What's Mainstream?
Conventional and unconventional learning in Logan

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Introduction

Over several days at the beginning of 2006, Jenni Connor, a senior curriculum writer and educational researcher in Tasmania, sat with dozens of students, teachers, program co-ordinators and school principals in order to get a sense of the learning landscape in a fast-growing and fast-changing outer suburb of Brisbane. In the following pages she has written a detailed account of how school communities are grappling with the challenge of raising levels of student achievement while ensuring that all students have a place in the life and work of schools.

Her piece continues DSF's interest in comparing and contrasting how local school clusters and districts are managing social and political expectations and in the process, re-inventing schooling or not. In 2003-4 for example, Roger Holdsworth reflected on ten schools in the Derwent district of southern Tasmania self-consciously attempting to reduce the marginalisation of 'at risk' students to 'alternatives' by developing 'hands-on/experiental' approaches embracing every student. Real Learning Real Futures, the rubric for that collaboration, derived from a view that categorisations of students being 'at risk' rested on limitations in the provision of appropriate educational options rather than limitations inherent in students (Holdsworth, 2004)

As downtown Brisbane and the Gold Coast are increasingly sucked into the economic demands of the global and regional Asia-Pacific economy, the sharp end of a thirty-year transformation from big country town to global centre is being felt in outlying communities like Logan. It's a melting pot of prosperous small businesses and welfare dependency, older Australians and a population with 40 percent under the age of 24 years, fourth generation Anglos and ethnic communities drawn from across the world.

One of the big challenges Australia faces is overcoming the gulf between the global opportunities increasingly available to the elite and the diminishing returns and impoverishment potentially facing those battling to maintain a decent place in the productive economy.

Shaking things up
This is a significant context for Queensland's ambitious program of education and training reforms for the future (ETRF). In seeking to become a 'smart state', the government expects more Queenslanders to participate in education and training – and has legislated to ensure that this will happen. As part of the ETRF, for example, 16 and 17 year old Queenslanders must participate in learning (rather than simply schooling, an important distinction), either to complete a senior certificate of

education, or VET certificate through TAFE/apprenticeship, or learning through full-time work.

Implicitly this structure questions the whole idea of a singular mainstream; in this new world there will be multiple options, with no one particular pathway privileged over others. The ENTER framework, which has enabled universities and their needs to largely determine the teaching and philosophy of middle and especially senior schooling, would compete with other frameworks of learning regarded as equally valid and life-enhancing. Rather than catering predominantly for the 25-30 percent of school students going onto university, the intention of ETRF was to open up schooling to new curriculum and ways of learning, both school and non-school based, for the benefit of all students.

The ETRF promised *learning options that provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of even more 15 to 17 year-olds*. Across Queensland in 2004 there were more than 120 settings identified as flexible learning centres (FLC), sometimes auspiced as part of an existing school, and sometimes not, that had sprung up to help cater for students who otherwise would not be in education or training. Nearly 5,800 students were attending FLCs on a part-time or full-time basis, and half the students were aged 14-16 years. The focus for most programs was on work readiness (more than 60 percent), although a third engaged students in academic pathways leading to a Senior Certificate or OP eligibility (QEA, 2004). However despite these reforms funding remains a major issue: among FLC settings in Logan for instance, *there's a constant and competing scramble for funds*.

It is one thing to mandate participation, however it is quite another to encourage or deliver this in meaningful ways in local communities and schools where it matters. This is what is intriguing about Logan and Connor's conversations.

Conventional and unconventional schooling
Certainly not for most, but for many students the idea of school has not always been a pleasant place in a sunny mainstream. A decade ago, Richard Teese reports, almost one in four of a large group of year 10 students in Queensland selected an image of prison to describe their school experience. The proportion rose to 62 percent among boys not coping well in English. Girls not coping well were slightly more generous, 47 percent using the image of prison to describe school (Teese and Polesel, 2004).

Despite this backdrop there are positive signs for educators about the direction of schooling in Logan. Connor's sampling of students and settings was by no means representative - this was impossible in the time and scope available – but the results of her discussions indicate that most students are happy in their current school or alternative program. Students overwhelmingly agree on the importance of education, for themselves, their future and their family, and their community. In conversations with individual students and groups of students, there were strong indications students felt teachers were striving for their best interests and attempting to create an environment suited to their needs.

As one student at Woodridge says: *I've been here since Grade 8 and at first I was 'apprehensive of the school. I've come to love the school' (to much laughter and applause). I've got lots of friends, built relationships. I'd heard about fights, drugs,*

and big tough bullies. I came with only a few friends, but there really wasn't any of that; I just jumped in by myself.

For other students though bullying is a significant problem. More than ten percent of the group Connor talked with felt awkward, left out or bullied. Thirty-five percent of respondents to her questionnaire had experienced depression, anxiety or sleeping problems in the last year. Loss, grief, loneliness and isolation are problems experienced by a significant number of students.

They want expectations to be made of them, to be encouraged to achieve to their potential – but in return they expect support and assistance to fully develop their talents. There is a palpable desire for respect and for a positive role in schooling, not just to be acknowledged as consumers but to also be engaged in helping to shape the culture and direction of schooling in Logan.

Too often our education systems struggle to identify the different responsibilities of teachers and learners. We have systems that are good at identifying curriculum standards but weak at constructing and supporting the personal and classroom relationships so crucial to productive learning. This is reinforced by the priority we place on curriculum assessment, which puts standardised content rather than pedagogy at the centre of education.

Across Logan students are exploring ways of working and telling stories that are the antithesis of chalk and talk. It's obvious that at the public schools under the spotlight here – Marsden, Loganlea, Mabel Park and Woodridge – a major shift is occurring. The dichotomy of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' is changing– the supposed mainstream is clearly offering many options within a familiar school structure, and organizations like Centre Education, which pride themselves as being a point of difference, are offering qualification routes that were previously only in the domain of the mainstream.

It might be more constructive then to speak of conventional and unconventional schooling – a dynamic continuum or continuity of schooling, sometimes familiar but at other times decidedly more challenging and edgy – rather than a divided world of 'mainstream' and 'alternative'.

The student populations of various centres and initiatives both within schools and the local Flexible Learning Centres includes low achievers, pregnant and parenting teens, students who have in the past been suspended or even expelled. The pedagogies are oftentimes similar: strongly focused on developing self-esteem, employability skills and story-telling so that *we feel proud and it's changed the way we feel about ourselves and what we can do.*

Among school and FLC leaders there appears to be a growing convergence of thinking about learning and teaching. Contextualised learning - project work, essential learnings embedded in 'rich tasks' and vocational education, and so on - seems be regarded as fundamental to student engagement.

Relying on VET

The extent to which this is planned and co-ordinated or results from happenstance and the current crop of teachers, principals and district leaders is not entirely clear. And it is not to say that school communities are necessarily agreed about this direction or certain what the longer impact might be.

It is apparent that some parents in some schools are uneasy about this trend, with some witnessing declining enrolments after Year 10, as some parents withdraw students fearing that a 'technical education' awaits their son or daughter.

This schism between vocational education (VET) and academic-university pathways and orientation remains a crucial one for both schools and FLCs. It seems that VET has become the major prism through which conventional and unconventional settings are seeking to engage troubled or disaffected students. In this respect some hard questions need to be asked about the role and potential of VET, and what is on offer for 'at risk' students.

The reasons for this reliance on VET are understandable. A student who has moved onto TAFE says *here they find out what you're good at and build on it*. For many students the context is the most powerful motivator. As Teese (Teese and Polesel, 2004) argues *the jobs (early leavers) are able to get - apprentice mechanic, butcher, tiler, counter staff, gardener, factory hand, piece worker, shelf stacker, window cleaner - are governed by the model of learning by experience, through immersion in practice, with theory acquired on the job or scarcely required at all. This model does not demand that they project themselves through mastery of words and symbols, books and assignments, that they make a sustained investment in the internal world of ideas which these objects represent. So it is often with relief and pleasure that they leave school. They have the feeling that things now depend on their own efforts, on processes that they can master, where before, at school, they could not manage the tasks nor see the point of the tasks they could manage and were thus wholly dependent on the goodwill of others*.

There are a couple of possible tensions that could emerge. One as Connor finds is that, *there is a serious likelihood of two streams of curriculum becoming evident to students, parents, employers and further education providers*. Despite the best intentions a possible consequence of this is that the status, privilege and resources devoted to OP-university pathways might be challenged but remain largely intact. *Content and pedagogy in the mainstream are changing ... but only slowly*, say teacher's aides. And a deputy principal comments: *the ancient curriculum structure and content drives the curriculum agenda. This leads to teachers becoming content protectors and behaviour managers*.

Something happened during the invention of secondary school. We lost the insight that we see among young children who learn powerfully from first-hand experience – discovering things for themselves. It is something Piaget told us many years ago. Deep learning is unlikely to come from simply covering the curriculum; it is more likely to come from problem-solving, from exploration and relating this to accumulated experience and from sometimes idiosyncratic routes to meaning (Bryce, 2000).

The possibility of two streams is because it is tough, perplexing and, let's admit, unfinished business to design, construct and implement programs and pathways that have the prestige and future purchase in terms of wealth and global possibilities that university and academic pathways currently have. In this space there is a danger that a two-tier education might emerge in a different guise.

To be fair this is an issue much larger than Logan.

Our qualifications frameworks are fragmenting: first, short-term contracts of training were equated with old-style craft apprenticeships, and now even that training is to be dissected into unitised bits of competency. The all round induction into life, work and skills embodied in the notion of an apprenticeship, undertaken through mentoring and serious intellectual and conceptual engagement in evolving a skill, is being gutted. VET is emerging instead as a platform through which individuals have the chance to build a broad vocational portfolio. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The questions though are about the rigour, quality, depth of learning, relationships, transferability and global opportunities promised through modern VET.

Meanwhile our universities are busy reaching for the global stage, eyeing their position on international league tables, moving to double certification through 'basic' and 'advanced' degrees, emphasising their research and professional attributes and diminishing their function as broadly based academies of ideas and thinking.

In Logan and elsewhere there are many conflicting (and unrealistic) expectations of VET: as a curriculum ingredient to provide a taste of the broader learning opportunities available; as a safety net and potential link to employability for students deemed to be 'at risk'; and as a robust pathway to an enduring career opportunity.

Concentrating advantage and disadvantage
There are dangers in disaggregating advantage and disadvantage, congregating one or the other, whether in the 'mainstream' or in 'alternatives'. One student reflected to Connor, *I know it sounds funny, but I think I'm too nice to fit in here. I've done some crime – car stealing and that – and I have friends in Juvenile Detention. But I think I was just going through a rebel phase and I'm wary about making friends here because people are jealous if you can do things they can't and you're not off the show like some of them. There's a risk of bad influences when so many damaged kids come together.*

It's an interesting debate. In education there are pressures to segregate 'gifted' students, while there are pressures to integrate and mainstream disadvantaged students. Herb Marsh argues that this latter trend is motivated by the threat of being labelled and stigmatised with the prospect of arousing lower self-esteem (Marsh, 2004). But his work shows exactly the opposite effects - academically disadvantaged students in regular or conventional classrooms feel excluded rather than included. He concludes that while not all these students will suffer in a regular, mixed-ability classroom, many will. It is probably like being a Little Fish in a very Big Pond.

The point then is surely that authentic learning, active learning, lifelong learning, 'learning how to learn' is multi-faceted: it embraces VET, academic learning and social learning. And should take place in both conventional and unconventional

schooling. As one local TAFE director says: *learning in school should be about engagement, rather than a preparation for work. Learning at school age should be focused on Literacy, Numeracy, Social Skills, PE/Health, IT and creative arts. It should be activity-based, creative and give a context for learning skills. Yet we persist with schooling models that produce illiterate, innumerate and antisocial young people*.

It also means that the connectedness of schooling, conventional or otherwise, to further post-compulsory learning and good quality employment (and not just any job) becomes crucial, and a powerful measure of performance. There is a need to ensure as far as possible that students in alternative settings do not drift down byways that are ultimately unproductive.

Fundamental change depends on how focused we are on learners and the way our educational institutions are geared for the diverse range of them and their needs – the passionate learners, the instrumental learners, the deferred learners, those over learning and so on. The best institutes and settings internationally cater for all these different learners by combining excellence, inclusion, and customised provision as mutually supportive operating values.

In transition
Schooling in Logan appears to be in a state of transition, moving from a standard template to something more dynamic and something still in evolution. A portfolio of schooling is emerging. Reflecting on the US experience of student engagement and school reform, Connie Warren of the Carnegie Corporation describes the exciting potential of district portfolios of schools. She says developing portfolios is more than just having an array or market bazaar of schools: *it is an intentional strategy to assure that all students and their families have access to a diverse array of high quality schools, and that all students have clear pathways to success*. She emphasises the need for a clear focus, across each district and in each setting, that serves to galvanise teachers' and students' work, and the provision of both rigorous curriculum and the academic and social supports needed to meet high expectations (Warren, 2006).

Areas such as Logan do have tools and a basis through which such a portfolio can be built – the District Youth Achievement Plan is one important mechanism for example. In the next round of planning the opportunity exists for steps towards the conscious creation of such an integrated and holistic portfolio; and for the development of more challenging notions of educational and institutional risk, as well as student risk.

This will also depend however on the signals coming from the policy centres of education in Queensland, from the drivers of the ETRF. The price and resource signals they send about the unconventional, the incentives they provide, the messages about learning and achievement that they project, the measures of success they use and the evaluations they commission will be important. To what extent will policy-makers really licence and commission schools to be free and unconventional, and to realise the potential of the lost middle years of schooling? And what about parents, they too will need to be embraced, informed and encouraged as active partners and stakeholders with real roles in the development of schooling.

In the end where are the sources of innovation in education going to come from that will inspire, fascinate and stimulate all students? Australia's leading writer on schooling and its outcomes, Richard Teese, argues it is not going to come from high-end schools, that pitch themselves almost exclusively to university entrance as their benchmark. Just how much is really being achieved, he asks, when schooling largely consists of *examination tactics, careful management of content, filtering of students into a hierarchy of academic options, weeding out failures, a critical mass of experienced teachers, online library and database resources, state-of-the-art laboratories and technical support, and selective admissions* (Teese, 2006). Relatively passive consumption of knowledge is unlikely to develop enduring awareness and knowledge of how to learn among students that need to understand this most.

Despite the heartache involved sometimes, inspiration can be found in young people. Teese and hundreds of teachers and practitioners in unconventional schooling want to put an end to the deficit modelling that so often has characterised the establishment and development of these settings; and to end the suggestion that these settings are little more than a lower rung on Australia's ladder of educational participation. As he says it is in *these schools where nothing can be taken for granted regarding a child's readiness for school, his or her language skills, attitude to work in a classroom, respect for others, comprehension of the 'craft' of being a pupil* that deep and wise learning is likely to take place (Teese, 2006).

Connor's journey into one community reshaping its concept of schooling gives us a sense of the urgency and magnitude of the task facing schools around Australia, and provides us with hope that change and a richer idea of schooling are on the way.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum
June 2006

In November 2002 the Queensland Government released *Education and Training Reforms for the Future: A White Paper* (known as 'ETRF'). The White paper outlines the Government's policy directions for education and training. These policies encompass all stages of education from preschool through to middle and senior schooling, as well as vocational education and training and employment. The White Paper was developed out of extensive consultation with young people, parents, employers and schools. One of the most significant reforms is the change to the compulsory age of schooling.

The Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003 that governs compulsory school requirements came into effect at the beginning of 2006. This law:

- makes it compulsory for young people to stay at school until they finish Year 10 or have turned 16, whichever comes first
- requires young people to then participate in education and training for: a further two years, or until they have gained a Senior Certificate, or until they have gained a Certificate III vocational qualification, or until they have turned 17
- provides exemptions for young people who enter full time work after they have completed Year 10 or turned 16.

These changes take effect for students who are entering Year 10 in 2006.

The reform is based on national and international research that indicates that completing Year 12 or equivalent gives young people greater opportunities in further education and employment.

> *The future of every young Queenslander depends very much on their ability to achieve high-level qualifications and to continue learning throughout their lives.*

The White Paper contains 19 specific recommendations, some of which relate to better preparation for young children before they enter school and a new approach to the middle years of schooling.

However, this study and report relate to the Senior Phase of schooling – Years 10, 11 and 12. Within this phase, apart from the legislative changes referred to above, there are moves to give young people more choice in terms of school-training-employment options. Choices include:

- studying senior subjects at school
- studying some senior subjects in schools, TAFE Institutes or alternative settings
- vocational education and training in schools, TAFE institutes, agricultural colleges or other training providers
- apprenticeships and traineeships

- a combination of education or training and part-time work
- an employment program that prepares young people for work
- training programs that are tailored to individual students' needs, such as literacy and numeracy programs
- virtual study, online schooling, or online vocational education and training
- international learning programs
- university subjects undertaken while students are at school.

The White Paper and accompanying documents take a clear philosophical position on the intentions behind these reforms: *This reform is about engaging young people in learning. It is not about forcing reluctant or disruptive students to remain in classrooms or lowering the standards of behaviour we expect from young people.*

These developments in Queensland are mirrored in other states and territories as education systems move to extend the age of compulsory schooling and thereby face the challenges of keeping adolescents engaged with the learning that is on offer.

It is in that context that the Dusseldorp Skills Forum commissioned a small-scale ethnographic study of the community of educators, practitioners and students in the Education District of Logan-Albert-Beaudesert of Queensland and to identify features of provision that could more generally inform education in Queensland and in other settings.

What's Mainstream?
The project collects and analyses data about:

- student, practitioner, principal and teacher views about schooling, education reform and non-school pathways, and especially the dynamics between 'mainstream' provision and 'alternative' settings in schools, TAFE, and community agencies
- ideas about related issues, such as notions of risk, engagement, achievement, equivalence and so on
- the profile of students opting or being encouraged into non-school alternatives
- the extent to which education and training settings are seen to be connected, the level of collaboration and shared learning between schools and non-school pathway providers, and the nature of learning taking place in these emerging settings.

The project was expected to provide a richer understanding of the perceptions, aspirations and experiences of students and practitioners, establish stronger baseline data for local practitioners; enhance the knowledge base of DEA policy-makers; and provide DSF with insights to help shape its own longer-term research agenda. The full Research Brief is included in Appendix 1.

Why Logan?
The Logan-Albert-Beaudesert Education District (LBD) was selected as the focus for the study because it has tremendous social and cultural diversity that it was assumed would present particular challenges to the implementation of ETRF. If the ERTF were to enrich the learning opportunities for young people in Queensland, it would have to succeed in communities like Logan.

Data from the 2001 census indicates that the LBD suffers a significant socio-economic disadvantage. Long-term unemployment, transience and dependence on welfare support characterise many families in the district. At the 2001 census, 10.1% of the population was unemployed, with a further 32.2 % of all persons aged 15 years and over not in the labour force. The census indicates that Logan has a high youth population, with 41.3% below the age of 24 years. An average of 5% of the state schools' population are Indigenous Australians, while 10.6% speak a language other than English at home. Ethnic communities include Samoan, Chinese. Spanish, Khmer and Tagalog/Filipino. In recent years, refugee families from Africa have added to this diversity.

The District Youth Achievement Plan, through wide consultation, identified 'stable accommodation, transport, placement in alternate pathways for learning and earning, and the requirement for mentors/role models' as key priority issues.

The Plan notes that students appear to be disengaging from learning earlier in their schooling and that particular attention needs to be paid to appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices in the Middle Phase of Learning. Chronic absenteeism and low levels of student achievement in literacy and numeracy are listed as particular concerns. Detail on the Logan-Albert-Beaudesert 2003-2005 DYP is in Appendix 2.

