

Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] In2science peer mentoring in schools

Reference Type: University-school peer mentoring

State or territory: Vic

Serial Identification Number: 478276

Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Delivering a viable and engaging science curricula to students is limited by money and reduced access to the diverse programs and opportunities that are on offer to city students. The regional schools do appreciate the wonderful programs available to students that are on offer all year round, however when push comes to shove, getting students to the programs in Melbourne/city or regional centres does cost money. Some programs are subsidised e.g. transport, registration and therefore are free to attend which is great.

However going on an ordinary excursion to say Scienceworks or the museum can escalate to \$50 - 60 per student because of the small numbers in our classes. Small class sizes also means that travelling to programs or workshops such as CSIRO don't cater for a sum total of 80 students (7 - 10) as they set their cost for a minimum of say 200 students.

Access for regional schools is getting better but there is still a huge roadblock in terms of cost in getting to some programs and/or a school organised excursion. Perhaps discount prices for country kids or continue subsidising the cost of transport (bus/train etc). - eg: a large bus from Wangaratta to Melb - has to include a driver will cost \$1800 for the day. \$680 for a small 22 seater that a teacher can drive - That is just a transport cost before anything else comes into play. Thus excursions to Melb are normally limited to ONE per year per year level. Special circumstances may be looked at, but only under very exceptional conditions.

Rating: 4

Teachers and teaching

Funding towards setting up and maintaining a regional, rural and remote teachers network/portal, where they can collaborate, network, share strategies, resources and ideas and support each other in what can be an isolated environment compared to the city schools. Couple of suggestions to include in this portal would be:

1. 4-5 schools within the same region form a cluster where they could: share/swap resources, and equipment. The portal could help facilitate this-CSU/DTAC are working towards this for the Wangaratta Region.
2. Facilitate a discussion board for teachers to network and share ideas / PD opportunities.
3. Provide the opportunities for teachers to meet on-line where they can share and discuss strategies or concerns. One platform that works extremely well between universities and mentoring programs is zoom. It would wonderful if DET hosted a site licence for video conferencing and webinars for all schools to access. This would allow teachers in city, regional, remote and rural teachers to collaborate, network, share ideas, attend webinars, host networking meetings between

schools - without the need to travel, thereby reducing the distance barrier that teachers experience. This would also provide a sense of connectedness between all teachers.

4. Encourage teaching PD opportunities that are run in the city or interstate, to be available via webinars.

5. Support for local regional PD Conferences - such as Digital Harvest Conference - maybe a small bucket of funding that regions can have access to pay for "top" presenters. It's getting the presenters to the regions to inspire and grow teacher capacity. Our teachers and students often have to travel to Melbourne to participate in PD, at large expenses to the school: travel, accommodation, registration fees, relief teacher cost - this can easily add up to over \$1000 per teacher per day. Many schools have to restrict numbers and the amount of PD's teachers within their schools can attend. Principals' have to prioritise, thus many teachers miss out on great opportunities to develop their digital technology skills. This bringing conferences to regional areas will assist in training up more teachers.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

There are some fantastic and innovative regional teachers that always go above and beyond for their students and school. There should be some way of recognising these teachers - perhaps have funding available for school principals to apply for, which would allow time-release for these teachers to help share what they do with other teachers within the community, or via a teacher's portal as outlined above.

Rating: 5

School and Community

Mentoring can play an important role in a young person's life and future decisions. The mentor is not a teacher, friend or authoritative figure, however they are seen as someone that can provide support to the students and guide them in identifying their own aspirations and goals beyond year 12. One mentoring program that is working well with regional, rural and remote schools is In2science. The 10 week program connects regional students with volunteer STEM university students via an on-line mentoring platform. Recent findings of the In2science program show that 92% of students enjoy talking to their mentors about university life and university courses. Through the program, regional students have the opportunities to have virtual tours of the universities lab space, library, study spaces and lecture theaters.

Maffra Secondary College's Broadening Horizons program increases student aspirations within gippsland, where students have the unique opportunity be involved in a self directed science enquiry, where they are supported by expert mentors from local businesses and industry.

STEM Expo in Wangaratta (Galen Catholic College) - organises a range of exhibitors from local industries. Tertiary institutes, GOTAFE as well as other exhibitors from all over NSW and Victoria. It is linked in with National Science Week and the National Science Week theme. There is a schools session in the early afternoon followed by a community session in the evening. This brings great interest and highlights STEM career pathways as well as innovation in STEM.

Wangaratta partnership - DTAC (Digital Technologies Advisory Committee)

Campaspe Cohuna Local Learning & Employment Network

<http://www.cclen.com.au/programs.html> (attended Digital Harvest Conference)

Rating: 6

Information and Communication Technology

Rating: 5

Entrepreneurship and schools

regional network/portal could help connect students from other regional areas where they can collaborate and share ideas

Rating: 4

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Creating a regional., remote and rural teachers portal would improve contentedness between schools

Rating for enrolments: 5

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 6

Rating for boarding: 5

Diversity

Rating: 3

Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 5

Additional Comments