isolation. We use a range of skills and knowledge to successfully complete a task.

Integrating learning outcomes across literacy and numeracy domains and across MS Pathways strands reflects the integration of skills and competencies in social and work activities. The Literacy Skills units recognise the connection between the curriculum areas and provide a structure for an integrated approach.

Reading and Writing units

For people to participate effectively in the four social contexts they need to have competence in the four reading and writing domains: Literacy for self-expression, Literacy for practical purposes, Literacy for knowledge and Literacy for public debate. Neither the social contexts nor the domains are autonomous; they overlap and each social context and domain contains traces of the other domains.

Writing elements

Writing process

Planning, drafting and editing are a part of the process of writing. It is important that learners become aware that writing is a process and that the first product is unlikely to be the final product. Any number of drafts can be done by learners in producing the final product.

However, in practice, learners may be restricted in the number of times they can draft a text, by the nominal duration of a module.

Purpose

Written texts, in general, are more successful when a writer is aware of why they are writing and who they are writing for. Learners need to recognise the difference between private and public writing. The language used and the tone of the text will depend on the purpose of the text and the proposed audience. Learners undertaking the reading and writing units need to be aware that they too must make their writing appropriate for its intended purpose and audience.

Structure

Texts must be organised to ensure that ideas and information are presented coherently and logically to suit the purpose of the text. This also needs to take into account that different types of texts are often structured in specific ways, i.e. reports, narratives, letters of complaint and instructions all have their own conventional structures.

Length or complexity

As students become more proficient in expressing ideas and information on paper, it becomes increasingly important for them to present a range of ideas and information and convey abstract concepts. Learners move from writing one or two sentences to developing more coherent paragraphs, with topic sentences, linking devices and complex sentence structures. The elements grouped under this heading show this move from length to complexity in writing.

Mechanics

This element deals with spelling, punctuation and grammar. Learners will gain control over these mechanical tools and use them with considerable accuracy. However, this does not preclude them from using dictionaries, spell checks, etc.

Reading elements

Purpose

As in the process of writing, being aware of the intended audience and purpose of a text is important in the reading process. This includes being aware of any unstated meaning, inferring purpose and the means used to achieve the purpose. Awareness of the purpose of a text also helps to set the text in its social context and allows learners to consider whether the purpose is achieved, and if so, how it has been achieved, thus developing critical awareness. Not all texts have unstated meaning or inferred purpose and where the assessment criteria ask learners to look at these, it is adequate for students to identify their absence.

Comprehension

This element progresses to extracting information for a specific task and identifying views underlying a text.

Application

Being able to identify information about texts, what is contained in texts and then apply it to other texts and contexts is the focus of the element under this heading. This results in learners being able to compare and contrast information and ideas and to appreciate the social context of what they have read.

Critique

Developing an opinion about texts and the content of texts is integral to making meaning out of texts. The elements grouped under this heading aim to enable learners to move from giving a personal opinion on a text to analysing and evaluating the content and effectiveness of the text.

Oral communication units

The oral communication units are designed to provide participants with knowledge, understanding and skills in spoken communication for different social purposes. The

units reflect the theory that language use varies depending upon the social context and purpose of the interaction and uses this as its main organising principle.

In the oral communication units, the domains provide a framework by which learners can become aware of genres, social contexts and areas of social practices in which they operate.

Assessment methods

The assessment methods used should be appropriate to the learner, his or her learning style and needs, the topic or field of study and the learning outcome. Teachers are encouraged to use a range of assessment methods, including:

- observation and written documentation of oral communication episodes; this may be simplified by using checklists of key features observed
- recording of student interaction on video or other electronic medium
- documenting individual interaction with teacher
- documenting individual interaction with peers
- self-evaluation of their performance
- feedback from peers/audience.

MS Pathways Numeracy Skills

Underpinning the MS Pathways Numeracy Skills units is the concept that skills development occurs best when it takes place within social contexts and for social purpose. Like the Literacy Skills units, the purpose of the Numeracy Skills units is to develop skills and knowledge that allow effective participation in the four main social contexts in which we function in Australian society:

- family and social life
- workplace and institutional settings
- education and training contexts
- community and civic life.

Numeracy and mathematics are used in all these social contexts.

Organising framework

The learning outcomes are organised into four different domains that focus on the social purposes of numeracy and mathematics:

Numeracy for personal organisation focuses on the numeracy requirements for personal organisational matters involving money, time and travel.