The *What's Mainstream* study seeks to describe the responses of educators to young people in these circumstances and to document the views of students about their experience of education.

Research overview
Five schools, five flexible learning centres/locations and Logan Institute of TAFE were visited by the researcher who conducted interviews with students and staff.

The schools were nominated by the Executive Director for the Logan-Albert-Beaudesert District as exemplifying innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of 'at risk' students. The learning centres not based in regular schools were selected as demonstrating alternative forms of educational provision and Logan Institute of TAFE was included because there is a trend towards non-adult learners engaging with courses through TAFE. Profiles of the education sites are contained in Appendix 3.

In total, interviews were conducted with 53 students and 36 staff in the educational settings. A student forum was also conducted involving 19 students.

Schools and centres were asked to select students for interview on the following criteria:

- A mix of male and female students
- Students with different cultural backgrounds where these were representative of the school's student population
- Young people whom the school regarded as 'potentially at risk', some of whom appeared to be thriving, others of whom appeared to be struggling

- Students generally aged between 15 and 17 years of age – i.e. the cohort entering ETRF implementation at Year 10 and those enrolled in Years 11 and 12
- Students who had participated in particular innovative programs at each education site intended to 'hold them' in education.

A questionnaire was used in interviews to enable comparisons and patterns to be identified among student responses.

The theoretical basis of the questionnaire derives from work by Beck and Malley (2003), Kagan (1990), Long (1997) and Ma (2003) which indicated that student sense of belonging in the school context is a significant predictor of school retention and school success. This research base suggests that six categories of variables impact on a student's engagement with schooling:

- Sense of belonging – including relationships with peers and relationships with teachers
- Self esteem – including confidence in oneself as a learner
- General health – including anxiety and sense of well being
- Academic press – including teacher expectations
- Disciplinary climate
- Parental involvement

The work of Strein (1995) and Marsh (1997) informed the wording of 'self concept' items. The questionnaire is in Appendix 4.

Summary of student responses

How do you feel about this school/centre?
The majority of students (39/53) across nine schools/centres where the questionnaire was used are happy in their current circumstances, have friends and feel safe. Seven responded that they were 'fairly happy', but still felt lonely and sometimes bullied. Seven stated that they felt awkward, left out and bullied (across two sites). Bullying/teasing appeared to be minimised by school/centre protocols, but where present, was a serious factor in non-attendance, school transfer and school refusal.

What are your impressions of previous schools and reasons for leaving?
Most students interviewed at school sites had been there for the duration of secondary education. Some movement was from state to private/Catholic/alternative and back to state. Students in flexible learning settings were unflattering about their previous schools and reasons for leaving. They cited bullying, teasing and isolation from other students and 'harassment' from teachers as their reasons for leaving. In more detailed interviews however, some students commented that teachers and schools had 'been remarkably patient' with their behaviour before taking the action that caused the student to leave that education precinct.

How much are you learning?
Responses clustered around 'a lot' or 'a fair bit' with a predicable qualifier of 'it depends on the subject'. Differences *within* schools were more marked than *between* schools. That is students within a school could have markedly different views about a

subject, and even a teacher, depending on how they felt they had been treated. They could explain in some detail what they saw as differential treatment of students within a lesson taken by the same teacher. (The research suggests that some teachers hold a deficit view of some students and communicate these expectations through less demanding and less supportive interactions. The issue of teacher expectations is taken up in the Key Findings.)

What re your favourite subjects?
Given apparent problems with literacy and numeracy, Maths and English were surprisingly popular, although definitions of these are changing to meet new times – Functional Communication and Vocational Maths for example. There was definite enthusiasm for 'practical', 'creative' and 'work related' subjects consistently across sites. In one school, Manual Arts, Design, Hospitality, Metal, Timber and Construction won hands down; in another, Speech and Drama and Visual Art were popular – not just 'because of the teacher', but 'because you can express yourself and it's not just right or wrong; as long as there's not too much theory'. In another school that had a number of young mothers, Early Childhood Studies found strong favour, with many girls planning a career in Child Care. 'PE and 'Rec' were popular at a school which fostered volunteer life-guarding and associated opportunities for community leadership and contribution.

What are your best learning styles?
It comes as no surprise that 'working in groups/working with others' are preferred, and 'hands on, being practical'. What is worth noting is the number of students who favoured 'creative' pursuits: seventy-five percent. Several students at a flexible centre named 'reading and writing' as their preferred modes of learning, reminding us that 'not all drop out students have literacy problems'.

What is a successful teacher like?
'Easy to understand, approachable, trustworthy' rated highest overall; sense of humour recurred frequently; intelligent, strict and knowing subject rated least. In discussion, it was apparent that students focus primarily on 'what will help them most', rather than abstract qualities. Students described their favourite teachers as 'mad'. When quizzed, it seemed to mean 'quirky', 'off the edge', 'fun', outrageous. Most respondents said 'a few are like that', and that, 'more would be good.'

Do you get enough support?
More than 80 percent of the young people interviewed felt that they get support for both personal and learning needs; naturally, they would like more, but particularly with learning. It would seem that educational settings have a quandary: they can provide a large amount of 'care', but if the learning deficiencies aren't addressed, it may not prove beneficial overall. However, if they don't deal with the personal/social/economic issues, students cannot get on with the learning.

How do you feel about your achievements?
Most students interviewed – 65 percent - quite like the way they are; many feel quite proud; a few recognise that peers don't hold them in the same esteem, and this presents a problem. However, even those who 'know they're ok', worry about school work and worry about their future. There's a lot of anxiety out there.

How has your general health been in the past year?
Depression, irritability, anxiety and sleep problems recurred across age and site dimensions – 35 percent. A number of students mentioned suicide by family members or by close personal friends as 'worrying and it leaves you wondering if it's all worth it.' They also mentioned their feelings of trauma when friends died through substance abuse/dangerous driving and combinations of the above.

What about discipline at this school/centre?
Nearly all young people interviewed (94 percent) felt that school rules were reasonable and well known to everyone. However, 55 percent of students commented that individual teachers implemented the rules very inconsistently. They expressed resentment that they had had no say in the formulation, implementation or review of rules and consequences.

Parent support
This is an interesting issue with cultural, age and contextual dimensions. For example, many students – 40 percent - were living with one parent, with a grandparent, or with extended family. They appeared relatively philosophical about being separated from at least one parent. A number who were in apparently 'dire' circumstances reported that family members still enquired about their school work, even if they did not go near the school. We need to beware of stereotypes that assume that just because parents/carers do not frequent the school, they do not care. Where there appeared to be *significant* parental interest and encouragement, (30 percent) however, these students seemed more motivated to work hard and achieve. Young people who related positively with siblings and their parents (50 percent), generally held positive views of themselves.

Is education important?
Ninety percent of students across campuses agreed that: a) 'education is important for a job; b) that it's important for life; and c) strong disagreement that 'there's no point'. Young people have absorbed the rhetoric about the significance of education; they just can't all access it.

What suggestions are there to make schools better places?

- Have regular, informal get togethers where it's inevitable students will mix
- Don't have a 'multicultural day', but invite cultures to teach each other cultural ways of acting on a regular basis; have regular Harmony days
- Provide cultural role models to speak to all students so they begin to respect what cultures can do
- Identify Key Teachers with whom students are comfortable and give them time to cruise and offer support
- Have a senior Leaders Camp to develop capability and responsibility in Years 11/12
- Give Years 11 and 12 more 'privileges' because they're seniors and nearly adults
- Act persistently: Don't have a good idea one year then drop it the next
- Provide learning in small steps with time for consolidation at each stage before we're confronted with new stuff

- Keep high expectations for our work, but give us enough support to get there and give us ways to tell what we know without writing
- Give students more control about things in the school, including rules
- Make student representation wide and real.

Eight research questions were identified and formed the basis of fieldwork and subsequent analysis:

- What kinds of programs, strategies and systems are emerging to meet the needs of 'at risk' students?
- How do the learning options and settings differ and what do they have in common?
- How do the student populations in each setting differ and what do they have in common?
- What are the barriers to full participation in education?
- What characterises successful programs for students 'at risk?'
- What are the outcomes from 'alternative programs' and learning provision for students?
- Is a new form of 'mainstream' emerging in response to student need and the requirements of ETRF?
- What lessons can the 'mainstream' draw from features present in successful 'alternative' provision?'

What programs and strategies are emerging?
It is clear from the study that both schools and flexible learning centres are making considerable efforts to meet the personal and learning needs of their student clientele and to keep them engaged in some form of education or training. Schools in Logan have responded to ETRF in three significant ways:

- They have vastly expanded student support services and programs;
- They have broadened the range of curriculum options; and
- They are undertaking career and transition to work programs.

Student services
Student services generally encompass the traditional Guidance Officer (GO), but with a greatly expanded role. In collaboration with other designated staff, the GO now often takes on behavioural management, conflict mediation, general counselling, career and health advice and truancy/school refusal issues. Speech Pathologists' roles are expanding too, to encompass broader support for student language and literacy learning.

In addition to a Guidance Officer, there is usually a School-based Health Nurse (at least on a part time basis), a Behaviour Advisory Team and sometimes a Chaplain and/or a School-based Police Officer and a Youth Support Coordinator. There are varying models of Student Liaison Officer/ Student Engagement Officer/and Learning Support Teams. Where the school has numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students, there is an ATSI Community Liaison person. A Head of Department and a member of the senior staff team coordinate vocational and work education.

Students report consistently that they 'know who to turn to if in trouble' and feel personally and socially supported. They generally proclaim school as 'a good place to

be', often 'more supportive than home'. However, they remark that: 'support with my personal problems is fine, but I can't always get learning support.'

Senior staff are passionate advocates for students and for maintaining services to support their obvious needs. Deputies seem particularly aware of the complexities of students' lives and accept that schools' roles have changed irrevocably. They note the significant investment of school staffing resources represented by these services and the communication and coordination difficulties that can arise from multiple players.

> *We have two part time Nurses, for example, and they both visited a family about a Child Protection issue, not knowing that they were duplicating the response. The family was furious about what they saw as a bureaucratic invasion.*

> *Case management is extremely difficult when so many people are working to support a student. Staff may not all be on campus at the one time, and, even if they are, it's nearly impossible to free them all up to get together.*

The coordination of services between schools and external agencies, including Child and Youth Mental Health presents challenges, as does the coordination of learning provision between schools and alternative sites such as Boystown, The Shed, TAFE and Adult Education. These are all issues that affect staffing, resource use and responsibility.

Changing curriculum
Changes to school curriculum appear to have been primarily directed towards learning about work and learning for work. Alternative programs seem to represent a mix of vocational education and training and training units of competence. The driver is to engage young people in useful education and training, including in places other than school. Students generally respond well to what they see as 'practical, hands on and world related' learning.

However, students, even those who are achieving well, often complained that their general studies up to Year 10 and their OP subjects for years 11 and 12, could have been more relevant to the real world and more engaging to study.

Adult respondents in the Logan study also commented:

> *Content and pedagogy in the mainstream curriculum are changing….but only slowly. English, for example, is now more relevant from Year 8, Ancient History continues unchanged and some kids are enrolled with no hope of meeting the course requirements. Even the bright kids must be bored, talking about 'Ancient Egypt again'. They did it in year 3, Year 6, Year 8 and here it comes again*: Teacher Aides, two sites.

> *I'm not sure how much power HODs have to adapt curriculum, Years 8-10, but I reckon they could affect class structures, teaching approaches and make curriculum content more connected to today's issues*: Teacher Aides, one site.

> *In terms of changing curriculum and pedagogy to provide access for all students to mainstream courses, the HODs are crucial. There are new courses in English and Maths, Sport/PE, Manual Arts and Arts. However, there's still too much theory, even when a subject, like Child Studies, looks like a practical course*: Learning Support Teacher.

The Executive Director for the District summed up the possibilities neatly when she commented: *We need to teach students, not subjects.*

There is general agreement that the curriculum does not always set students up for success and future engagement:

> *We almost set kids up to fail at learning, by enrolling them in unsuitable courses from year 8. Why not concentrate on literacy, numeracy, PE, Arts and Health and cooperative skills for year 8, so they can do cooperative learning?*: Deputy Principal.

> *Learning in school should be about engagement, rather than a preparation for work. Learning at school age should be focused on Literacy, Numeracy, Social Skills, PE/Health, IT and Creative arts. It should be activity-based, creative and give a context for learning skills. Yet we persist with schooling models that produce illiterate, innumerate and antisocial young people*: TAFE Director.

> *The ancient curriculum structure and content drives the curriculum agenda. This leads to teachers becoming content protectors and behaviour managers*: Deputy Principal.

> *New Basics has had no translation into the structures or content of current high schools. The KLAs persisted in spite of New Basics and the KLA content mentality is now entrenched*: Youth Worker.

With an increasing trend towards vocational courses, there is a distinct possibility of 'two streams of curriculum' becoming evident to students, parents, employers and further education providers. History suggests that 'the academic stream' will retain status over the 'technical', excluding some students from higher status subjects, future learning pathways, employment, income and social status (Teese, 2000).

Schools have a responsibility to the full cohort of students. The desire to retain the integrity, intellectual rigour and public validity of academic courses is legitimate. However, this may be a false dichotomy. Curriculum reform efforts in Australia and overseas indicate that subject content can be rendered more contemporary, more ideas based, world-related and inquiry-driven without any necessary loss of academic press. Indeed, curriculum reform projects such as New Basics would suggest that the mainstream curriculum needs major reform if it is to fit any students for a future world. A number of respondents expressed the hope that the review of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning currently underway, will address these issues.

Bringing work-related learning in at Year 10 and even before, presents trainers and work place employers with social and pedagogical challenges they may not have

faced before. Not all workplaces or even training institutions are 'kid friendly' and not all kids are 'work ready' at 14, 15 or even 16:

> *Apprenticeships are not very forgiving; kids need on-going advocacy and support. Someone needs to explain to your employer that you're only 16, your life has fallen in pieces and there's a good reason for your non-attendance*: Program Coordinator, flexible learning centre.

> *I went to do a carpet laying apprenticeship, but the older guys just gave me hell. I could put up with teasing and silly requests, but when one guy called me names and another told me everything I did was hopeless, I gave up*: Student, male aged 17 Logan TAFE.

Career transition programs
All students complete a Senior Education and Training (SET) Plan which assists them to identify suitable career pathway options after school. Where schools involve all stakeholders, including parents or guardians, students, teachers and potential employers in a lengthy process of consideration, investigation and review, the process provides students with both insights and motivation.

Matching student desires with abilities and course options presents a challenge, but unless the match is made students clearly are a) unable to learn what they need to learn; or b) enrol in courses where their lack of success is likely to cause drop out and disillusionment. To make this match requires schools to be very flexible and to put considerable effort into student counselling and possible course re-direction.

Career Keys is funded by DEST/DET and operate three main programs relevant to ETRF
:
- Adopt a School – linking businesses and schools;
- Structured Work Place Learning; and
- Career Transition Support for 13-19 year olds.

Respondents in the study commented favourably on the career planning materials Career Keys developed for schools and on their 'alternative education' options and school holiday programs.

How do the learning options differ between settings and what do they have in common?
The flexible learning centres studied mirrored many of the aspects of changing curriculum provision in schools. Some centres, such as the Centre for Continuing Secondary Education (CCSE) are focused on academic learning, including English Communication and Vocational Maths. Others, such as The Shed and Boystown have more of an emphasis on training for work. What differs is that centres have the flexibility to provide individually tailored learning programs which are not locked into age-grade structures.

While schools are adopting such strategies to the extent possible, school size, class size, timetables and system accountability requirements make enrolment across grade

difficult. These issues about 'how' programs are structured and administered are explored later in this report.

Similarly, in terms of student services and support, schools are doing their utmost to meet an increasing range of 'welfare' responsibilities. Staff-student ratio issues as noted above make it somewhat easier for centres to give intensive personal support to an individual student. However, 'support' is more than 'time spent with a student' and the positive aspects of relationships between staff and students in centres – mutual respect and a focus on productive action, rather than conformity, for example - offer lessons for schooling generally.

How do the student populations differ and what do they have in common?
Aron (2000) identifies a set of dimensions that might distinguish between 'schools' and 'educational alternatives':

- *Who* is being served;
- *Where* the education is offered;
- *What* the program offers; &
- *How* it is structured or administered.

There are some differences in the student populations attending each type of site. It is likely, naturally, that centres defining themselves as 'last chance' contain the most seriously alienated young people, for whom other measures have failed. Many of these young people are dealing with extra-ordinary life problems; but so are some of those remaining in school. It would not be accurate therefore, to dichotomise the student populations in each setting. Students who might be described as 'disaffected' are being retained through considerable effort in schools. Many of the students in regular schools who were interviewed would be described as articulate, well adjusted and learning-motivated. So would some students attending centres.

It should be noted as well, that the study was not able to obtain the views of a large number of young people currently not enrolled in any form of educational provision. Centre Education Programme hopes to establish outreach programs to profile and assist young people currently 'on the streets.'

Attempting to categorise 'alternative education' on the basis of 'where' it is provided, is equally fraught. In educational districts such as Logan the pressures of student need have led schools to provide various forms of 'alternative learning options' on school sites: Mabel Park has the POWER program; Woodridge has a similar facility; Marsden has 'E Block' and its student location in the shopping centre. The student population of both 'centres within schools' and 'flexible learning centres' off campus includes low achievers, pregnant and parenting teens, students who have in the past been suspended or even expelled. However, there are some students who finally reject any form of in-school learning and the flexible learning centres fulfil a valuable function for them.

The literature on resilience gives some clues to why some students can maintain in the school system and some cannot. Personal qualities such as intelligence, temperament

and social skills naturally play a part, but consistent, strong adult support – whether from family or education staff – is also a crucial element.

Ma (2003) describes the significant roles of educators 'in promoting children's educational resilience despite family poverty, physical illness, parent divorce, substance abuse and frequent relocation'. She explains that:

- Students perceive teachers who are attentive, respectful and helpful as caring about their social and academic well being.
- School structure and peer influence can interact to affect students' sense of belonging to school.
- Students need to *connect* – with each other and with teachers; to feel *capable* – through modified tasks that build success; and to *contribute* – through in-school opportunities to feel valued.
- The beginning of secondary education is the most crucial stage for the development of sense of belonging because students at this stage are in transition from childhood to adolescence.

What are the barriers to full participation in education?
A set of obvious 'barriers' emerges from the study:

- Attendance
- Relationships and teaching practices
- School expectations
- Learning difficulties, including low achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Attendance
'If they're not there, you can't teach them' is a favourite saying of educators. Attendance is a major issue in all education systems and schools in Logan face the same challenges.

> *Schools and the wider community have become aware of an apparently high level of truancy and/or chronic absence among students, particularly during the crucial middle years of schooling and of the link between this and school disengagement and disaffection between young people and their communities*: Youth Engagement Officer.

In Logan, two officers – one attached to primary, the other to secondary schools – are funded from the Department of Community Renewal as Youth Engagement Officers (YEOs). The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) aims to reduce juvenile crime in Logan by addressing the underlying causes of truancy and chronic absenteeism.

The YES program seeks to identify, investigate and intervene to improve student engagement with schooling, particularly in Years 8 and 9. The YES program concludes in September 2006, so the officers decided that gathering data on absenteeism was crucial to inform future prevention and intervention. Patterns are emerging which could inform action in Logan and other locations.

Unexplained absences start to appear from Year 1. There seems to be a high level of parent-condoned absences for children around six years of age. The pattern then evens out, with 'overall reasonable attendance' for Years 3, 4 & 5.' There is then a rapid growth of 'Chronic Absence Behaviour' (CAB) in Year 8.

