Beacon Program Cressy District High School
Main Street, Cressy, TAS, 7302

The Beacon Foundation (Beacon), established in 1988, is a non-profit organisation working in around 115 secondary schools, with over 13,000 students, across all Australian states and territories. Within each school, Beacon works with students, business and community to inspire and motivate young people to stay engaged at school and develop positive pathways into further education, training or employment believing that every young Australian can develop an independent will to achieve personal success for themselves and their community. Beacon focuses on students who are falling between the cracks, typically from areas that experience socio economic disadvantage or disproportionately high youth unemployment or disengagement. Beacon works intensively with schools for up to 5 years to build and embed a solid career education framework. Cressy District High School (CDHS) is a state government coeducational school (Kindergarten to Year 10) serving the Northern Midlands, a rural area south of Launceston. CDHS joined the Beacon program in 2005, and has embedded elements of the Beacon program within the school curriculum running a weekly Inspiring Futures Pathway Planning class for all students in the high school sector (180 students), with the primary sector (180 students) and the kindergarten (28 students) delivering a curriculum that sequentially develops elements of the Beacon program.

How this program works
Beacon aims to bring together school staff, business, community and family to provide powerful experiential learning supporting young people to develop employability and life skills. Beacon offers a suite of core activities to participating schools including: Charter Signings where Year 10s publicly make a pledge, to an audience that includes local business and community members, that by the following year they will be in further education, employment or training; Beacon Student Ambassadors who are elected from the participating cohort to support the organisation and running of the Beacon program within the school and community; Business Blackboard involving business visiting classrooms to share knowledge with students and link real life situations to the school curriculum; Career Education where events such as the school’s work experience program or mock interviews are enhanced by the Beacon network and business support; Industry Knowledge which enables students and teachers to learn more about specific industries and careers.

Beacon activities align with the CDHS Learner at the Centre framework and its commitment to developing personalised learning opportunities for all students. In 2013, CDHS implemented a number of Beacon activities as part of the Inspiring Futures Program (previously known as the No Dole Program) including: the annual Beacon Charter signing for Grade 10s, election of Beacon Student Ambassadors, Guest Speaker Program, Mock Interviews, Grade 9 Try a Trade, Pathway Planning 1 to 1 Support, College Orientation, University Tours, Further Education Site Visits, Career and Industry Tours Grade 7-10 Work Placement, Grade 10 Work Experience, Industry Expos run by students, and Work Inspirations Projects where students spend time with staff at a large local employer (like a hospital or Council) learning about organisational roles and activities. While Beacon normally works at the Secondary School level only, from 2010 CDHS has sought to embed the Inspiring Futures program into all curriculum areas from K-10 to support authentic learning and real world learning opportunities for students. This includes incorporating subject based guest speakers into the curriculum and charter signing involvement for all year levels and Secondary Students hosting mini career expos for Primary Students.

Outcomes
Positive outcomes are of three types: explicitly related to the Beacon program at CDHS; overall Beacon program outcomes that are likely to be relevant to CDHS; and overall CDHS outcomes to which the Beacon activities are likely to have contributed.
Program wide achievements: National data show the Beacon No Dole Program delivered a Social Return On Investment of 11:1 - for every $1 invested, approximately $11 of social value is created.

Individual student achievements: A number of CDHS Beacon Ambassadors have been honoured with Northern Midlands Council Youth of the Year Awards.

Destinations and pathways: Nationally, 93% of Beacon students are in work or training after Year 12. As an example of success one CDHS Beacon student went on to complete a Cert III Business, Cert IV Human Resource, Diploma in Human Resource Management to become an Administration Manager.

Engagement and participation in learning: Across all schools, 96.8% of Beacon students are still in education nine months after completing Year 10 (2013). In 2012, 97% of students reported that Beacon activities helped them gain industry knowledge, learning aspirations or employability skills. The number of CDHS students continuing their training and education beyond Year 10 increased from 58% in 2009, to 72% in 2010, to 86% in 2011 and to 97% in 2013.

Productive partnerships: The Beacon National Outcomes Report (2013) shows that 98% of Beacon schools increased their connections to local businesses, with 91% noting a positive change in the community perception of their school since partnering with Beacon. CDHS has developed numerous business partnerships including a Work Inspirations Project with the local council, ongoing sponsorship from the council and a new partnership with a general hospital (2013).

External recognition: CDHS Principal is a 2011 Beacon Hall of Fame recipient and in 2009, CDHS was recognised as a Beacon Foundation’s Platinum School – one of only 10 around Australia.

Why this program is successful
The Beacon Foundation believes their results are achieved through a combination of practical, hands on careers education utilising the combined networks of schools, business, students and community. The Principal at CDHS attributes the success of Beacon programs at the school to: the fundamental elements of Beacon being a part of the curriculum, the engagement and support of parents and the wider community in establishing their Business Partnership Committee, and the role of planning.

Want to know more?
http://education.tas.edu.au/cressydistricthigh/Pages/Home.aspx

Sources of information
Cressy District High School Website (accessed 08.08.2013)
Cressy District High School (2013) Prospectus; Newsletter (2012-2013)

Please note, where possible and appropriate, we have adopted the language and terminology used by the program sources (italic fonts) and referred to the most recent publicly available information.

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