

Challenge Based Learning at Kolbe Catholic College, Western Australia

Journey

Challenge Based Learning was first introduced at Kolbe in 2011 for Year 9 students. The reason for its introduction was that the overall Year 9 program was missing elements that would spark the excitement and a joy of learning that leads to deep learning.

During our first four years, CBL existed as an add-on to the mainstream curriculum. It started with a series of negotiations with all Heads of Learning Areas to borrow a couple of periods from their scheduled timetable to secure a decent length of learning time for CBL in Term 2.

After having achieved pleasing results through CBL, the College recognised the need for formal timetabling in order to nurture the necessary skill sets systematically and organically. As a result, CBL was upgraded to a compulsory elective subject for Year 9 students in 2015. From that year, a half of the cohort enrolls in a semester based course of CBL which consists of two classes a week.

Structure and Program

Challenge Based Learning at Kolbe focuses on the following sets of skills which we believe are essential dispositions that learners require to be successful in the 21st century.

- Learning Skills (to enable deep learning): citizenship, communication, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, and creativity and imagination
- Life Skills (to become a competent learner): flexibility and adaptability, perseverance, self-confidence, initiative and self direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, accountability, leadership, and responsibility
- Technology Skills (to become an efficient learner): information literacy, media literacy, and ICT literacy

A semester course of CBL, 20 weeks in total, consists of the following three proceedings:

Small Challenges - Tasks that are designed to train and test the target skills with smaller and gradual steps in a short period of time, usually two class times.

Examples: A Communication Challenge, Solve The Black Spot Challenge, Reduce The Bill By 20% Challenge

Medium Challenge - An entrepreneurial task in which students design, plan and run a business to make profit for charity. Students are given 4-5 weeks to complete this challenge.

Main Challenge - Under a common Big Idea and Essential Question, students are to engage in, investigate, act, present and reflect on their chosen real-world issues. Students are given 9-10 weeks to complete this challenge and devise a solution.

Outcomes

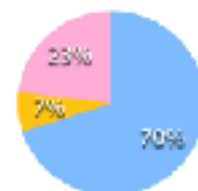
At the end of each semester, data and anecdotes have been collected from students and analysed. Both tangible and intangible outcomes have been identified over the years which provide us with practical opportunities to revise the structure, program and tasks, and the role of teacher in assisting the students. There has been a noticeable growth in students' academic achievements and meta-cognitive skills.

Would you recommend CBL to future year groups? Why? Why not?

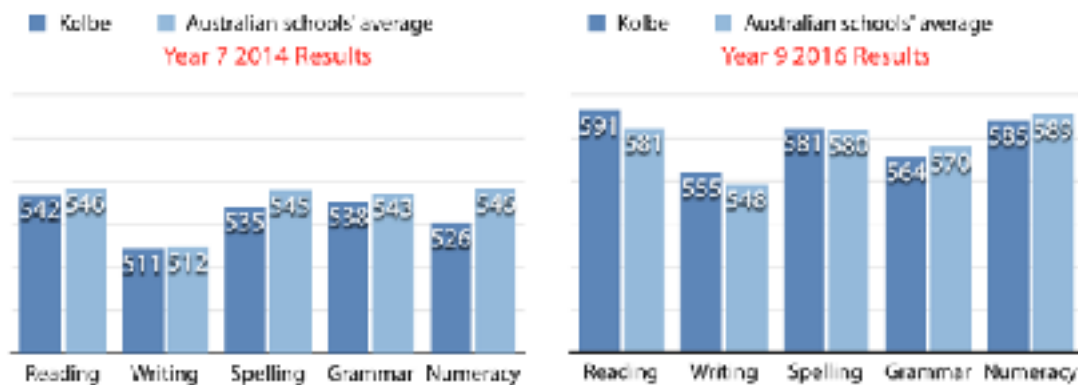
(from a survey conducted in 2016)

● Yes ● Not sure ● No

- Gives people a more creative mind and makes people think about the world around it.
- Yes, because I believe everyone had been given a chance to learn a new skill that will be useful in their future lives.
- Yes. Because I think it is good to know how to make a business and also it's good to learn about things such as, homelessness, hunger and depression/anxiety.
- Yes, it's not like a normal class, you learn things worth learning that you'll actually use after school.
- Yes, because it gets people out of their comfort zone and they can discover themselves.



The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy



New focus in 2017

The City of Rockingham, where the College is located, has been a most reliable and valuable supporter for our CBL since its conception. The partnership so far has enabled:

- Workshops for students to investigate how a local government operates,
- Field trips to the City's facilities,
- On-demand questions from students,
- Representatives from the City viewing students' final presentations.

In 2017, the City is in the process of presenting a series of real local issues for students to solve as a CBL challenge. In return, students will present their proposals and solutions to the City at the end of a 10 week period.

Here are some examples provided by the City of Rockingham:

1. Local community members don't lock doors and windows, particularly garage doors, leaving them vulnerable to break-ins and loss of possessions. Devise an innovative educational program that engages and teaches people to be security conscious particularly in regard to doors, windows and garage doors.
2. The City, as part of the foreshore revitalisation, is installing the Rockingham Foreshore Activity Node (RFAN) to provide local young people with the opportunity to socialise and recreate at the foreshore as part of the community. Identify design elements that they identify as important to local young people to be included. What are they looking for in such a space? The space will need to appeal to young people 12 - 18, include all genders, have some level of universal access and be sensitive to users from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse backgrounds, but also have elements that appeal to families.
3. The City builds a number of such developments (e.g. Baldivis Youth Space due to open soon). How can information be most effectively collected from young people about such developments?
4. The City recently provided a Beach Party at the Rockingham Foreshore that attracted 1,000 local young people. The City would like to continue to provide this event annually, and is interested in what types of activities young people would like included in such an event.
5. The City is aware that girls are often more difficult to attract to formal and informal sporting and recreational opportunities. It is particularly difficult to know what attracts girls to informal recreational spaces. (We need to build more than skateparks, so we need to know what elements to add to skate parks to attract more girls to such spaces. What do girls want in public spaces?)
6. There is often conflict in families as young people grow up due to misunderstandings of how generations think differently. Develop an educational tool or method regarding how young people think, and tell their stories about their issues and challenges. How does this story telling look?

7. Young people reported in our recent consultation for development of the new Strategy for Children and Young People that they don't believe Rockingham deserves the bogan* label. They would like communities outside Rockingham to understand this is not an accurate representation of our community. How would they or you go about changing this perception both within Rockingham and in other communities? (* bogan - an Australian term denoting someone of low socio-economic status; uncouth)

8. Do young people see contact with seniors as valuable? What types of inter-generational exchange programmes do they see as value adding to their lives?

New movement

Recognising the value of student-centred, deep learning experiences that CBL offers to students, and the positive outcomes of how they grow academically, socially and emotionally, the College is introducing a series of non-traditional and active learning programs similar to CBL for our Middle School students.

- Year 7 - Big Ideas
- Year 8 - Innov8or
Project 2030

These programs have been developed with the same focuses, such as autonomy, authenticity, cross curricula, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Students are challenged to ask questions and find answers or solutions, rather than simply answering to teacher-directed tasks. Challenge Based Learning is now positioned as the culmination of authentic learning programs that are afforded to the first three Year groups at Kolbe.