It is possible, but a bit too simplistic to assume that 'cultural values and school attending habits' are a consequence of these early absences. However, there are different reasons for student absence at different stages in their schooling. Other studies would suggest that young children are absent from school a) because they 'don't feel like going'; b) would rather do what mum does; and c) the parent does not see missing school as important 'because they're only little'.

Subsequent student disengagement at primary level is often associated with a) falling behind in work and losing confidence; b) disconnecting with friendship circles and finding it hard to 'break back in'. Later, factors endemic to adolescence, such as rebellion against the strictures of secondary schools; having a likeminded peer group who also choose to avoid school; and having 'an image to protect' as a rebel, become more influential.

The reasons students give in the YES survey for 'staying away from school' suggest a basis for future investigation:

- We have too many fights at home
- Most teachers don't like me
- Most teachers don't care
- The teachers go too fast and I can't keep up
- My friends want me to hang out with them and have fun
- I'm not important, nobody cares if I don't go
- I'm so far behind I can't catch up.

Student absentees have been grouped by the YEOs into different categories requiring different forms of intervention. Some may have health or anxiety problems requiring professional intervention; others may respond to a trusted mentor; some may require a fresh start at another school or flexible centre; and a further group may be beyond the reach of current alternatives and need outreach programs.

There is an agreed need to gather, disaggregate and conduct co-variant analysis around these early statistics:

- Do these same students from Year 1 recur in year 5, 6, 7 & 8 statistics?
- What are their particular demographics?
- What intersections are there between student achievement, family circumstances, race and culture?
- Which primary and secondary school practices appear to be 'holding' students in school best?

At present, detailed statistics are held on individual students only at the school level. Inter-school comparisons and individual student tracking do not therefore appear possible. Funding ongoing work around the issue of school attendance in Logan-Abert-Beaudesert is vital.

Relationships

Relationships – between students and teachers, between students and students and between staff and families – are recognised as one of the most significant aspects of school climate.

In general, student-teacher relationships in the study were characterised by mutual affection and respect. 'Respect' appears to be a crucial value and behaviour.

> *Respect is the key. If only all teachers would recognise that feisty is good; feisty is resilient. If these kids weren't feisty, some of these kids would be dead*: Learning Support teacher.

> *If you build a strong relationship with a student, and they truly believe you care and will defend them, then they'll respect you enough to wear a reprimand when it's deserved. You can't get change without a student taking control over their behaviour, but you can't get that without respect on both sides*: Deputy Principal

Student-student relationships in the study, likewise, were characterised by high levels of mutual support. In most cases, there was a give and take and sense of group community that was impressive and beneficial.

However, Students in flexible centres frequently cited 'bullying' as a significant reason for them leaving school. This ranged from relatively light-hearted name calling, to serious, debilitating harassment. Even within the cohort attending non-school centres, some social practices of peer marginalisation prevail. These are undoubtedly destructive to student retention and learning engagement. Students reported, and the literature agrees, that overt bullying is more common among boys, with any difference 'targeted'; while girls engage in more covert behaviours to socially exclude 'unwanted peers'. Recent studies (Martino and Thompson) suggest strategies schools can use to uncover the hidden and often destructive sub-cultural dynamics, including mechanisms to give students a voice.

Teaching practices

It has often been asserted that 'it's not the curriculum, but the pedagogy that needs fixing.' Certainly, a quality teacher-student relationship, energetic teaching with an eye to relevance and a resilient approach to classroom discipline would seem to be vital components, but curriculum and pedagogy seem irrevocably intertwined:

> *Schools should see themselves as 'civilising places'. Currently, they do some stuff that contradicts their stated mission and intended culture. For example, some teachers have limited behaviour management strategies and use 'the Planning Room' as a first resort. Why would you think it would help to put an angry kid in a blank room for _ hour? The further up the chain of staff an issue goes, the harder it is to resolve without drastic action*: Deputy Principal.

> *ETRF should have spent more time and resources on changing the culture of schools and teachers. There's too much emphasis on 'pathways' rather than how to get there*: Flexible Learning Centre Manager.

There is no shortage of contemporary advice on 'what constitutes quality pedagogy.' The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Lingard et al 2001) identified twenty elements of productive pedagogies that could be grouped into four dimensions:

- Intellectual Quality
- Connectedness
- Supportive classroom environment and
- Recognition of difference.

The QSRLS found that schools were far better at Social Support than Intellectual Demand. It was almost as if schools felt they had to trade one off against the other, when, in fact, high scoring teachers viewed all students as capable of learning; they focused on skills and concepts rather than transmission of content; and they resisted the belief that student outcomes were beyond their control. 'Intellectual demandingness, supportiveness, connection to the world and recognition of difference', all combined to enhance student learning outcomes.

Expectations
The research literature suggests (NSW DET, 2001) that the expectations teachers hold for individual students are conveyed through everyday practices and often contribute to lower achievement. Educational expectations are inferences or assumptions that teachers, parents, students and others make about students' likely academic achievements and future success. Aspirations are hopes that people hold for their own or others' lives and careers. Perceptions are the often-intuitive responses we make to what we see.

> *There is strong research evidence that some teachers hold lower expectations for students from low socio-economic or minority backgrounds, and that these lower expectations contribute to lower achievement for these students.* (NSW DET, 2001).

Phillips (1992) found a significant link between parents' expectations of their children's futures, their choice of (home) activities and their children's achievement levels. As one respondent in Logan noted:

> *I've found that parents generally, start off with high hopes for their child. They just get worn down by problems in their own lives and their dealings with schools. Often, they only get bad news from the school*: School Principal.

The overall climate of schools and centres in Logan is friendly, supportive and inclusive. However, the literature warns that:

> *Difficulties arise where schools place expectations on all students that are based on mainstream values and class aspirations. The mismatch can result in problems that are labelled as behavioural difficulties and dealt with as such. Particular students are over represented in suspension and exclusion statistics. Students' interest in learning actually declines as they progress through school* (DETYA, 2001).

Two respondents in the Logan study noted:

> *Schools are custodial environments in a society where there are clashes between community, cultural and school values*: Deputy Principal.

> *Many school structures and expectations are irrelevant to contemporary values. Schools are conventional, conformist and controlling. Values are individualistic, materialistic and anti-authoritarian*: Director TAFE.

Learning difficulties
The study did not focus on students who have significant physical or intellectual impairments or specific diagnosed conditions. However, it did encompass students evidencing very low achievement in literacy and/or numeracy. 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy' are often used an interchangeable doublet. Competence in both is a prerequisite to success in learning and in life.

However, because of the way in which schooling is currently delivered and experienced, literacy presents the greater barrier to students' full participation in education. It is not just that being able to read and write competently allows students to engage with lessons and materials; it also affects how well students can demonstrate what they understand and what they have learned.

The District Youth Achievement plan commits to a 'focus on literacy and numeracy as a passport to lifelong learning.' Every school is putting maximum resources into supporting student learning in these areas; and yet, all would agree that an increasing number of young people are entering secondary education with insufficient knowledge and skills to cope with the demands of the curriculum.

> *Literacy and numeracy present massive problems with more and more kids coming into secondary with totally inadequate skills in these areas and in social skills.*

> *I suspect there's insufficient support for students from P-3. By Year 3, it's too late. Communication between the levels of schooling is excellent. 'We know who the kids are, it's just too hard to fix at year 8*: Teacher aides, two sites.

> *Kids begin to disengage with the curriculum around the middle phase when it becomes more literacy dependent. There is also the culture clash between home, life and school*: Speech Pathologist.

The distress of students struggling with the questionnaire, even with assistance, was palpable. It was obvious that many would do anything to avoid literacy-based tasks and that some of their 'acting out' behaviours were avoidance strategies to protect their self esteem.

There is considerable debate in Australia about 'the best methods' by which literacy should be taught. One high school in the study has found that students respond well to a program of direct instruction. There is a definite argument that making the language system explicit for older students and providing consistent and specific feedback is

beneficial. There is also a strong argument for teaching literacy knowledge and skills in the context where it will be used and where students see its purpose. This would mean VET teachers, TAFE and apprenticeship trainers would need to understand and be able to teach the literacies required by their fields, as well as teachers of English, Science, History and other subjects.

The Queensland Government paper *Literacy the Key to Learning: A Framework for Action 2006-2008*, builds on the *Literate Futures Report* and focuses on 'identified challenges we face in improving literacy outcomes for all students.' These include:

- Literacy teaching – to increase professional knowledge and skills in literacy
- Literacy learning – to assess, track and improve literacy learning outcomes for all students in the context of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- Literacy in the curriculum – to improve literacy capabilities for learning in all areas of the curriculum.

It is to be hoped that this Framework leads to a planned, concerted, supported professional learning program that meets the challenges faced by students, teachers and schools in Logan.

What characterises successful programs for 'students at risk'?
A range of studies attempt to identify 'key variables in student success.' The *Building Relationships: Making Education Work* report (DETYA, 2001) identifies school climate, school structures, curriculum and assessment, and staffing. School climate, relationships and curriculum have already been addressed here but it seems appropriate to 'dig a little deeper' into what Aron describes as 'how programs are structured and administered'.

School structures
A large body of research suggests that the following structures can be beneficial:

- Interdisciplinary teaching teams
- Cooperative learning approaches
- Creation of smaller academic units within large schools;
- Independent learning options
- Flexible timetabling; &
- Intensive advisory structures.

Many schools in Logan have designated specific staff as responsible for particular cohorts of students. However, larger structural changes appear somewhat piecemeal and are not necessarily strategic or coordinated. There would seem to be limited examples of mini-schools, teaching teams or consolidated timetables, or independent learning options within the mainstream (such as those detailed in the learning choices listed under ETRF). *Middle schooling has the potential, but it's not yet been realised*, says one school Principal.

Cooperative learning is recognised as desirable, but students are often seen to be 'lacking in social skills, so we can't do it.' Learning to cooperate, in fact, is a bit like

learning to read: you learn to do it by doing it, in a context that makes sense for you and where you can see a clear purpose for the activity.

Several respondents spoke about the possibility of creating 'Senior Schools within secondary' in which older students would have more privileges and fewer constraints. Such structures are in operation in the ACT and Tasmania, for example and it would seem that these campuses have adapted to their changing clientele by expanding curriculum options and providing an increasing range of services for students, as Queensland secondary schools are doing. What appears to be different is the general sense that students in senior secondary colleges have of being treated as adult learners, with concomitant independence and responsibility.

Staff and staffing
Finding, holding and supporting 'the right staff' to grapple successfully with the challenges of contemporary schooling is the central issue facing all education systems. The need for a particular kind of human being with special qualities and skills has already been referred to in this report. In Queensland, the state transfer system works across all schools and teachers and, in the first instance, teachers are appointed to a district, and then allocated to a school. The region is talking about a regional Workforce Plan that might look at renewal and consolidation by moving teachers from one school to another.

> *A particular kind of teacher is required whom the community can embrace as a professional who will help their children*: Deputy Principal.

There is a consistent belief that 'knowledge of primary teaching practices would benefit many secondary teachers'. Models for exchange of teachers between levels of an education system have been trialed and generally indicate improved understanding and broadened professional repertoire on both sides.

Resistance to change is not the exclusive prerogative of the teaching profession, but it may be exacerbated by the current age profile across the nation. Teachers who have been operating in a traditional teaching mode quite successfully with most of their students over a long period of time, are understandably loathe to take on new pedagogies. However, it is apparent that relatively dry, overly-theoretical content, with little contemporary relevance or tasks, delivered in a transmission mode increasingly fails to engage even the most motivated students.

As students noted in their forum during this project:

> *I'd learn better if I could see the point of stuff like Algebra. I like Maths, but, especially at Senior, there's so much new stuff and you barely get that under your belt, when you're hit with another lot*: Student, male aged 17.

Traditionally, there has been a link between a teacher getting good academic results for students, and getting a promotion. In Queensland, the nomenclature and focus of responsibility for senior staff is changing. Where promotion and seniority attaches to a band of schooling and/or a portfolio such as Social Justice, this raises the status and effectiveness of these roles in a school's professional community.

'Staff' of course, does not refer only to 'teachers'. Project coordinators, counselors, para-professionals and individuals with understanding about adolescent health and welfare are increasingly needed. Staff require time and expertise to case manage students across services and between agencies. They need planned professional learning opportunities to gain currency of information, new and relevant skills and the confidence that comes from being part of a collegial network and being recognized for your experience and expertise. Staff workloads are greatly increased by the demands of relationship management and the potential for 'burn out' is high.

New roles are emerging for specialists such as Guidance Officers and Speech Pathologists raising issues about their knowledge, job security and status.

All of this poses the question of how to address the professional learning needs of staff in a planned, concerted and deep way. The Executive Director explains that professional development for teachers is organized on several levels:

- The Australian Government Quality Teacher program provides funding for a number of initiatives, determined at the centre.
- Strategic Curriculum Support funds are made available at the regional level to be used for state priorities.
- In Logan, a Professional Learning Community Advisory Group with representatives from each cluster determines district priorities.
- There is a requirement that schools spend at least 10% of General Grant Funds on professional learning; many spend more than that.
- Further discretionary funding at district level would enable a focus on the specific needs within our schools.

Several respondents echoed the sentiments expressed below:

> There has been a dearth of professional learning for teachers across the board. Bits and pieces don't give teachers depth of skills or breadth of repertoire.

What are the outcomes from alternative programs and learning provision for students?
'Alternative programs' whether within or outside of the regular school campus are capable of fulfilling very different functions. They may merely be 'holding bays' for 'difficult students'; they can provide exactly what is needed for a particular student at a particular time in their life; and/or they can build bridges on to further learning, training or employment.

For schools, the challenge would seem to be balancing small scale intimate provision, such as 'special blocks' while maintaining the student's connection with 'mainstream learning programs'. For flexible learning centres, the challenges revolve around making learning attractive, while ensuring that students emerge with valued credentials.

Kagan (1990) points out when schools 'accommodate' by adjusting the demands of school life so as to bring them into greater correspondence with students' needs, negative effects can result:

- Students expected that accommodations would always be made;
- A low level of cognitive engagement was inherent in accommodated academic tasks; and
- Students found the move back into regular classes 'too hard'.

Schools in Logan are taking action to keep 'alternative and mainstream' connected. At Marsden, for example, learning support is carefully connected to subject requirements; Mabel Park has accepted responsibility for its students attending at the Shed.

Flexible learning centres, understandably, regard it as a triumph when young people turn up on a reasonably regular basis, behave in a positive and responsible way and engage with some of the learning on offer. And yet, this begs the question of whether 'mandating requirements for completion' is itself a goal, or whether there should be a requirement for both participation and minimum levels of achievement. Flexible centres indicate that they are moving increasingly towards accredited courses beyond Certificate II, once young people begin to re-engage with learning. This would seem a worthwhile goal.

It is obvious that students whose personal and social issues remain unaddressed are not in a position to learn well. However, it is also well established that a creative, activity-based curriculum involving cooperative learning strategies and differentiated delivery modes minimise anti-social behaviours and maximise academic success.

> *'These aren't tough kids, even the gang leaders; often, they're hurting. You can usually win them around by walking around, always ready to chat and know them well enough to ask the right questions. Applying blanket rules on everyone is mad. It leads to confrontation and 80% of cases referred to Deputies could have been resolved at site if the teacher hadn't over-reacted. There isn't always the agreed goal of saving the student*: Deputy Principal.

> *We need to applaud individual distance travelled in learning, or we're not being inclusive; we need to strive for equitable outcomes, or we're not being just*: School Principal.

> *In the next decade, these schools are going to have to change dramatically, or die. They're going to have to interweave school and community and make hard decisions about what they're there for. There'll have to be more real recognition and respect for students who go on to trades and earning, not just status for the academic kids. Parents generally recognise and value these alternative, vocational pathways. The League Table about OP scores didn't mention that of 180 kids leaving Year 12, only 32 were not engaged in anything productive; that's pretty good*: Deputy Principal

> *We need to introduce students to real work options and build aspiration in small steps*: Manager, Flexible Learning Centre.

However, Richard Teese (2006) warns that:

...not all retention is good. It is only good if there is quality learning behind it. Some of it is accompanied by under-achievement, student dissatisfaction and low morale and motivation ... we need to ensure that as school retention levels rise, they are accompanied by a real opening up of access to all areas of the secondary curriculum, not only more recent general studies or accredited vocational studies, valuable as these are.

Is a new form of 'mainstream' emerging in response to student need and the requirements of ETRF?

The short answer is 'yes'. For some years, schools have been expanding the range of services for which they take responsibility and building stronger paths to a range of learning, training and employment futures. Flexible settings have developed effective ways of working with the most challenging and marginalised students and forging productive futures for and with them.

As noted earlier, the boundaries between the two types of setting are blurring and it is clear that new partnerships between them and between educators, further education trainers and employers are developing in the interests of students. Ultimately, these moves are in the interest of society in general because they minimise the potential for self-and-community harm.

There is obviously much to do and the challenges do not decrease with each passing day. However, Logan is blessed with some extremely dedicated education personnel.

These teachers do more than 'go the extra yard.' They personally transport students to learning venues, they give their own time to be with students in out-of-school sporting and creative activities; they 'hang in with' troublesome students, believing that they can and will change and improve; believing in them as people. These are 'Star teachers' (Haberman, 1995).

What lessons can be learned from the features of successful provision?

- Small schools and class sizes including sub-structures to render the social dynamics of large schools manageable by students, teachers and parents.
- Close student-teacher relationships characterised by mutual respect
- Curriculum that students see as relevant
- A minimum emphasis on conformity and a maximum emphasis on democracy
- High academic standards and expectations
- High levels of learning support targeted to student need
- High quality student-centred programs that actively engage teachers, parents and other community members;
- High levels of administrative and bureaucratic autonomy at site level
- Reliable sources of funding
- Differentiated resourcing on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage

A teacher at a Flexible Learning Centre suggested 'mainstream' could:

- Build the understanding and empathy of everyone on campus about the issues facing young people

- Design and implement interest-based activities
- Give students practical options for how to undertake learning and how to demonstrate learning
- Use arts based programs to give kids a voice
- Cut down on conformist trivia.

Conclusion

Young people in the study and many of their teachers and family members would have to be described as remarkably strong in dealing daily with their circumstances. The principal who remarked that 'students are often more malleable than resilient, was probably on the right track. Building resilience takes a long time and considerable consistent support. A huge number of studies identify 'risk' and 'protective' factors which interact in a dynamic process with an individual's personal and environmental influences (Batten and Russell, 1995; Bernard, 1996; Brooks, Milne, Paterson, Johansson and Hart, 1997).

Teachers and schools in Logan can provide ready examples of effective strategies to build personal and educational resilience, in action in the local context.
Over many years in Australia, the most innovative programs and successful teaching and learning approaches have been developed in disadvantaged settings. Richard Teese (2006) argues that this occurs because, *it is in these schools that the fundamental question of a child's relationship to learning in a social environment is posed in its most acute form*. He suggests that we make disadvantaged schools 'laboratories of teaching and learning reform'.

The five schools in the study were:

- Loganlea State High School
- Mabel Park State High School
- Woodridge State High School
- Marsden State High School
- Kingston College

Loganlea SHS

When the researcher visited, the school chose to showcase: the development of a short film by Year 10 students; the trialing of the Career and Transition Program (CATS); and the processes involved in developing Senior Education and Training (SET) Plans.