Numeracy for interpreting society relates to interpreting and reflecting on numerical, statistical and graphical information of relevance to self, work or community.

Numeracy for practical purposes addresses aspects of the physical world to do with designing, making and measuring. It incorporates mathematical skills related to the appreciation and application of shape and measurement.

Numeracy for knowledge is included at the Senior level. It deals with learning about formal mathematical skills and conventions needed for further study in mathematics, or other subjects with mathematical underpinnings and/or assumptions.

Teaching and learning models in Middle School Pathways Numeracy

Strategies adopted are appropriate to the learning situation and include:
- use of small group and whole group activities
- undertaking out-of-class activities or investigations such as: trips to learn about reading and using maps and costing of such trips; investigations and experiments to collect data for a statistical analysis; planning, designing, costing and planting a garden, etc.
- use of variety of classroom-based activities, investigations, problem solving, etc.
- use of the internet to find out about mathematics topics or to find data to analyse, etc.
- use of oral presentations
- listening to guest speakers
- production of written essays, reports, timelines, posters, flowcharts
- production of multimedia and/or online reports or documents
- undertaking research projects.

Assessment

Assessment should be undertaken as an ongoing process that integrates knowledge and skills with their practical application over a period of time. It will require a combination of evidence collected mainly through teacher observations and some collection of written records of students' attempts at tasks.

It is not expected that all assessment criteria for an outcome can be assessed within one single task, e.g. it would be unlikely that both the money and time aspects of the personal organisation learning outcome could be demonstrated within one task. Therefore it might require a number of observations or tasks to completely assess a learning outcome. On the other hand, it will often be possible to assess aspects of more than one learning outcome within one assessment task, e.g. a task that involves the practical application of measurement knowledge and skills (practical purposes – measurement) may also allow demonstration of ability to calculate with money (personal organisation).

A range of assessment options should be used according to the needs of the learner group and the learning situation, e.g. in the workplace, assessment could be by observation of students performing on-the-job tasks, whereas these may have to be simulated in a classroom environment.

A folio of evidence could be collected through a combination of the following:
- records of teacher observations of students' activities, oral presentations, practical tasks, etc.
- samples of students' written work
- written reports of investigations or problem-solving activities
- student self-assessment sheets, reflections or journal entries
- pictures, diagrams, models created by students.

MS Pathways Work Related Skills

Purpose
The purpose of the Work Related Skills (WRS) strand is to develop employability skills, knowledge and attributes valued within the community and work environments as a preparation for employment.

Aims
The Work Related Skills units are designed to:
- integrate learning about work skills with prior knowledge and experiences
- enhance the development of employability skills through work related contexts
- develop critical thinking skills that apply to problem solving in work contexts
- develop planning and work related organisational skills
- develop OHS awareness
- develop and apply transferable skills for work related contexts

Employability skills
Employability skills contain key personal attributes and skills that are important for young people (entry-level employees) entering the workforce and for existing employees in a global and knowledge economy. The key employability skills include:

- communication
- team work
- problem solving
- initiative and enterprise
- planning and organising
- learning
- self-management
- technology.

Structured Workplace Learning
Structured Workplace Learning forms part of the Pathways Program at Year 10. Students go out to work 1 day per week in either a school based apprenticeship or structured work placement. Students source local businesses and approach them during year 9 requesting a work placement for the following year. The SWL may also

involve a VET certificate applicable to your workplace. This will be negotiated with your perspective employer at the time.

MS Pathways Personal Development Skills

Purpose

The purpose of the Personal Development Skills (PDS) strand is to develop knowledge, skills and attributes that lead towards:

the development of self

social responsibility

building community

civic and civil responsibility, e.g. through volunteering and working for the benefit of others

improved self-confidence and self-esteem

valuing civic participation in a democratic society.

Rationale

The PDS units have been developed to recognise learning that is valued within the community but is not recognised within other qualifications.

Personal Development Skills units

Two PDS units exist in each level.

In Unit 1, for all levels, the content of learning programs should link to one of the following curriculum contexts:

- personal development (self)
- health and wellbeing
- education
- family.

In Unit 2, for all levels, the content of learning programs should link to one of the following curriculum contexts:

- community engagement
- social awareness
- civic and civil responsibility
- active citizenship.

Further Information

If you would like to discuss the Middle School Pathways further, please speak to Mr Chris Grant at the McAuley Campus.