The film group
Students recounted how, as part of the English program, they had developed characters and storylines for potential film scripts. Students selected three plots that were sent to the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS). Two scripts – an animated fantasy and a raw urban drama - were chosen and an established Director offered to make the drama into a short film with the students. Students then worked with professional script writers to work up tension points and dialogue. Professional actors were hired by the Director and local volunteer police and ambulance personnel played parts, lent uniforms and advised. Deadline (so named because students always felt they were on one) is the story of a young, Aboriginal man who gets involved with drugs and is killed in a horror ending involving his estranged father. Students explained that the moral premise is: *don't give up on the ones you love; it may be too late.*

Students learnt about their rights and how to preserve the integrity of their work. When changes were suggested to 'increase commercial appeal', the students insisted on their legal and moral ownership. They were supported by teachers and the local police in keeping true to their original intentions.

Students stayed on task for the entire year. They built strong relationships with key people – the workshop leader, local advisers, actors, director and crew - some of whom were Indigenous, as some students were. They were grateful for the personal persistence and support given by the English teacher.

> *We didn't want to let people down - Ms Cameron, the Director, the actors, the local volunteers…the school; ourselves. Ms Cameron did extra things she didn't have to do and we didn't want it to fail*: Student, female, aged 15.

The project was embedded in a 'real subject'. It was part of a plan to develop knowledge about language – from the intra-personal, to the impersonal, to the personal – and used an authentic vehicle, script writing, to come to understand

language forms, functions and contexts. Even if the commercial Director had not come on board, the activity would have remained authentic. Students were being trained in camera use and would have made their own film.

It involved collaborative activity, built cooperative skills, used democratic processes to reach decisions and resulted in a tangible product of which all could be proud.

> *We could eventually see an end in sight and it was exciting – filming, making the doco about it. Towards the end, it all seemed real. We got no pay and didn't get to Dream world, but we feel proud and it's changed the way we feel about ourselves and what we can do*: Student, male, aged 15.

Students got an opportunity to portray the world they know. When asked 'where did the characters and storyline come from?' one student replied: 'it's life; we know it from experience'. Student control over important aspects of their work was maintained:

> *No one said we couldn't use that language, or the plot or characters were too rough. No one at school said 'the ending's too horrible; change it'*: Student, female, aged 15.

Student confidence overall and their belief in their own abilities and capacity to make thoughtful decisions appears greatly enhanced. Several of these young people were on the verge of exclusion. Most have now returned for Year 11 and are talking about futures in creative industries.

Senior Education and Training Plans
The Career and Transition Program (CATs) program began with four high schools in the district working with students from high school entry at Year 8. Students learn about their strengths and limitations and about links between school tasks and the world of work.

In Year 10 a Careers Unit commences, with the motto: *you don't own a job, you own a career*. Students research a wide range of jobs including non-traditional options that challenge gender stereotypes. The Unit and its accompanying workbooks are increasingly job oriented and help students to refine their career plans and to match their aspirations with subject choices.

The SET P is the final stage of the CATs process. From 2005, all schools in Queensland developed SET Plans with Year 10 students and their parents or guardians. The SET Ps map out a student's plan of action for their education and training in the Senior Phase of learning.

Strengths and issues
Career planning is embedded in subject areas such as English, so that student work can be linked to their current learning needs and future plans. Industry representatives are placed with appropriate subjects around the school; industries that use science or technology, for example, locate a representative within the school Science program.

The Industry Day is not a one off 'careers expo', but linked to students' learning SET plans and to work experience. Students are pre-prepared in class to research and formulate questions and to take notes on the day. Students pre-select the industries that will attend.

Work experience is generally popular, with students surprised at how much they can do and learn in a short visit to a work place. Across the nation, this is a not a universal impression and seems here to reflect the excellent relations built between the school and employers and the careful preparation of students for the experience.

> *I went to work in Retail and found I was left in charge and I felt very capable. I was ok with the responsibility because I'd been prepared at school for it*: Student, female, aged 16.

The Careers Unit offers students real life reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and thinking activities that enhance their literacy skills.
Students make an oral presentation following their work experience and other students ask questions. The presentation is scaffolded through worksheets and students interviewed said they had greatly enjoyed presenting and felt it clarified their understanding of their experience as well as building their oral presentation skills and confidence. That students enjoyed this opportunity to present orally, with or without a Power Point, probably also suggests the value of non-written demonstrations of understanding that enable all students to show what they know.

Students commented on the value of the workbooks developed by Career Keys:

> *I wondered what finding out about yourself had to do with getting a job, but I found some surprising things that I'm good at and it's broadened my options* : Student, female aged 15.

> *The time management exercises helped me. I love computers, but I had no idea how much time I could waste on one*: Student, female aged 16.

A particular strength of the Loganlea approach has been to involve students in developing the subject selection guide for the Senior Phase. Tying the SET P to subject selection involves a lot of extra work, as timetables are adjusted to ensure students can undertake courses that link with their future plans. The tie does, however, help the school to adjust its curriculum offerings to keep pace with student interests and changing workplace demands. Student choices shape the curriculum, indicating a flexible, student-and- real- world orientation.

School ethos
Managing problem student behaviour is a serious concern for all school systems in contemporary society. This and associated family and personal welfare issues have led to the increasing range of support and liaison services that schools in Logan now provide.

The Principal at Loganlea expresses their approach thus:

We have a strong emphasis on social justice, from a position of firmness and fairness, underpinned by care. Structures for managing behaviour are in place and known. The rule is that a student's current life or background may be an explanation, but not an excuse. We seldom exclude because we find that consistency and scaffolding before that point, often avert the need. It may be an achievement for some students to turn up and to participate. For some, school is a safety haven. It's important to focus on the big stuff and not to bother about the small.

The school takes specific steps to build community pride in its school and student pride in and responsibility for their community. For example, the 'Making Places project is based on the premise 'If we make it, we respect it.' Students created banners for the railway station giving safety messages (approved by Qld Rail); they've made a quilt for the hospital foyer and mosaics. These have not been vandalised; students on excursions have remarked: 'I helped make it look good.' All of these strategies take a lot of extra work by staff, but they pay off.

The Principal expressed her view about parental relationships with the school: *in this community they're authentic people with aspirations. They expect a principal to be honest, transparent and strong.*

The school also expects things of parents/carers: they have to come to the school; the Semester Report won't be sent home, it must be accompanied by an interview. Parents and carers are closely involved in career and course planning activities with their young people.

Staff have developed a high level of loyalty to the students and the school by:

- focusing on the vision
- learning to understand and support each other (e.g. an annual 'retreat')
- maintaining social contact
- a strong emphasis on communicating

There is a Mentoring strategy for First Year and New staff. Senior staff are involved in a major program of in-school Professional Development and the Deputies deliver learning programs.

Mabel Park SHS

The researcher's visit focused on the POWER program and the school's move towards more vocational learning and employment pathways.

POWER
The POWER program - Parents Overcoming Work and Education Restrictions – is a school-based program for pregnant and parenting people. It won the 2003 Education Queensland Showcase for Excellence Award. The program offers:

- On-site child care;
- Individually tailored timetables, achievement plans and career pathways;
- Peer support and a friendly safe area for parents and their children;
- Parenting, life skills and personal health advice;
- Referral to community agencies and financial assistance.

The POWER Support Team consists of staff with qualifications and experience in Youth and Social Work, Women's Health, Conflict resolution and Career Transition. POWER was in place before ETRF occurred, but it is now assisting young parents to remain in schooling through the extended compulsory period. 28 young people are currently enrolled, all mothers. The program is funded by FaCS for three years.

> *I've been to four high schools. Here, I get more support here from teachers and other kids. It's not a shame to have a kid; you can feel proud of your baby and still be a student-learner*: Young mother aged 17.

> *I get tired, having the baby awake at nights, but there are people here to help you. I want to do nursing*: Young mother aged 16.

> *I dropped out of school, hung around and got pregnant. Sometimes, school's just not your thing. Mostly, schools are bothered about the small things. It's all about conforming. Here, they say: 'you're here and you're learning and that's enough'*: Young mother aged 18

Destination data on 37 young mothers from 2005 indicate that approximately half either returned for Year 12, graduated and enrolled in TAFE, moved to another high school for Year 12, or gained employment. The other POWER participants either moved location with their family, or withdrew for pregnancy and/or post-birth health issues.

Strengths and issues
The education level of a child's mother has long been demonstrated to be connected to higher learning outcomes for their children. The POWER program, by increasing the educational attainment level of parents, especially mothers, is clearly contributing to improved life chances for children.

Premature birth, low birth weight and low nutrition are risk factors associated with poor life trajectories. A number of the babies in the POWER program faced these prognoses. Staff commented about how relatively healthy the babies and toddlers in

the crèche were, now that their parents had learned about infant health, growth and development and were looking after themselves and their babies better.

Keeping a young parent attached, however minimally, to education is likely to get them involved in further education and to reduce the number of further pregnancies.

Young people interviewed stated that they were amazed at the tangible care and commitment by staff associated with POWER and very much appreciated individual help such as transport to the school and centre. Knowing that there are adults who care and who will go out of their way top help you, builds young people's trust and their belief in themselves and in others.

The appointment of a program coordinator, who integrates programs and services, checks attendance at classes and monitors students' interactions with their child, is a big school investment, but without it, the success of the program would be in jeopardy. Uncertainty of funding plagues many of these programs and must distract from the main game of quality provision.

Recurring pregnancies among the girls are a concern. There is significant evidence that having one child does not automatically limit life chances for young women, but that the spiral into poverty and associated socially detrimental patterns increases with each subsequent birth.

Many young parents still 'slip through the net', although the school advertises in the Logan News, at Centrelink, in Job Network agencies and in the shopping centre.

Curriculum review
In a Senior Schooling Curriculum Review conducted in 2005, parents, students, teachers and the community overwhelmingly recommended (80 percent) that the school implement 'more hands on/practical' subjects. By this, respondents appear to mean work-related curriculum and active teaching and learning strategies.

> *Mabel Park has always been into School-based Traineeships and Apprenticeships. This now comprises 25% of the curriculum and it will keep on increasing. We're also trialling different models of school-work and-training. Vocational orientation appears to be motivational for these students. This does mean new roles for staff such as Guidance Officers and Pastoral Care teachers and places stress on school personnel resources*: School Principal.

That review recommended:

- Introduce Certificate 11 in Hospitality, Sport and Recreation, Aged Care and Music and Visual Arts;
- Introduce Dance and Film and Television;
- Provide nationally recognised short courses in Literacy and Numeracy'
- Make Structured Work Placement compulsory if students are doing one or more VET subjects;
- Develop more school-training-work mixes e.g. TAFE, University, paid work;
- Introduce Certificate 1 courses in year 10;

- Introduce Year 10s to the language and assessment requirements of Years 11 and 12;
- Try flexible timetables, starting earlier or finishing late according to subject requirements;
- Consider the value and give credits for voluntary work and community service.

Alternative provision off campus
'The Shed' is a facility run by the YMCA in Slacks Creek with Commonwealth infrastructure funding. The Principal notes that:

> *It was becoming a repository for disaffected students and the school was taking insufficient responsibility .... Now, the school has recognised how programs at the Shed can contribute to student learning and well being, and accepted its obligation to its students based there; now three staff from the school work between the campuses.*

A Deputy with Year 8/9 responsibility oversights the student program at the Shed. (for more detail on the Shed programs is provided later in this report.) Students range from age 12-17 years. There are 15 students there from Mabel Park this year. The future for them may be to training, the work place, or back to schools:

> *The Shed is a realistic alternative to litigation for non-attendance, or expulsion. The only way to re-engage students is to focus on their needs*: Deputy Principal.

Mabel Park SHS and the Shed are in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise their partnership.

Strengths and issues
As noted above, vocational programs give many students a sense of purpose in learning and keep them coming to school. Having clear life goals is also some protection against getting involved in negative and socially destructive behaviour patterns.

ETRF, the changing student clientele and school attempts to increase learning relevance clearly call for new pedagogies and relationships between staff and students. The teaching requirements of vocational courses, where they are to be provided on a school site, implies the need for staff training and industry experience.

Managing students at different learning sites off campus, such as the Shed and in Structured Work Placement, means additional responsibility and new roles for existing staff. Staffing needs to be very flexible and suitable preparation and support for these staff seems essential.

The school is trying to provide course entry across year levels to meet student real needs and their mix of competence. It would seem that 'the system' may not be quite ready for this. For example, students are only eligible for some certificate courses at Year 12, but could benefit from them earlier; 'marking the class roll becomes a nightmare' with students learning across campuses.

There is a risk of the school being labelled 'a technical school' and losing academic students to other settings. There is some evidence of 'upwardly mobile parents' moving their children after Year 10, losing a critical mass of capable students and empowered parents.

There are questions about cultural relevance in the curriculum. Adding music and dance from different cultures is beneficial, but does not necessarily connect students' 'funds of knowledge' from community and culture to everyday learning. Bilingualism can be utilised as an asset.

Woodridge SHS

Interviews with staff and students highlighted the school's support systems and special units, the behaviour management program, a trial Career Advancement Program, an Indigenous Camp and the increasing range of vocational and workplace learning options.

Indigenous Camp
An Indigenous Camp is conducted for three days per year, to build strength in culture. There are 'get to know you/get to know yourself' activities, aimed at developing personal, social and cultural identity. The Indigenous organisers of the Camp bring mainstream teachers in to build relationships and cultural knowledge. These are teachers who work frequently with Indigenous students; some they get along well with, others they feel have not understood them and their culture.

> *It's been highly effective; it's sensitized staff and connected them to students they might normally reject as troublemakers. It's the first time culture has been recognised as an element in students' personal or learning lives*: Indigenous Liaison Officer.

There was an Indigenous Rugby Day, with friendly Touch Footy played against community members. Students made banners with health messages around issues such as the harmful effects of smoking.

Career Advancement Program
Like other schools in the district, Woodridge SHS is experimenting with various strategies to re-engage at risk youth. It trialled a Career Advancement Program in 2005, involving boys who were regarded as 'high risk'; 15 boys, the majority of whom were Pacific Islanders, 'became highly engaged, with subsequent minimisation of behaviour problems'. It involved three days per week intensive Literacy & Numeracy, incorporating Thinking Skills. The other two days involved Structured Workplace Learning with the option of going on to a school-based traineeship or apprenticeship as the year progressed. The Principal reflected that:

> *The program was not as successful as we hoped because: students were 'less work ready than presumed'; there were also problems in staffing the initiative: 'you need a dedicated, specialised staff to run those programs and manage those kids'.*

Vocational programs
There is an increasing variety in vocational subjects including VET, which used to commence at Years 11 or 12. The school has chosen to identify itself as 'an enterprise school.' Hence, enterprise education has been embedded across all aspects of the school curriculum both in middle and senior schools. Tourism, Retail & Computer Assisted Design subjects are part of the curriculum from Year 10.

The 'vocational enrolment' is now 53 percent of the senior students. The number of traineeships & apprenticeships has increased three times over the past two years. The school has actively promoted these. Apprenticeships still tend to be into traditional trades such as hairdressing, mechanics and engineering. The Deputy Principal

commented that: 'the shift is that apprenticeships are now viewed with less stigma/more regard':

> *My goal is to become a Plumber. I'm living with mum. She's pleased about my goals. Now, I'm passing everything at school; I changed to Vet about half way through last year and it's just the right path. I'll have a work placement later. We had a Careers Expo and that helped me to choose plumbing*: Student, male aged 16.

> *I'm interested in the Construction industry, looking for an Apprenticeship. I'm doing Building, Construction & Furnishing. My school experience has been pretty easy going; I reckon if things did go wrong for me in my personal life, I'd get heaps of help and support here*: Student, male aged 15.

> *I want to be a visual artist; they have good arts courses here; I'm very proud of all my art work; I get positive feedback from teachers and my family*: Student, male aged 16.

Since the end of 2002, the Year 12 graduating cohorts have been monitored in relation to their 'learning or earning' destinations:

There have been some fluctuations: the 2003-2004 exiting student unemployment rate dropped from 22 percent to 12 percent, for example, but rose again in 2004-2005 to 27 percent. There is a slight, but encouraging trend towards Year 12 graduates returning to school – presumably to strengthen their employability prospects. The 30 percent applying for University or TAFE remains fairly constant, with 60-70 percent taking very vocational learning pathways at those institutions.

School ethos
In terms of ETRF, Woodbridge SHS has made a significant staffing investment to manage both the academic stream and career pathways and VET. It has created a 'one stop shop', with a career agency on site and appointed two Middle Schooling Heads of Department.

The Principal and a Deputy Principal explained the school's strategies:

> *If you get it right there in managing behaviour and curriculum, it pays off later. The curriculum framework for the Middle School is focused on developing positive learning relationships and learning how to learn. The Integrated Studies program incorporates the four core areas of English, Maths, Science and Social Science. This may have impacted negatively on student outcomes in terms of the Key Learning Areas, but contextualised learning is more purposeful for students.*

> *Kids here live with very great issues – poverty, family crises etc. People say 'they're resilient;' I prefer the term 'malleable', resilience takes longer. Individual distance travelled in learning outcomes should be the yard stick, not comparisons across the cohort.*

The school has been working hard on relations with parents and the community. Relationships with parents are improving; now up to 60% of parents are in touch with the school and gradually, enrolment is growing.

> *Pacific Island parents generally 'hand over their kids to the system' and expect the school to get on with it. They're hard to get to the school, but we persist and it's worth* it: School Principal.

There appears to be a divide between public perception of the school and the reality. Staff, students and parents associated with the school, value it highly and this was born out recently by a hugely well-attended reunion; there's immense pride in ex-pupils of the school. However, the Press remains poor, partly tainted by overall negativity about 'Logan'. In interviews, students supported the contention that a school's reputation is often a poor measure of its worth:

> *I've been here since Grade 8 and at first I was 'apprehensive of the school'. 'I've come to love the school' (to much laughter and applause). I've got lots of friends, built relationships. I'd heard about fights, drugs, and big tough bullies. I came with only a few friends, but there really wasn't any of that; I just jumped in by myself*: Student, male aged 16.

Strengths and issues
Seven students interviewed were from Years 10, 11 and 12 and included a mix of learning abilities and cultural backgrounds. All were candid about their behaviours and positive about how the school had helped them through tough times.

> *I feel happy & safe; it hasn't always been like this. When I was growing up and going through changes*: Student, male aged 16.

> *As I grew up, it's got better; I don't get bad influences so much. My social group has changed; that's how I changed*: Student, female aged 15.

All students in the group were explicitly knowledgeable about both the exact procedures following a complaint or incident relating to behaviour, being impressed by the use of witnesses and counselling of both parties before school return. Penalties vary according to significance – e.g. smoking might just incur a 're-education program'. The idea of 'the Woodridge way' appears to have been instilled as an agreed code of conduct.

> *Some kids wouldn't agree, but most kids know the rules and they're printed in the school diary*: Student, female aged 17.

> *I left my last school because of bullying; I reported it, but I felt that the school didn't do enough about it. Here, they'd take more action; there's Zero Tolerance here and an anti-bullying program*: Student, male aged 15

> *It's working a) because people act on complaints; b) because you'd be out on your ear; and c) because they've all got more respect for each other. The program does this*: Student, female aged 16

Students commented spontaneously about how friendly and easy going most teachers are and about open access to the Principal. They love the breakfast program and like the way most staff will just 'come up and ask how you're doing; they remember what's been going on for you.'

They also noted that some teachers 'don't react early enough to misbehaviour, so 'it escalates'. This contrasts with students in other settings who complained about teacher over-reaction. It makes the point about the tensions schools struggle with in keeping the place safe and productive while attempting to accommodate students with serious issues and problems.

Marsden SHS

The visit included interviews with three groups of students, 16 students in total from Years 10, 11 and 12. The school highlighted four Special Programs:

- Personal Rejuvenation
- Guardian Angel
- E Block Study Centre
- Café Beanie

The Personal Rejuvenation program targets students in Years 9 and 10 who are currently disengaged from learning, or at risk of becoming disengaged prior to entering Senior Schooling. A maximum of 20 students attends the program for a period of 40 weeks. During project sessions the staff-student ratio is maintained at 1:5. Year 11 students act as Mentors, on a 1:4 basis. There is an emphasis on personal development and behaviour change, a focus on hands-on, practical activities in a variety of learning environments – Eagleby Learning Centre, Logan TAFE and workshop locations – and students interact with a range of educators.

V is a product of the Personal Renovation Program. His Learning Support teacher says that in Year 9, he was 'obnoxious, rude and suspended'. Two teachers in particular believed in his leadership potential and worked especially hard on building relationships with him. Through the program, he took courses at Eagleby and did well at woodwork. His general subject marks are all up, despite some very difficult life circumstances with which he's dealing.

> *I used to hate teachers until I got to know some. A teacher can turn kids around. They just have good personal qualities and they're approachable. They don't attack you personally; they fix the behaviours, but still treat you with respect. The best teachers are fun. When a teacher can make you laugh, you want to be at school*: Student, male aged 15.

Guardian Angel is an informal strategy in which teachers and aides keep in touch with particular students, check how they're going and act as counsellors to get kids back on track. Those involved would like the strategy to have more space, profile and resources in the overall school program.

E Block was set up to assist students who were assessed in primary and early secondary school as having particular learning needs. Most of these students are in regular classrooms, but are withdrawn for specific programs, such as social or work skills, functional literacy and/or numeracy. E Block has been created as a Study Centre with two full time Learning Support teachers. It is trying to change its image from a 'Special Education Centre' to a Student Support Centre where anyone can get help.

An extensive interview was conducted with teacher aides who assist students with basic skills required for learning. They explained that they work both in E Block and across the board. Their job is to assist students do the work in class, either by being there with them, or helping them in a withdrawal system, maintaining the connection

to the work going on in class. Aides assist particularly with English Communications and Maths for Living for Year 10. They commented that:

> *Literacy and numeracy present massive problems with more and more kids coming into secondary with totally inadequate skills in these areas and in social skills. We wonder if there's sufficient support for students from P-3. By Year 3, it's too late. Communication between the levels of schooling is excellent. 'We know who the kids are, it's just too hard to fix at year 8.'*

The Learning Support teachers withdraw targeted students for 'Tutorials' in Years 9,10 and 11 in small groups for work that also mirrors classroom work.

There is a Reader-Writer service which supports students taking tests. Aides don't 'crib' for the student, but help them to understand the test questions.
The system is clear and kids know who, where and when they can seek help.

Café Beanie is an onsite café where Special Needs students prepare and serve the menu. Staff purchase meals there once a week and the students are gaining success in work placement and subsequent training opportunities. Students at the café are very proud of their work and operate in a very mature and responsible way. Café Beanie hosted the Forum for visiting students and visitors were impressed by the professional approach of the catering and serving students.

Strengths and issues
As with other schools in the district, Marsden SHS is very aware of the needs of its student clientele and is making strenuous efforts to give them the best learning and life chances. The investment in special programs and services is enormous and reflects the school's obvious commitment.

Relationships between students at interviews and between them and attending teachers and aides were excellent.

Students are certainly positive about E Block and the extra teacher aide support in class and with assessment tasks. Y, for example, was placed in Reading Workshop at Year 8 when she'd been identified at primary level as having literacy difficulties. She was put into a Direct Instruction program and, initially, was unhappy because she felt singled out and had to drop favourite subjects. On the pre-test, she scored 34 percent, at the end, she scored 96 percent. She's now an advocate for the program, giving talks to younger students.

> *It's about participation. What you get out is what you put in. I want to do Journalism. How could I do that if I still had literacy problems? I'm lucky I've got good parents who supported the school putting me in the program*: Student, female aged 16.

It is imperative that strong links are maintained between the special programs and the mainstream program. There are obvious risks of stigmatisation and the development of two streams of students and curriculum. Students become very attached to staff and structures in special settings and there is a literature that suggests there may be

dangers of 'over accommodation' which make re-entry to the less forgiving world of the mainstream very difficult.

Many school subjects received positive reports from students, including English and Maths in their new, functional guises. Sport/Rec., Manual Arts, Hospitality and Arts were popular 'because you get to do stuff and you don't have to always get the right answer'. Some subjects such as Early Childhood Studies were deemed 'over theoretical' by students, who said they enjoyed visits to child care centres, but the course did 'not relate enough to the real job'.

Learning Support teachers and aides expressed the view that alternative programs and pathways need a bigger space and profile: 'we should build on student strengths.' For example, a student who has shown an aptitude for boat building can only visit that work site for a short time each week. Much of his time is spent travelling. He could gain more by being 'on the job' for an extended period, building his self esteem and motivation, which could flow on to other learning.

Kingston College

Discussion at the research visit focused on alternative pathways and programs, including School-based Traineeships, Apprenticeships and part time TAFE enrolment. The seven students spoke about the support systems available at the college and their feelings towards school, teachers and learning. Their comments mirrored those of students at other school sites that have already been reported.

Strengths and issues
There is an active Student Council of 10 Senior Leaders and four delegates from each year level meets regularly throughout the year. The interview group appreciated having an avenue for all students to have a say in decision making.

School-based Traineeships were well received. One student has a traineeship in IT Level 111 and he 'trouble shoots' technology problems on campus one day per week:

> *I had to drop some subjects to do this because of the timetable and I miss some of them. But, I'm taking English, Maths B, Physics, Information Processing, Technology and Legal Studies. I think it's given me a good grounding for my future*: Student, male aged 16.

Students were well aware of the college systems for student welfare and support, but suggest that they 'wouldn't always go to them because you'd be embarrassed because all the teachers know you and you might get labelled as a problem kid.'

They enjoyed the relatively small size of the college however and appreciated the efforts the school makes to meet their curriculum choices – even if it means making a class of five who want to do Chemistry.

> *It feels like a family and it gains from the negative reputation of some other local schools*: Student, female aged 16.

They were realistic and thoughtful about student-teacher relations, remarking that 'some teachers yell at you and that doesn't help, but sometimes students deserve it; it needs patience on both sides.'

The non-school sites in the study comprised:

- Centre Education Programme
- Boystown
- The Spot
- The Shed
- Centre for Continuing Secondary Education (CCSE)
- Logan Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE)

Centre Education Programme

The Centre was established 18 years ago to 'provide young people alienated from mainstream education with a place to re-engage with learning'. It operates on Christian principles and a social inclusion framework.

The current student cohort, aged from 13-18 years of age, is engaged with Middle and Senior schooling. The Senior Phase is a recent addition 'because there were problems in the transition for students back into the mainstream'.

The Principal prefers to describe the Centre as 'flexible schooling' because he believes that 'alternative education' has other connotations, including 'home schooling'. The Logan-Albert-Beaudesert District Executive Director regards it as 'a school'.

One of the features of Centre Education, which distinguishes it from most school structures, is that students are grouped not by grade, but by learning needs. For example, a student may be 16 and operating at Level 2 in Literacy and Level 4 in Maths. Their program of learning will therefore be individually planned.

Two teachers and eight students aged from 14-18 were interviewed. Student discussion focused on their reasons for leaving 'traditional schooling' and their views on the flexible learning options at the Centre:

> *I was getting into fights, drugs, suspended; mixed up with the wrong crowd. I chose to move down here. I own my decisions now. My violence doesn't happen now. I'm living with my dad. He'd beat the living daylights out of me(sic). I've had Counselling (separate from the Centre) and it's good to have someone to listen to you*: Student, male aged 14.

> *They had too many rules. The teachers here are closer to the students (class size is 10-15); they're more understanding*: Student, female aged 15.

> Asked 'why make the effort of coming to school? *all students replied 'because you need a better education for the future.' 'You'd get bored at home anyway; at least here you can be with your friends. The FOOD here is brilliant – pizza, spaghetti bol.; it's all home cooked; the best meal for the week*: Students, collective response.*

Students are rostered in the kitchen and they love it. *'It's good to be trusted and it looks good on your resume'*: Student, male aged 15

I came from an alternative school'; I was kicked out for violence. I've learnt to control my anger, which is better for life: Student, male aged 17.

I was expelled for fighting and talking back. (She admits it took two years of this behaviour before they excluded her and they were pretty patient). It was mainly one teacher who couldn't stand me. I got counselling from The Spot, and it helped, but I was expelled from there anyway: Student, female aged 16.

J felt picked on by the teachers and other students, the work was too hard and there wasn't enough support. *I needed help with literacy skills and found all subjects too hard because of that. The girls called me a beached whale and made sure I was out of everything*: Student, female aged 16.

Strengths and issues
Class size and the close relationship between staff and students are obvious strengths of the program at the Centre. Students are very relaxed with staff and interactions indicate minimum power differential.

The fact that this seems like an adult working environment where turning up and engaging with learning are up to you; that uniforms do not enter the equation and that there is considerable licence with students' language use removes what students and staff regard as the 'trivial reasons' for disciplinary action in schools.

The student-student social dynamics differ from those in schools in part because of the small size of the overall student cohort. There appear to be fewer sub-cultures and students generally mix across 'culture' quite simply because there may only be a couple of young people of your age and gender present one any one day.

However, there appears to be an overall 'Centre culture' which can exclude some students:

> *I know it sounds funny, but I think I'm too nice to fit in here. I've done some crime – car stealing and that – and I have friends in Juvenile Detention. But I think I was just going through a rebel phase and I'm wary about making friends here because people are jealous if you can do things they can't and you're not off the show like some of them. There's a risk of bad influences when so many damaged kids come together*: Student, female aged 17.

A particular kind of teacher is required to work successfully with students who have become anti-school. Teachers who are compassionate, good humoured, accepting of difference, resilient in the face of conflict and who have a repertoire of teaching strategies to engage disengaged youth, would seem essential. The potential for 'burn out' seems high.

BoysTown

'BoysTown is an incorporated company managed by a board of directors. BoysTown is inspired by the ethos of the De La Salle Brothers. Services are delivered to anyone in need. BoysTown programmes seek to socially reconnect children and young people with their families and community. The services are solution focussed and are designed to build on the resilience possessed by the children and young people'. (www.boystown.com.au)

Initially created to provide residential services to boys in State Care, BoysTown began delivering 'welfare through training and employment', in the 1960s.

The Programs Coordinator says that BoysTown 'caters for the most marginalised young people' aged 15-17 years. Through its various sites, BoysTown provides:

- Intensive welfare support
- Individual case management
- Individual mentoring
- Learning Choices
- School-to-work transition &
- Employment assistance

Plans are in progress to develop individual mentoring programs which will provide a skilled coach to support young people in achieving their personal goals. Mentors will be trained and matched with young people. Community mentors – retirees and members of the business community – will commit to a minimum of 2 hours per week for a year.

The District Youth Achievement Plan recognises that young people in Logan are in sore need of adults they can look up to and learn from, and the mentoring program has the potential to be one of the most informing strategies from the BoysTown mode of operation.

Learning Choices was developed in Redlands in Brisbane as one of a number of enterprise education models for high-risk 12-14 year olds. Learning Choices includes *Fresh Start* that provides alternative learning off school campus for Year 8 and Year 9 students at Wynnum. These programs will provide models and strategies that re-engage at risk young people in learning and productive life pathways.

School-to-work transition programs include *Get Set for Work* (GSFW). GSFW is funded by the Queensland Department of Employment and Training under ETRF to provide young people aged 15-17 years with pathways to employment or re-entry to education and/or training. GSFW is seen as a 'safety net' for high risk students after other learning options have been explored. BoysTown is a large provider of GSFW, assisting 100 young people in 2005 through the program.

Another innovative feature of BoysTown is that its commercial enterprises offer 'real', on-the-job training. Employment assistance involves work placement in one of these enterprises, as well as job search and customised youth job placement. Enterprises include fencing, car washing, furniture removals and landscaping. BoysTown tenders for mainstream contracts. As the Programs Coordinator noted: *It's*

a balancing act: providing good work role models, teaching young people to work on the job, taking their extreme needs into account – AND delivering a quality product.

Staff explained that young people at BoysTown have drug & alcohol dependencies, anger management problems and serious health and lifestyle issues. BoysTown conducts counselling and workshops in house and refers on where clinical intervention is called for. They try to integrate services as much as possible. Coordination is a serious challenge, both of the range of services and of a series of interventions over time.

For programs which involve 12-14 year olds, the aim is 'to give them a rest from school, place them in small groups, build some pride in achievement and expose them to a different role model. For 15-17 year olds, the best outcomes are employment and/or training. The goal remains to re-engage.

The centre has to take some care with the mix coming in from particular school campuses: You can get tribalism if there are too many from one school, says one programs coordinator.

There are very few rules**:** no drugs, no violence, students must participate.

> *Staff persevere and therefore there are very few exclusions and then only for violence. We do use Codes of behaviour and suspension, but essentially, 'the focus is on an activity based service where it's fun to be and the kids become more responsible'*: Teacher.

Student interviews
As this was a non-school campus, interview questions focused on 'why students had left their previous schools and what the differences are here':

> *I didn't want to come here; thought it was like Scouts; I thought it was a gay club because of the name; I thought it would be scary, like a detention centre. Now, I like work experience and learning about tools; the learning feels useful*: Student, female aged 16.

> *Basically, I get on here with staff & kids. The rules are generally fair here. I like hands on, not listening; you can always get help from teachers here*: Student, female, aged 15.

> *I thought it was all bad people here, and so did my parents, but they sent me here because we didn't know what else to do. I've been to four high schools. It's ok*: Student, male aged 15.

> *I heard from other kids that people here are kind and they are. It's better than home or normal school. I get to do construction stuff*: Student, male aged 15.

> *I came because my cousin was here. I heard about learning trades and crafts and stuff. I knew it was directed towards work, which I liked. I want to do Child Care at TAFE, so I know I'll need literacy & numeracy. My family are pleased, though I'm not at home*: Student, female aged 17.

My previous schools were 'strict'. They worried so much about uniforms they even got upset if your socks didn't match. That's crazy.
Some teachers there cared, but lots argued with you and got angry. They picked on you for little things like talking. Some were 'cool', patient and relaxed; they were ok. I got on fine with the other kids: Student, male aged 15.

Yes, support was available at my other schools, but it didn't help. I could get help with work, but it was never enough. I'd just start to learn something and if I hit a problem, I was sunk again.
It was better in primary. I felt I could get help there. Secondary just didn't work for me, so I dropped out. Especially SOSE – I hated SOSE! Student, male aged 16.

You can like the teacher, but not the subject. It only works if you like both. The content of subjects like Science and SOSE just didn't seem relevant to life: Student, female aged 16.

Strengths and issues
The BoysTown mission is an obvious strength. A total commitment to young people and to changing their lives for the better is apparent in every strategy and in the pervasive discourse.

Boystown, as with other 'last chance' options operating in Queensland, fulfils an essential service for those young people who are in desperate circumstances and who face disastrous life trajectories unless intervention is successful.

Young people here face desperate living circumstances, but if they want to come, they find a way, despite transience etc. There's no doubt you have to sort out the welfare issues before they can learn. Schools can't do all this, but could get the funds and outsource the role: Programs Coordinator.

Earlier disengagement from schooling has been noted as an increasing issue. Innovative programs being piloted by organisations such as BoysTown for this age group should be closely monitored to identify features that could be incorporated into other settings. For example, staff at BoysTown commented on the obvious advantages gained from BoysTown staff teaching at the high school when students are enrolled at both campuses, as is happening at Port Pirie in South Australia. BoysTown staff also suggested moves schools could make to engage at risk students:

Schools are still focused on OPs. Attempts at innovation such as Middle Schools have been very tentative. School is still a factory production line and you're out if you don't fit in: Teacher.

The job market has changed radically. There's a generational mind shift. Kids aren't thinking about their future, especially the younger ones who are dropping out. Indigenous education programs, performing arts, entrepreneurial programs are more likely to engage than traditional pre-job learning: Teacher.

There's a constant and competing scramble for funds. This issue dogs all education providers, but appears to be a particular pressure at 'alternative sites' which do not necessarily receive recurrent funding.

There are particular pedagogies involved in 'rescuing disaffected students.' Teachers suggest that some students have 'learned helplessness'. They need help, time and constant encouragement to assume some responsibility for themselves and their own lives. Staff help them get over 'the chip on the shoulder' by working on their self esteem and explaining how 'the system may not fit them'. They work on accurate self appraisal, so kids can fix the things they can through self knowledge; young people are often, in fact, over self-critical. As a BoysTown teacher explained:

> *They've failed at school and they're highly resistant; at times, nothing is good enough for them. You have to spend time with them and adjust the program The kids have to see the immediate value of an activity.*

> *Teachers have become the ultimate 'authority figure'; you have to learn not to take it personally. If you're non-judgmental, it resolves. Changing a victim mentality may require living through conflict with them. You don't buy into the bad guy teacher position; don't react when they blow up; remain firm and respectful; start each new day afresh.*

> *We need to reframe their view of themselves, break patterns of thinking and behaviour and reform their group identity as likable, employable young adults.*

The 'curriculum' at BoysTown has the advantage over 'regular schools' in that it can be totally focused on personal improvement, life and learning skills and the world of work. While regular schools have a broader mission and clientele, there would appear to be lessons for school transformation.

The Spot

The Spot was initially a Youth Drop in Centre for 15-25 year olds. It's been operating as a transition education centre since 2005. Its clients are 15-17 year olds who need alternative pathways. The majority have family and/or school problems and are referred by schools or Youth Workers etc. They're predominantly male (60-40 percent) with a mix of cultures.

Students do Year 10 Maths & English at the Spot and return to school or move to other pathways for Years 11 & 12. The Spot negotiates flexible pathways to a structured environment. Over 65 percent of students assisted by The Spot have gained employment or entered further education or training. Returning to school however, seems much harder. Some make the transition successfully, if they have sufficient support and are sufficiently self-aware and motivated.

Those who don't return to school make other transitions – Get Set for Work e.g. is delivered by the SPOT and focuses on developing work skills and young people undertaking training.

> *The changing job market is impacting on young people from at least year 10. Although many of them come from families with long term unemployment, generally, if they're here, they're self motivated and they enjoy the independent style of the learning environment. Family support is very limited generally*: Teacher, the Spot.

The learning program involves three classes, for 2 hours per day, four days per week. Students work independently; goal setting is a strong aspect of the course and it pays off.

> *The Spot is able to build capacity because there are only 7-10 students in each group. The social dynamics are different to school, with a family feeling and less competitiveness. There's more peer support and leadership and mentoring is developed and encouraged*: Teacher, the Spot.

The Spot uses its on site Youth radio station to great advantage; many of the activities are arts based. Young people develop and record raps, poetry, etc. 'It gives them a voice and links with their culture'. The Hip Hop elements – aerosol art, graffiti, DJ-ing, rapping, break dancing – are led by industry professionals and a network of local artists.

> *The creative process is inevitably skill building – collaborative, plan-ful, goal directed, product oriented. It develops a culture of enterprise*: Teacher, the Spot.

Attendance is good – over 70 percent over the four days - but the afternoon group, from 1.30-3.30pm is hard to maintain. Individual students may be moved into different groups by staff to get the group dynamics right.

> *Kids walk, ride a bike, and catch a bus to get here; it's good that it's near the shopping plaza because if they go there, they get bored and end up here*: Teacher, the Spot.

Strengths and issues
The learning environment at The Spot is characterised by:

- Flexible time schedule
- Small group size
- Engaging activities
- Relevant curriculum
- Arts based learning
- Adult learning expectations – no uniform, independent work
- A young team of teachers with whom it may be easier to relate
- A committed staff
- The combination youth worker & teacher role works; someone is always able to help with your personal stuff and kids feel safe.
- Excellent relationships with support agencies
- Rules being kept to a minimum: Participate, respect, be safe.

This intensely supportive environment faces similar issues about re-entry that other flexible sites deal with:

> *We say to students: This is a stepping stone, not your destination.', But it's hard for some to leave. Ex students drop in and many keep in touch. This is no bad thing, but they have to move into life eventually:* Executive Director, The Spot.

The Shed

The Shed was established by YMCA Brisbane to assist at risk and marginalised young people. It aims to develop industry related skills and self awareness and confidence. Most young people at the Shed are partly enrolled at school, although whether students attend regularly at both campuses may be another matter. Teaching staff at the Shed noted:

> *They can be right little Jekyll and Hydes', delightful here, abominable there. They say 'teachers here listen, not just to the first two words, but to the last two and those in between.'*

The Shed, as mentioned earlier, is moving towards a formal partnership with Mabel Park SHS, which provides teachers for Metal Arts, Literacy and Sewing/Textiles. Other courses are taken by Volunteers. The woodturning is of a particularly high quality and students are very proud of their products.

> *Usually, it's the first time they've done anything they can be proud of. Initially, schools sent kids here to be baby sat. Now the Shed is working towards RTO status, so kids can get legitimate credits for their work*: Manager, The Shed.

The Shed conducts daily de-briefing meetings at which students can air and resolve problems. Protocols apply and everyone's listened to.

U-Turn is one of the programs operating out of the Shed. U-Turn is funded by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council and the Australian Government's National Crime Prevention Program as a response to youth crime, particularly car theft. Young people are referred by Police, Probation Officers etc; they bring mates. The program offers a structured ten-week training course for young people aged between 15 and 20. Its aim is to prevent them from becoming recidivist offenders.

> *When kids start at U-Turn, they're not particularly motivated or cooperative. The course only runs for 10 weeks and it takes 3-4 to settle them in, but when they realise people are reasonable and it's fun, they turn up and lose some attitude*: U-Turn Program Coordinator.

Interviews with students
One student, aged 15 years, who is enrolled at Mabel Park and at the Shed, 3/2 days per week, explained that at the Shed she's doing auto, woodwork, and reception, welding/metal work & Arts & crafts. At Mabel Park, she's doing Year 10 Early Childhood and Retail Certificate II, English Communications and Maths A: *I prefer*

the Shed. I have more friends down here, know the teachers better and it's more relaxed and the learning's useful.I reckon it took me 'about two and a half months to change over.' I've got friends who enrolled in U-Turn and they've 'stopped thieving and they have jobs fixing cars'.

Two boys who were interviewed explained why high school 'turned them off' in this way: *Primary was all right, but secondary sucks. Science and SOSE were really boring. Why do I need to know about Gravity? I don't even turn up for Science; I visit another teacher at the school; she's ok; she listens to us.*

One of the boys admitted freely that he's 'into minor crime' such as attempting to steal cigarettes from a shop. He doesn't appear to care about being caught.

> *They'll just take me down the cop shop; I'll share a cell with other crims; we'll do some dope, then some community service.*

> *He says: 'I behave better here because I come here every week, I've got mates here and I like it, so I don't want to get chucked out.'*

A young Indigenous woman, living with her dad and siblings after a custody battle, was more positive about her learning experiences at both the Shed and at Mabel Park school. She returned to Mabel Park because she gets on with the teachers. 'They don't fuss about what doesn't matter.' She says proudly that she was the only girl in Queensland to graduate from a U-Turn Program. She gives some insights into being a young woman in a traditional male field:

> *I had some initial problems with 'the fellers' and some arguments about how they were treating me. But I get on well with people and I can sort my own problems. My brother (aged 19) did the same Auto course, but I tried not to rely on him to solve my problems*: Student, female aged 17

She is going for her licence to make travel between sites easier and to give her independence. She hopes to do Automotive at TAFE.

Strengths and issues
Chasing funds is a continual and time consuming problem. The Shed Manager and the Coordinator for the U-Turn program explained that 'funding for Case Management is needed to ensure that we keep track of kids and that they get the most out of the learning options across campuses'.

The Manager commented about differing levels of tolerance at the various learning sites students experience:

> *Staff at TAFE are not always tolerant of angry, younger kids'. Schools escalate trivia. Kids can be banned from the Shed, but it has to be serious and they can come back.*

Staff, students and volunteers all noted that the Shed works because of its obvious world relevance:

> *It's hands on, practical and purposeful. Kids can see the immediate usefulness of fixing a bike, or a car or making something beautiful with wood or clay*: Volunteer.

Volunteers are given clear protocols and advice about relating to the kids and responding to their language, attitudes and behaviour. e.g. 'foul language may simply be habitual use, not necessarily directed at you; if you correct them every time, you won't get anything done and you'll lose them.'

Centre for Continuing Secondary Education

Known locally as 'Kingston College Adult Education Centre', CCSE is an Education Queensland facility that has courses for people 15 years of age and over who wish to undertake flexible part-time or full-time studies in:

- A fast track course for Year 10 in English, Maths, Science and Computer Studies;
- A fast track Year 11 and/or Year 12 course in English Communication and/or pre-vocational Maths;
- A literacy and Numeracy course that prepares students for Year 10 covering elements of Year 8, 9 and pre-10 Maths and English.

Courses begin in January and in July with day and evening classes in designated subjects. Senior Authority subjects, such as Accounting, Ancient History, Biology, Art, Legal Studies and Physics, which are externally assessed, are also on offer.

Kingston College CSSE received funding under ETRF for 180 students aged 15-18 participating in a literacy and numeracy intervention program offering a continuum to Year 10 Certificate level courses. The additional funding is particularly used to reduce class size.

Only the Centre Coordinator was interviewed because staff and students were engaged in learning programs. The comments below are from his interview.

> *The young people come with high needs, but they come here because they want to be here.*

> *Many kids grow out of 'Special Education Units'. They realise they've got a stigma and such settings can become too protective.*

> *There's a flexible enrolment, so fragile kids can enrol anytime. Parents ring up in tears and there are referrals from Boystown, TAFE and job agencies.*

The Coordinator is an ex-principal who has a history of dealing with young people previously excluded from mainstream schooling. He explains that 'here, they're treated as adults; with no uniform; flexible hours and flexible programs' – some run internally, others are out posted. Kids have to obey the law, but things like smoking are no big deal.

They tend to meet attendance requirements and about 50 percent sit state wide exams. The other 50 percent are internally assessed. There's a trial to internally assess Literacy & Numeracy. Day classes are 60-70 percent of the student population. Night classes are mainly adult re-entry. Staff & students are on first name terms, and he explained:

> *There are very few hassles down there 'because kids taste success', many for the first time in an academic study; I think we have to keep some spring in the fence about rules; instead of zero tolerance, it's 'have another go'.*

There is a policy of not encouraging interaction between students at the College and CCSE campuses.

> *The only problems that arise grow out of too many kids from the same school, bringing the baggage here. Centre staff consciously 'stamp out small fires' and split kids who have too much history and old habits*: Coordinator, CCSE.

All staffing is casual and staff choose to come here. All are female. They like the fewer hours so they can care for children etc. 'Some have a culture shock, but there's very little staff turn over'. The Coordinator runs his own in-service as he has Guidance Officer training. There is no GO at the Centre, but a School Support teacher & Social Worker visit twice per week.

> *Staffing is on the ratio of 1:15 which is needed to succeed with these kids; it's difficult, but District Office knows the fight we're having*: Coordinator.

Very few students go back into mainstream. The Centre celebrates Graduations with fanfare and works hard to build community confidence in the Centre, the students and the learning outcomes. After Years 11 & 12, young people mainly move to TAFE or search for work.

Logan Institute of TAFE

The TAFE learning environment has traditionally catered for relatively motivated, trades-oriented adults. In recent times, TAFE has had applications from much younger school-rejecting adolescents. TAFEs are increasingly involved in school-based traineeships and apprenticeships.

As part of ETRF, the Department of Employment and Training (DET) has developed a resourcing framework for 15-17 year olds to undertake courses through TAFE, agricultural colleges and through registered training organisations that hold a User Choice contract. Under the program, tuition fees do not apply to students undertaking a subject at TAFE as part of their secondary education.

Two courses were developed centrally to deliver as part of TAFE responses to ETRF:

- Course in Skills for the Future
- Certificate 1 in Skills for the Future

These focus on personal planning and participation, budgeting and life skills, communication and cooperation, personal health, safety and security and job-readiness skills. They aim to assist young people to determine appropriate education, training or employment pathways.

> *We solve problems together and help them to settle in constructively. The kids like the structure of the course, and they can focus on learning how to learn before they're hit with academic challenges. Students come most days*: Program Director, Logan TAFE.

The delivery of these courses at Logan Institute of TAFE is funded through Get Set for Work. Most students enrolled in the Skills for the Future courses at Logan TAFE, are undertaking trades-oriented courses such as Carpentry and Plumbing at Boystown or the Spot.

Interviews for this study were conducted with the Director of the Institute, the Program Director and two staff members and with a group of students. Eight students were interviewed and they represented a diverse group aged from 15-17. They said that they had enrolled in TAFE primarily because they have been expelled from schools.

The expulsion generally related to violence on the student's part, but interviews indicated more complex underlying causes for the behaviours:

> *I started Year 11, but got expelled for spraying the teacher with a fire extinguisher and for bullying; I guess the school put up with a lot from me. I reckon I've grown up and might not react like that to kids who annoy me. The school gave me lots of help over the transition to TAFE. (He got bored at home and they gave him numbers for BoysTown & TAFE.)*: Student, male aged 16.

> *I've been to 'heaps of schools'. My family moved around a lot and the schools all had different rules. I broke the rules deliberately though*: Student, male aged 15.

> *I went to a private school and changed at year 11 to go to public. I lasted one week and dropped out. I was home for half a year when my friend told me about the Skills for the Future program. I like being treated like an adult and learning first aid and useful skills. I won't return to school because 'the students are so immature'*: Student, female aged 16.

> *I loved primary school and beginning secondary. I wasted my good qualities by trying to be a hero. I was the school clown. It was hard to stop because everyone expected me to be outrageous*: Student, male aged 15.

> *I came from overseas in primary school. I was bullied because of my accent. They did it so much; I didn't know what to do any more. I lost confidence in myself and didn't believe I could cope. They started teasing my girl friend, so I cracked it and hit one of them. At TAFE there's a bit of giggling & teasing, but no serious bullying*: Student, male aged 16

> *I had trouble with a primary principal who called me a cry baby when I'd been bashed up in the playground, so I hit him. I had a fantastic Science teacher in grade 5 though, who knew I liked to find out how things worked. He brought things from home, like old clocks for me to take apart*: Student, male 15.

Strengths and issues

TAFE benefits from many of the advantages of an adult learning environment: a staff member suggested that the attractions of TAFE are that 'you can smoke and there are no uniforms; there's no 'penitentiary system.'

On the matter of uniform, students agree:

> *It doesn't bother me that much, but I like to be an individual. They say it's to keep us safe. We could all wear the same colour, or something. They say it's to stop competition, but on free dress day, all the girls wear the same and all the boys wear the same, so we conform with each other anyway*: Student, female aged 17.

And teachers commented:

> *There aren't as many rules at TAFE. The more rules you have, the more likely they are to get broken.*

> *The small class size matters, not just because you get individual attention, but there's less friction in the group as well. 'Small is good for kids and teachers'.*

The Director issued the following caveats about younger students wanting to attend TAFE fulltime:

> *Some products of TAFE are appropriate in the way they can deliver hands on, work-related and work-embedded learning. However, TAFE teachers have been used to motivated adults with distinct pre-vocational goals and their pedagogy is not necessarily adapted to younger learners.*

> *It's fine if kids come to TAFE for specific trades courses and TAFE can offer voc-ed training for schools in stuff they're not placed to do, such as Hairdressing and Event Management. However, other trades, such as Construction, do not lend themselves to learning by school-aged students because, for example, of the mobility required to turn up at different building site locations. Hence, school-based apprenticeships/traineeships may not suit all trades.*

Competency-based teaching and learning does not suit all curriculum content, but it has the advantage of frequent, regular and specific feedback to the learner: *Here they find out what you're good at and build on it*: Student, male aged 17.

By its very nature, TAFE may not be the most suitable social environment for younger students. There are obvious risks in placing vulnerable young people

unsupervised on a campus with relatively sophisticated and life-experienced adults. The TAFE Queensland Policy (No .21 V 1) explains that:

> *...TAFE Institutes, with a mean age of students of approximately 30 years are primarily focussed on adult learning, providing an adult environment, with no out of classroom individual supervision and an adult curriculum.*

TAFE providers are, however, increasingly involved in various capacities with school-aged students. As respondents have already noted, it will be important to ensure that all staff have the teaching skills and attitudes to support younger learners.

ETRF has already led to greater community partnerships and the training-learning arrangements developing between TAFEs and schools and flexible learning centres look promising.

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Background
DSF strongly believes in providing students during the compulsory and senior phases of learning with robust, rigorous options that embrace creative pedagogy, content, and relationships capable of meeting the needs of all students.

Queensland's Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) are changing the landscape of educational provision, and redefining the obligations of young people, their parents and government as well. Legislative changes require participation in what are called compulsory and then senior 'phases of learning' until the age of 17 years. In 2006 the package of ETRF measures goes 'live' after several years of intense research and development and piloting. There are multiple objectives but the reforms are essentially intended to encourage schools to more actively engage students at risk of dropping out, discourage the phenomenon of schools pushing out low achievers or those at risk of dropping out of learning, and improve the employability of the future Queensland workforce.

The reforms are focused both on schools themselves, seen in developments such as a more open and challenging QCE, 'New Basics' teaching and learning, and Central Purchasing of 'alternative' learning places with schools or TAFE.

Other steps are more related to new forms of provision and participation alongside schooling options within the ETRF framework. These include a variety of settings under the banner of flexible learning or flexi-schools, training options available through school, TAFE and other VET providers, Certificate III apprenticeships, and the Get Set for Work program for example. A network of Positive Learning Centres is assisting schools to cope with behaviour difficulties of some students within state schools. Student assistance to choose and maintain a pathway is being provided through transition plans, youth co-ordinators and a statewide mentoring program. Professional development for teachers and practitioners is being provided online through Learning Place and in-service training. A comprehensive framework for the provision of 'alternative learning' in Queensland is being developed by DEA and is due for completion by July 2006.

Project purposes
This project is essentially about 'taking the temperature' of key stakeholders – principals, teachers and youth practitioners, and students - in the Logan area of Queensland as the legislative provisions of the ETRF come into force.

It will be in the nature of a small-scale ethnographic study of the community of educators, practitioners and students in Logan. *What's Mainstream?* will gather together stories and reflections and provide a finer level of analysis; but it also has the potential to develop into a second and more action based stage by involving students in learning how to tell their stories, and in partnership with local schools, doing this through a variety of media. The consultant will be asked to assess opportunities and next steps for such a stage once the project is underway.

The rationale for the project is that by developing a richer understanding of the perceptions, aspirations and experiences of students and practitioners, stronger baseline data will be established for local practitioners; the knowledge base of DEA policy-makers will be enhanced; and DSF will have insights to help shape its own longer-term research agenda. The project may also have implications beyond Queensland: policy-makers in other jurisdictions are keenly watching ETRF developments and this study will hopefully be of benefit to them.

Our goals are to:

- develop a better understanding of the dynamic interface between schooling and other emerging learning settings
- consider opportunities for students to enhance their story-telling and interpretive skills, and help facilitate this if appropriate
- provide information for local practitioners and central policy-makers about perceptions of the education reforms taking place
- tease out stakeholder views of the steps required to achieve the intentions and expectations of the ETRF in one local community.

The project seeks to study:

- student, practitioner, principals and teacher views about schooling, education reform and non-school pathways, and especially the dynamics between 'mainstream' provision and 'alternative' settings in schools, TAFE, and community agencies
- ideas about related issues, such as notions of risk, engagement, achievement, equivalence and so on
- the profile of students opting or being encouraged into non-school alternatives
- the extent to which education and training settings are seen to be connected, the level of collaboration and shared learning between schools and non-school pathway providers, and the nature of learning taking place in these emerging settings.

Key areas of enquiry
The consultant will seek the views of students, practitioners, principals and teachers around these research areas:

- engagement with learning and perception of settings; aspirations; potential career paths
- understanding of and responses to the ETRF reforms
- any potential for competing goals within the ETRF and management of these
- reasons why non-school learning settings or school-based 'alternatives' are being developed in Logan
- learning improvements taking place in these settings, notions of 'learning equivalence' and the primary outcomes of these settings
- the student population attending or likely to attend these settings; patterns of student movement between these settings and mainstream schools; and patterns of collaboration or non-collaboration between them.

The consultant will analyse implications for local schools, communities and the ETRF reforms of these stories and insights, and also suggest potential directions for DSF's own activities.

Methodology
The project will involve four main steps:

- data gathering: including an appropriate literature review of Australian and international sources, an examination of applicable ETRF initiatives, available statistical data, District Youth Achievement Plans and other published local material, information gathered from key informants
- fieldwork involving focus group discussions and interviews with participants and relevant Departmental officials
- consideration of opportunities for an action based stage by involving students in learning how to tell their stories through a variety of possible media
- analysis of data and dialogue with local stakeholders, DEA and DSF's Learning Choices Expo in May 2006.

DISTRICT YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT PLAN

FOR

Logan-Beenleigh

Last updated: 31 March 2004

Strategic Plan

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The ETRF package of proposed education and training reforms proposes that all young people should be "learning or earning." Trial sites will develop a District Youth Achievement Plan (DYAP) that will set local targets for participation, retention and attainment in education, training and employment programs. The DYAP is essentially a strategic planning document. It is the key mechanism by which the Logan-Beaudesert District will plan, develop, coordinate and implement the key ETRF reforms for 15 to 17 year olds in the district.

Following an extensive environmental scanning process, with contributions from across the Logan-Beaudesert Community, key issues have been identified. The strategies to address these issues will build on the valuable programs and initiatives already actively supporting young people in the district.

The DYAP will:
- Provide a common framework for action for meeting the needs of young people in the district
- Outline the objectives and priorities for young people in the local area
- Provide a summary of the key actions and strategies to improve the learning and employment opportunities for young people, including key actions and strategies in regard to:
    - Development of Senior Education and Training Plans (SETPs); and
    - Grants program initiatives (both local level and centrally driven initiatives)
- Set targets for local participation in education, training and employment
- Outline management, coordination and reporting structures for implementation of initiatives

DURATION OF AGREEMENT

This plan covers the period from July 2003 until June 2006. Progress of initiatives will be monitored and evaluated by both the originating Actions Groups and overseen on a regular basis by the Management Group.

Future trials will be informed through the monitoring and evaluation of the primary trial initiatives in which a wide range of stakeholders have agreed to participate in the support of lifelong learning for young people.

STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT

The Logan-Beaudesert District was designated as an ETRF trial area in conjunction with Gold Coast North District. Given the diversity and complexity of the Logan-Beaudesert District, two District Youth Achievement Plans were developed – one for the Logan-Beenleigh Area and one for the Jimboomba-Beaudesert corridor.

All parties to this District Youth Achievement Plan agree to the following key elements, membership and management structure (ref Membership & Management of DYAP) and commit to collectively using best endeavours to undertake the proposed work identified in this Plan.
All parties agree to:
- Confirmation of the objectives of the DYAP;
- Establishment of comprehensive communication strategies to involve all stakeholders and the broader community to work with DYAP members in achieving goals and outcomes;
- Commit to management structures;
- Commit to collectively using best endeavours to undertake the proposed work outlined in the key elements of the plan;

Commit to identified organizational accountability within the DYAP Action Group for achievement of DYAP goals.

BACKGROUND

The following section is a brief summary of the key characteristics of the Logan-Beaudesert District, with a focus on the Logan-Beenleigh area.

Data gathering was complicated as Logan City includes suburbs, such as Springwood, Rochedale, Browns Plains and Park Ridge which are not included in the Logan Beaudesert District. Principals of Windaroo Valley SHS, Park Ridge SHS, Browns Plains SHS, Springwood SHS and Rivermount College were invited to join the group of trial schools due to their close working relationship with the Logan-Beaudesert District.

The Jimboomba-Beaudesert communities worked independently on their DYAP.

To assist with comparability and consistency, in some cases postcodes were used as a basis for obtaining data.

Key Priority Issues

Analysis from the three action groups indicates that **stable accommodation, transport, placement in alternate pathways for learning and earning, and the requirement for mentors/role models** were key priority issues.

Feedback from consultations with young people indicated that **accommodation**, **transport** and **financial issues** impacted on their capacity for engagement in learning. They also noted the importance of the **mentor role**, and the requirement for more **experiential or alternative learning options**, with less classroom based activity. Some **lifeskills training and vocational education** were also seen as important. Young people also indicated their need for **individual assistance in planning** their future pathways.

Key Characteristics:
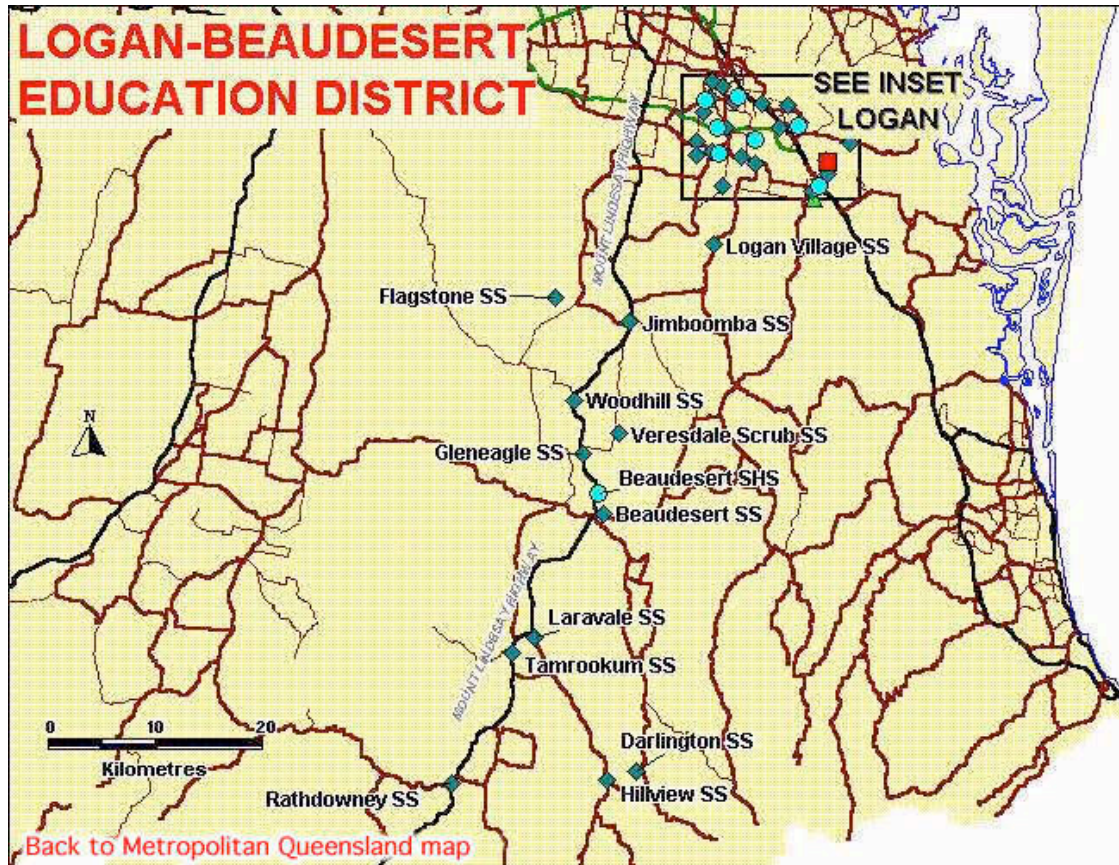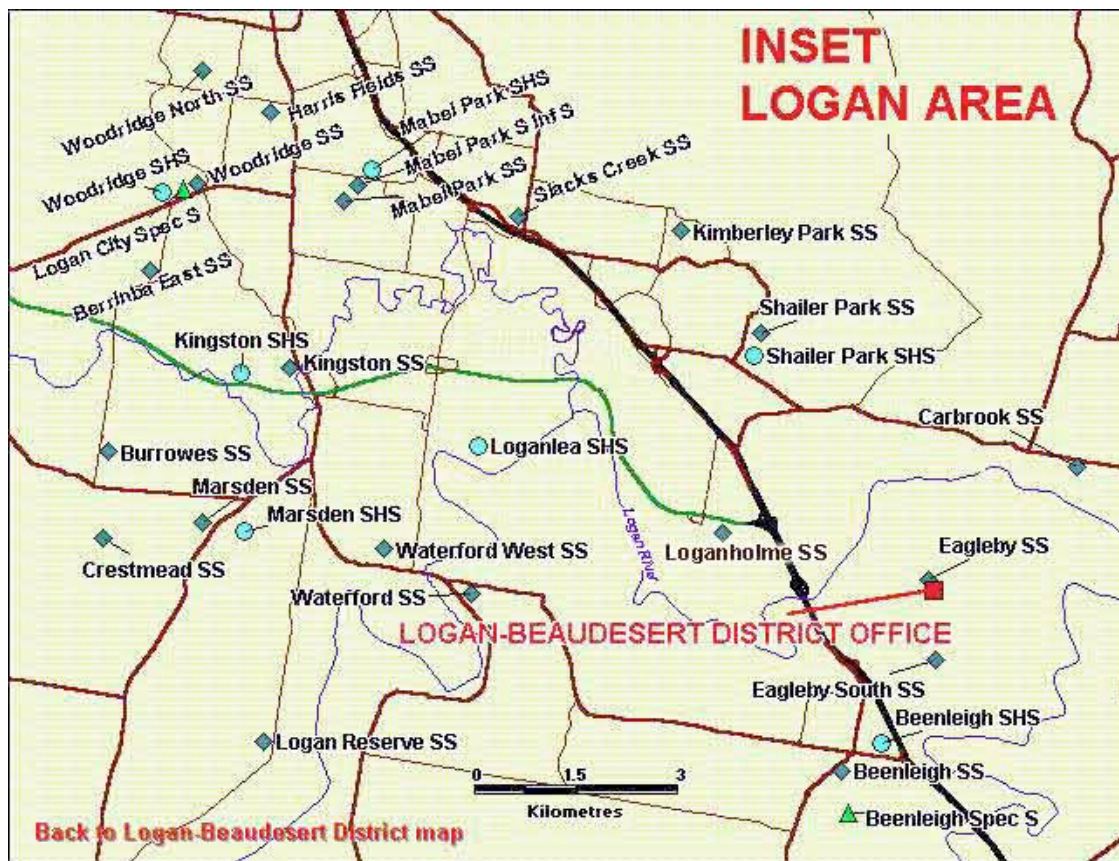### Demographics
Geographical Boundaries
- ➤ The Logan Beaudesert District comprises: 32 state primary schools; 9 non-state primary schools; 9 state high schools; 11 non-state high schools; and 2 state special schools. In total 43 state facilities and 20 non-state facilities. Two high schools have Centres for Continuing Secondary Education – Kingston College and the Eagleby Learning Centre (an annex of Beenleigh State High School).
- ➤ In July 2003, the district was servicing 24,142 students in state schools. This included 14,365 primary, 7815 secondary and 1748 preschool. As at May 2004, 1469 students were ascertained within recognised impairment categories. There are approximately 790 primary indigenous students and 405 secondary. Enrolment data will be used to track retention rates of students in years 10, 11 and 12.
- ➤ The Logan Beaudesert District (LBD) is a large district and has tremendous social and cultural diversity. This complexity is further enhanced by the fact that Logan City includes schools and agencies that are not included in the LBD district. It is acknowledged that the Logan-Beenleigh and Jimboomba-Beaudesert areas have their own identities and have developed responses unique to their clients.
- ➤ LBD data indicates a significant socio-economic disadvantage.
- ➤ Income is below State average. One impact of this is the limited capacity for many students in the district to access training, even when concessional arrangements for fees and materials are applicable.
- ➤ Transport infrastructure is high but ineffective to meet the needs of youth with regard to timetabling and destination of services.

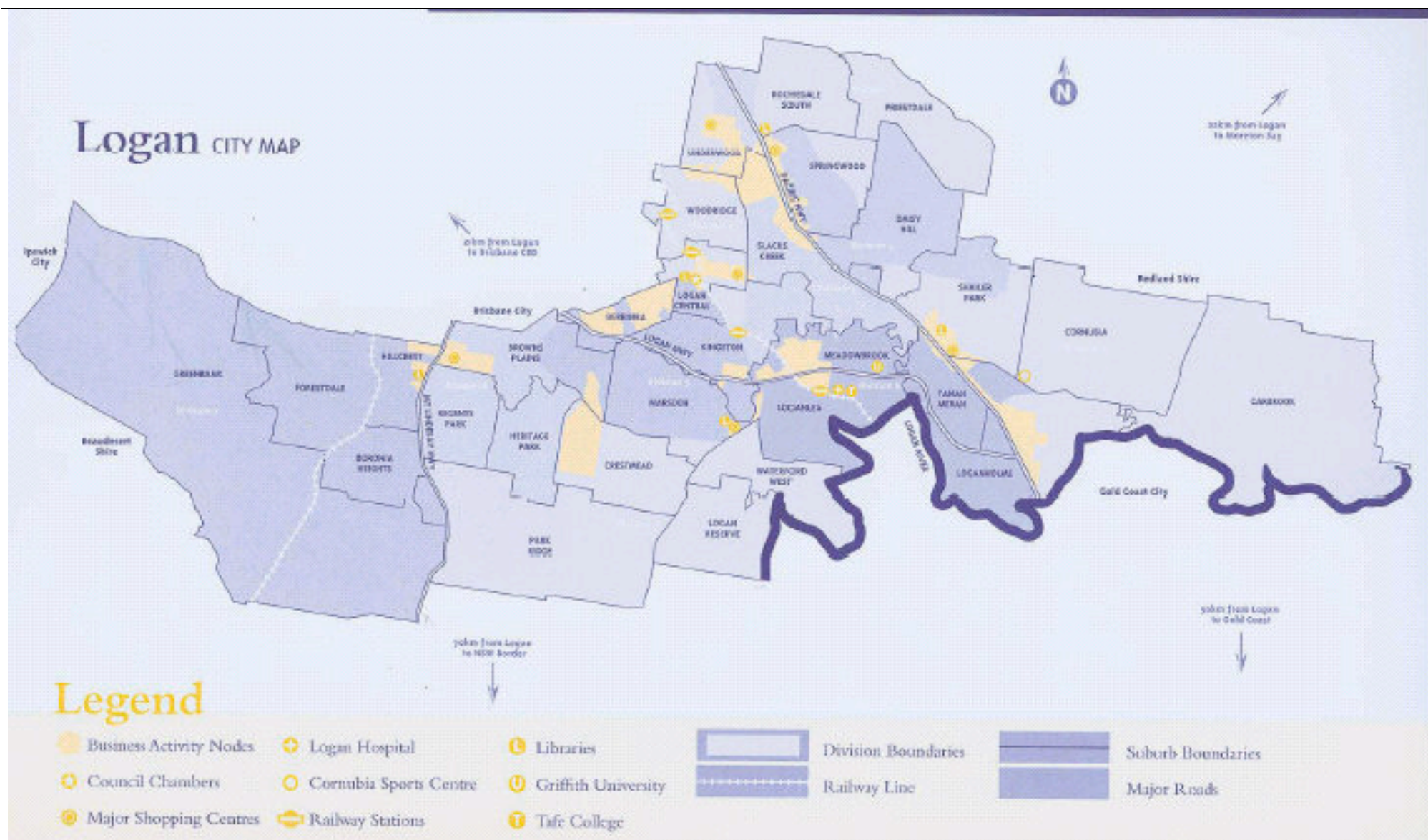**Labour Force Characteristics**
- ➤ From the 2001 census, 19.2% of employed persons were intermediate clerical, sales and service workers and 15.2% were tradespersons and related workers. 10.1% of the population of Logan was unemployed, with a further 32.2% of all persons aged 15 years and over not in the labour force. 17.7% of employed persons worked in retail trade and 17.2% worked in manufacturing.

Population Characteristics

➢ The 2001 census indicates that Logan has a high youth population, with 41.3% below the age of 24 years.

➢ Indigenous Australians accounted for 2.4% of Logan City's population in 2001. An average of 5% of the state schools' population and less than 1% of non-state schools' population are Indigenous Australians. Rivermount College is an exception, with an Indigenous population of 13.6% in their primary school.

➢ 85.6% of Logan City's population speak only English at home, while 10.6% speak another language at home (This compares with 7.1% for Queensland). The top five languages spoken at home in Logan City are Samoan (12.2% of all people speaking another language at home), Chinese (6.9%), Spanish (5.2%), Khmer (4.1%), and Tagalog/Filipino (3.9%).

➢ From the 2001 Census, 70.5% of the population of Logan City were born in Australia. The number of people born overseas is 24.9 %. The highest ranking birthplace countries of people born overseas were New Zealand (6.8%) and the United Kingdom (6.5%). Ethnic communities are well established in Logan City.

INSET
LOGAN AREA

Back to Logan-Beaudesert District map

LOGAN-BEAUDESERT
EDUCATION DISTRICT

SEE INSET
LOGAN

Back to Metropolitan Queensland map

Logan CITY MAP

Legend

Business Activity Nodes	Logan Hospital	Libraries	Division Boundaries
Council Chambers	Cornubia Sports Centre	Griffith University	Railway Line
Major Shopping Centres	Railway Stations	Tafe College	Suburb Boundaries
			Major Roads

Action Plan

ETRF OBJECTIVE 1: All young people in education, training or employment

Related ETRF outcome	DYAP priority	Initiative	Goals or Desired Outcomes	Local performance indicators
An increased number of young people successfully transition into the Senior Phase of Learning	Provision of a variety of educational pathways	Development of Senior Education and Training Plans (SETPs) for all Year 10 students SETPs help individual students plan for their futures through comprehensive mapping of their learning and career pathways. This depends on students being able to make informed decisions about their futures at the time they begin the Senior Phase of Learning, based on up-to-date information about specific prerequisites, consequences, work expectations and opportunities, and reflection on their own abilities and aspirations.	All Year 10 students in the trial area are assisted to make decisions about their future employment and training pathways.	All Year 10 students in the trial area complete their SETPs.
An increased number of young people successfully transition into the Senior Phase of Learning	• Address Middle phase of learning Issues • Refocus intervention and support programs to include the 10-14 year old age group, and to commence intervention in the primary setting	Continue exploration between Primary and Secondary schools of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting to enhance the transition of students during the middle phase of learning Development of models of productive middle phase of learning approaches through review of current transition arrangements from primary to secondary engagement	Increased professional development of teachers in both primary and secondary schools in the criticality and importance of the middle phase of schooling as a firm foundation for engagement and learning in the senior phase of learning	School planning and programs reflect appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting for students in the middle phase of schooling – particularly in years 7, 8 and 9
An increased number of young people successfully participate in a range of relevant options during the Senior Phase of Learning to facilitate their successful transition to further education, training and/or employment	Provision of a variety of educational pathways	Promotion of and participation in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and VET pathways The Employment Action Group with representation from Commonwealth, State and Local Government, employers, Group Training Organisations; employment agencies, new apprenticeship centres, schools and community organisations, is working on the development of a model to provide for more effective and efficient industry/school partnerships and the promotion of vocational education and training pathways.	Continued high-level participation in school-based apprenticeships & traineeships. Challenges/barriers to participation identified and overcome.	Level of uptake and participation in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.
An increased number of young people successfully participate in a range of relevant options during the	Focus on literacy and numeracy as a "passport" to lifelong learning	Schools and other organizations to continue to focus on literacy and numeracy as critical components of all education and training programs	Enhanced knowledge and skills of teaching and other school staff More effective pedagogy and practice	School data reflects improved performance across all state schools

Senior Phase of Learning to facilitate their successful transition to further education, training and/or employment		Logan Beaudesert has identified Numeracy as one of the highest priorities for professional development for 2004 and beyond. Strategies to be developed to enhance the performance of all students in numeracy at all levels	in the teaching of numeracy	
An increased number of young people successfully participate in a range of relevant options during the Senior Phase of Learning to facilitate their successful transition to further education, training and/or employment	Continue and enhance current support mechanisms and alternative program options through senior schooling	**Articulation:** Continue to build relationships and alliances with Griffith University to provide more opportunities for students in Logan Beenleigh high schools to: • Undertake tertiary studies in conjunction with and in addition to senior phase of learning • Establish articulation pathways • Investigate, with Griffith University, the issues impacting on first year students which often result in their withdrawal to determine strategies which may be implemented during the senior phase of learning to better prepare young people for tertiary studies	Students may: accelerate their learning in the senior phase to maximize their potential experience a smoother transition from the senior phase to the tertiary phase of learning	Increased numbers of students undertaking tertiary studies in conjunction with and in addition to the senior phase of learning Reduced rate of withdrawal of first year students from tertiary programs
An increased number of young people successfully transition into the Senior Phase of Learning	Continue and enhance current support mechanisms and alternative program options through senior schooling	**Youth Support Coordinators:** The Youth Support Coordinator (YSC) Initiative was established in July 1997 as a pilot program in response to a growing body of evidence, which indicated the need for collaboration between schools and community services in addressing issues of student homelessness and early school leaving. YSC's activities were negotiated as part of the District Youth Achievement Plans to provide a key linkage between schools/training sector and the community sector.	In Logan-Beaudesert, four YSCs work collaboratively within the school community, with training providers and community support organisations to respond to issues presented by young people which might prevent them from successfully transiting into or completing their Senior Phase of Learning.	A number of young people are supported to remain engaged in learning and earning. Relationships established between YSCs, school communities and training and support agencies.

ETRF OBJECTIVE 2: Learning communities that provide new opportunities for students

Related ETRF outcome	DYAP priority	Initiative	Goals or Desired Outcomes	Local performance indicators
Community partnerships enable better coordination of programs and services for young people	• More communication and co-operation between agencies and organisations • Duplication of services and resources reduced to make the best use of resources • Further development of interagency links	• Action Groups to continue to collaboratively use their resources for coordination of programs and services for young people • Southern Gateway Regional Managers' Forum continues to identify issues for collaboration and partnerships • Logan Employment Task Force has also linked its activities to key ETRF priorities in its Action Plan	To maximise the use of available resources to assist young people to identify and achieve their goals for learning and earning.	Continued partnerships/regular meetings of the logan-Beenleigh Action Groups.
More options, support and flexibility for young people, including those at risk of disengaging	Provision of a variety of educational pathways	**Pathways:** initiative continues engagement in regular consultation and partnerships between local schools and Logan TAFE and other private providers	Identify facilities that can be shared. Establish accessible pathways for young people, including school students, to access TAFE courses and training	A number of specific facilities shared to prevent replication and improve efficiency of delivery Significant increase in no of students accessing courses through Logan TAFE and with other providers
More options, support and flexibility for young people, including those at risk of disengaging	Refocus intervention and support programs to include the 10-14 year old age group, and to commence intervention in the primary setting	**Chronic Absenteeism:** Youth Engagement Officer has been provided through funding from Community Renewal Program (Department of Housing) to work with students identified by Woodridge, Mabel Park, Kingston and Loganlea High Schools as being 'at risk' due to chronic absenteeism – to identify contributing causal factors and to work with available community and other services to provide family support to enhance school attendance and participation. Funding of $ 160 000 for two (2) years has been provided. Youth Engagement Officer (0.5) has been provided through funding from Community Renewal Program to work with students and families from Woodridge, Woodridge North and Harris Fields Primary Schools (1 day per week at each school) to identify contributing causal factors and to work with available community and other services to provide family support to enhance school attendance and participation. Funding of $ 75 000 for two (2) years has been provided	Case management of individual students/ families will provide valuable information and data with respect to factors impacting on school attendance in both the primary and secondary environments in the state schooling system. Sustainable model to be developed for schools to consider and develop appropriate responses and strategies to enhance and support students and their families	Decrease in unexplained and chronic absenteeism in state schools in the Logan Beenleigh Schools Increased participation and achievement of state schooling students in Logan Beenleigh schools
More options, support and flexibility for young people, including those at risk of disengaging	Provide skills/experiences to disengaged young people to facilitate pathways to employment or re-entry into education and/or training	**Get Set For Work:** Program for disengaged young people in the Logan Beenleigh area intending to leave school at the end of 2004. Participants will undertake program as per guidelines and transition to employment,	Participants will develop personal, vocational and employability skills	80% of participants will: • continue in a pre-vocational or pre-apprenticeship program; • return to school to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship; or • obtain fulltime employment

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		further vocational education and training or re-engagement in school or other education setting		
More options, support and flexibility for young people, including those at risk of disengaging	Provision of a variety of educational pathways	**Jobs, Education, Training & Transition (JETT) Pilot** Woodridge SHS, Mabel Park SHS, Loganlea SHS, Kingston College Project officer to work across all schools, TAFE Institutes and universities to: • collate comprehensive education, training and employment information to support development of Senior Education and Training Plans; • provide input into the development of a website for access by all young people and other community members to assist in career planning • provide support and training to school and other personnel through workshops, seminars to build capacity in establishing and negotiating education, training and employment pathways, etc. • Funding of $ 150 000 for two (2) years has been provided through Community Renewal	Young people will have easier and more effective access to information to support development of Senior Education and Training Plans (SETPs) School and other staff are able to provide better advice to parents and students regarding career options and pathways Website developed and available for all young people to access current and relevant information Strengthened partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders involved with education, training and employment	Website with relevant current information regarding education, training and employment pathways SETP process in schools is more streamlined and efficient Increased capacity within schools and other organisations to provide support and advice to young people in relation to education, training and employment pathways

ETRF OBJECTIVE 3: Appropriately trained education and training staff

Related ETRF outcome	DYAP priority	Initiative	Goals or Desired Outcomes	Local performance indicators
Education and training staff have the appropriate training and support to deliver the objectives of the ETRF	Provision of a variety of educational pathways Explore options for promoting a community culture that values lifelong learning	Trial schools in Logan-Beaudesert realise that there is a need for a significant culture change to meet the challenges and implications for teaching and learning with the introduction of the new legislation. During 2004, a symposium for leaders of change in Logan-Beaudesert state secondary schools will be held to examine issues such as working across education and training sectors, primary/secondary school partnerships, and leading and managing change.	School leaders realise that the changes implicated in the ETRF agenda are a process and not an event and will be working closely with schools across the district and within their school teams to identify and implement these changes.	The effects will include the impacts on incorporating academic and vocational education and training pathways, modifications to standard curriculum and accommodating the individual needs of students.

| Education and training staff have the appropriate training and support to deliver the objectives of the ETRF | Access to research/good practice from other settings | In partnership with Logan Institute of TAFE, Logan-Beaudesert secondary schools are working to enhance teachers' skills and understanding in content and pedagogy in relation to teaching stand-alone VET, to strengthen partnerships and maximise the use of resources.

State secondary schools will utilise Australian Government Quality Teacher Program funding to support this initiative, as well as Reframing the Future funding. | Stronger school-TAFE partnerships and more training and employment pathway options for young people. | Increased delivery of VET within schools, more young people able to take up VET pathway options. |

ETRF OBJECTIVE 4: Collaborative resource management

Related ETRF outcome	DYAP priority	Initiative	Goals or Desired Outcomes	Local performance indicators
Collaborative resource planning, allocation & management of assets, finances & human resources	Explore issues and opportunities to make the best use of transport infrastructure to facilitate access to learning and earning options	Action Groups to continue to explore challenges and possibilities for improved transport options for young people to access training and employment. Southern Gateway Regional Managers' Forum has identified this issue as a priority and will consult with Queensland Transport and other relevant bodies to explore strategies to address the access and other issues related to barriers (structural and financial) which impact on young people's capacity to participate in appropriate education, training and employment programs It is recognized that this strategy will be a medium to long term strategy and will be prioritised for 2005/2006	Short term transport strategies will be developed to support interschool collaboration and provision of vocational programs for all students in the Logan Beenleigh area. Strategies developed to improve accessibility and affordability of public transport to education, training and employment opportunities	More flexible and user sensitive services to remove geographic barriers to education and training facilities Young people and others are better able to access more training and employment options. Outcomes of Southern Gateway Regional Managers' Forum strategy – Minutes of meetings, etc.
Collaborative resource planning, allocation & management of assets, finances & human resources	• More communication and co-operation between agencies and organisations • Duplication of services and resources reduced to make the best use of resources • Further development of interagency links	As for OBJ 2, Action Groups to continue to collaboratively use their resources and networks for coordination of programs and services for young people.	To maximise the use of available physical, human and financial resources to assist young people to identify and achieve their goals for learning and earning.	Continued partnerships/regular meetings of the logan-Beenleigh Action Groups, and links to relevant member networks.

Action Plan

ETRF 'Access to Pathways' Grants Program Initiatives

(As agreed in each Action Group & the ETRF Management Group, ALL Logan-Beaudesert 2005/6 Funding Dependent On Outcomes From 2004/5)

Initiative	Description	Start Date	Finish Date	Funds sought 2004-05 and 2005-06	Funding Recipient/s
Fresh Starts	**Description:** Customised Fresh Starts programs for at risk young people in Logan-Beenleigh. **Aims:** To re-engage young people in learning, increase their desire to learn, develop networks for young people outside of the school system and provide family support. **Clients:** Schools in Logan-Beenleigh will participate in Fresh Starts trials with approximately 8-12 at risk young people in Yr 9 and Yr 10 from their schools. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Various members of the Education and Training Action Group and Community Support Action Group	Term 1, 2004	Program will continue in Year 3 dependent on outcomes from Years 1 & 2	**$40,000** to school led programs **$40,000** for The Spot Youth Services program Program delivery, admin support, materials	Logan-Beaudesert Trial Schools (by selection process); and The Spot Youth Services
VET in Schools TAFE Pathways Partnership	**Description:** Logan Institute of TAFE and Logan-Beaudesert schools are working together to deliver quality vocational outcomes for students. **Aims:** 1. (Continuation of VET Scholarships program) Logan Institute of TAFE will provide introductory programs (Certificate II) primarily in the following vocational areas: Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy competencies in Construction, Engineering and Furnishing unable to be delivered by schools Programs (for fourteen {14} students in each program) will consist of 0.5 days per week during one (1) year and will provide the student with a Certificate II qualification (or competencies which may lead to a Certificate II) and be supported to: Continue in a pre-vocational or pre-apprenticeship program; Undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship while continuing at school; or seek fulltime employment. 2. A model is being developed for trial in 2004/5 in the vocational areas of Engineering and Construction and will include: collaborative professional development for teachers; identification of appropriate delivery strategies and assessment instruments; development of appropriate resources; engaging industry and employers; and optimising learning pathways including increasing uptake of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. **Clients:** Logan-Beaudesert Schools and Logan Institute of TAFE. **Stakeholder Involvement:** The DYAP Education and Training Action Group has identified this initiative as a key priority for the local community and will monitor and evaluate its progress.	July 2004	June 2005 Program will continue in Year 3 dependent on outcomes from Years 1 & 2	**$15 000** for VET scholarships; and **$15 000** for Engineering & Construction Pathways model Plus In kind support from TAFE and participating schools	Logan Institute of TAFE
Strategies to identify and re-engage disengaged young people	**Description:** Continue research and engagement activities to identify the number of disengaged young people aged 15 to 17 years across the District, and the reasons for their disengagement, and develop appropriate strategies for re-engagement. A key focus for development of strategies will be on enhancing community partnerships and community awareness of learning pathways in order to:	July 2004	July 2005 Program will continue in Year 3 dependent on outcomes from	**$5 000** Materials, catering/ forums, admin support, travel	EQ, Logan-Beaudesert District Office

		• Establish positive relationships with parents and other community members of various cultural groups; • Ensure that parents and school communities are more informed about education and training pathways and employment options for young people • Increase the involvement of business and industry in providing learning pathways and support for young people through mentoring, SATs, and employability skills development • Establish partnerships with Centrelink and Job Network Providers to engage young people (at the point of registration with these services) to identify their education, training and support needs in the early stages of job seeking eg develop appropriate programs in partnership with TAFE and other providers such as Kingston College and the Mabel Park POWER Program. **Aims:** To identify and re-engage in learning young people disengaged or at high risk of disengaging from learning. **Clients:** Disengaged young people aged 15 to 17 years across Logan-Beenleigh. **Stakeholder Involvement:** School communities, parents, local business and industry, and other government agencies such as Centrelink. The local DYAP Action Groups will support this activity through their regular meetings and broad networks.		Years 1 & 2		
Mentoring		**Description:** Enhance and extend the implementation of the proposed ETRF Community Mentoring Program to assist in the support of "at risk" and disengaged young people in the Logan-Beenleigh area by linking current initiatives to the rollout and by co-ordinating the learnings from existing and new model. **Aims:** To ensure that young people are assisted to return to learning through the support of local community, business and industry members who will provide support, encouragement and advocacy. **Clients:** High at risk and disengaged young people in the Logan-Beenleigh community. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Schools, TAFE, youth support services in the Logan-Beenleigh area will support this service & link with the ETRF Community Mentoring Program provider.	July 2004	June 2005 Program will continue in Year 3 dependent on outcomes from Year 2	$10 000 Program will be established through EQ directly funding a provider. Trial area will enhance this service through additional local funding	Logan Institute of TAFE
Stable Accommodation		**Description** Develop a proposal for a Youth Accommodation Strategy through review and analysis of data/outcomes from Logan Student Homelessness Project (Funded by Community Renewal) and other data sources to identify causal factors and explore issues relating to accommodation arrangements for young people, which impact on their capacity to engage in learning or earning. The focus will be on students in schools, particularly those with independent living arrangements, and for young people disengaged from learning. **Links with DYAP** The Community Support Action Group identified the requirement for Stable Accommodation as a Key Priority to be addressed in order for young people to remain engaged in learning and earning. **Clients** At risk and disengaged young people from 15 to 17 years of age in the Logan-Beenleigh community experiencing stable accommodation issues that impact on their capacity to engage in learning or earning. **Stakeholder involvement**	July 2004	Dec 2004 Further programs for Year 3 dependent on outcomes from Year 2	$43,000 Researcher, development of options, sourcing of sustainable funding	The Centre Education Programme

	Relevant Government departments, schools, TAFE and youth support services in the Logan-Beenleigh area will support this proposal **Local Performance Indicators** • Analysis of data completed. • Recommendations for appropriate strategies for youth accommodation made and endorsed by ETRF Action Groups to support young people to stay engaged in learning and earning. • Funding sources identified and commitment gained from relevant agencies and stakeholders to implement appropriate strategies.				
Youth NEXTPO 2005	**Description**: A whole of community approach for imparting information to young people during National Youth Week 2005 on both personal support available and opportunities for engagement in 'learning or earning'. **Aims**: Allow young people access to stalls providing information on employment opportunities, alternative education and training pathways, and support services in an appropriate atmosphere for engaging with this cohort. **Clients:** Young people, 15 years and older who have disengaged from learning or earning, particularly those who left school at the end of 2004. **Stakeholder Involvement:** All Action Groups & a broad range of Govt departments (all levels), business, industry & support services will support this initiative.	July 2004 to March 2005 Preparation prior to NEXTPO 2005	March 2005 Program will continue in Year 3 dependent on outcomes from Year 2	$6,000	Dept of Employment and Training, Bris Sth & Gold Coast Region

Appendix 3: School and Centre Profiles

Loganlea SHS

In 2006 Loganlea SHS has a student population of 701 from Years 8-12. Traditionally, students of Anglo-Saxon culture have predominated, although the Principal notes that increasing numbers of students are enrolling who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and there is a range of minority cultures represented including Muslim, Vietnamese and Samoan. The school has 99 students with a range of complex needs in the Special Education Unit. Thirteen teachers work in the Unit, supervised by a Deputy. There is a school farm, a 'State of the Art' Horticulture Centre, a jazz band and a choral group, which provide opportunities for students to demonstrate competence in extra-curricular ways and for the school to be seen and valued by its community.
The school is involved with the Beacon Foundation, with its 'No Dole' program and careers projects that aim to build community responsibility for youth and local support for young people. It is closely connected to the Logan School to Work Program.

The range of curriculum offerings includes QSA subjects in years 11 and 12, Vocational Education subjects, Agricultural, Forestry and Horticultural Studies, School based Traineeships and Apprenticeships and Structured Work Placement programs. As with other schools in the District, there is an increasing investment in Pastoral Care and Student Support Services. The school has a Vocational Guidance Officer, a School based Police Officer, a School Nurse, a Transition officer, a Behaviour Management Team and, most notably, a Social Justice Department.
The Social Justice portfolio encompasses student services, monitoring and maintaining equitable practices in the school and coordinating services and relationships with local agencies and the community generally. That the school has appointed a Head of Department to this position sends clear signals about the status it assigns to these roles and functions and recognises the crucial need for the integration and coordination of services to young people and families.

Mabel Park SHS

Mabel Park has approximately 600 students. The school community is characterised by moderate to low socio-economic indicators. The student community includes 40 nationalities with a significant population from Oceanic nations as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The school provides Samoan and Indonesian as a LOTE and has a Samoan Chaplain.

The school prides itself on celebrating cultural wealth through activities such as Cultural dance groups, celebration of NAIDOC and the Partners in Success program for Indigenous students. The school also encourages students to participate in Logan City Junior Council and operates a 'CLIPP' program – Community Learning in

Partnership program – which involves parents, Community Liaison Officers and Pastors working with students to enhance learning outcomes.

One of the biggest challenges at Mabel Park is that so many students have English as a second language. While this lends cultural richness, it often impacts on student literacy learning. To address this, nine teachers in 2003-4 undertook an 'ESL in the Mainstream' course. As the English Head of Department noted:

> The subject 'English' is 'the greatest ally in the war against illiteracy.'
> That's why I like to focus on developing good English programs which interest and engage our students'

The school literacy campaign is based on the Literate Futures program, applying the Four Resources Model through the Middle Schooling Years and building Critical Literacy capacity, especially with seniors. There is a Learning Centre which provides extra tutoring in Literacy and Numeracy, especially for senior students and ESL students drop in. An Aide is available before school and at lunch time to help students with literacy-related problems in completing assignments.

Mabel Park appears to have a very committed and experienced English teaching staff, a strong theoretical foundation and a multi-strategy approach.

Woodridge SHS

Woodridge State High School has 835 students. It has a teaching staff of 74 including two Deputies and 8 Heads of Department, including two Heads of Middle School and two of Senior School. The school's mix of beginning and experienced staff has fostered a positive approach to change and innovation.

The student population is diverse, with approximately 10% Murri and Torres Strait Islander students, 30 % Pacific Islander and 15% born outside Australia.

The school (and this is supported by student opinion) takes its cultural diversity very seriously and creates many opportunities to celebrate particular cultures. Woodridge has the only ESL Unit in the district. Links with the Logan City Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre are established and this provides additional support as required. The district has Community Liaison Officers who represent the major cultural groups in the community and who assist schools to communicate with families of different ethnicities.

Woodridge residents experience the multiple disadvantages arising from generational unemployment, low income, family transience and problems of access to education, health and services. These issues have significant implications for the levels of support required by students while they are at school.

The school provides a very supportive student environment through its Student Services Strategy which includes a Special Education Unit and a Learning Support Unit. A planned Student Care Management System provides ongoing support with attendance, welfare, family issues and learning. A range of support staff such as Guidance, School-based Police Officer, Nurse and Chaplain assist all teaching staff to

directly support students and to refer them to outside agencies. There is an onsite crèche so that adolescent mothers can continue in education.

Marsden SHS

Since opening in 1987, Marsden has experienced constant growth, peaking at 1569 in 2004. Ninety Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attend the school and the student cohort comes from 60 different ethnic groupings. More than 300 students receive special assistance with additional learning needs; 70 students attend the Special Needs Unit. Personalised enrichment programs are provided for academically gifted students.

The majority of families in the community can be characterised as low socio-economic, but encompass a broad cross section of occupations. The school enjoys generous community support, including support from businesses and employers. It prides itself on its strict codes of dress and behaviour and believes this contributes to community support for the school. The community frequently accesses school facilities.

The school offers a broad range of QSA subjects and vocational pathways and the majority of students graduate into University, TAFE, employment, apprenticeships or traineeships.

Marsden has a large Student Support Services Team and a range of Special Programs and provides a comprehensive description of the services identifying staff responsible for particular aspects of student learning and welfare.

Kingston College

Kingston College reached its enrolment peak of 1900 in the mid 1980s. With the opening of neighbouring schools, its enrolment has declined to around 500 students on a Year 8-12 campus. Of its student population, 3% are from ethnic backgrounds and 9% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The college has on site a Year 7 class from Burrowes State School, as a mechanism for easing transition between primary and secondary schooling. The Year 7 campus 'also encourages primary teaching strategies to come across to secondary.'
The college operates an Inter-Year program between Years 7/8 and Year 12 students. The program aims to develop communication, self esteem and leadership skills.

There is also a Centre for Continuing Secondary Education (CCSE) on campus. The Centre was initially funded by the Department of Housing, but is now part of Education Queensland. Enrolments there are declining 'because of alternative programs within schools and changes to English and Maths curriculum'. Staffing of the Centre is separate from that of the College, except for Heads of Department who take across campus responsibility. Detail on the CCSE is included later in this report.

Centre Education Programme

For 18 years, the Centre Education Programme (CEP) has provided young people alienated from mainstream education with a place to re-engage with learning. The CEP is based on an ethos that is:

- inclusive
- just
- relevant to its time
- centred in the Christian tradition based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

'Within a social inclusion framework of "walking with", the CEP offers young people a place to re-engage in a reciprocal relationship, relevant curriculum, just pedagogy and ownership of the educational experience. For many who attend, CEP is their sole connection with community, and the only place where they can participate in the acquisition of common global values.

In order to maintain CEP as a valuable shared experience, all who attend agree to participate in accordance with these four principles: Respect**,** Participation, Safe and Legal, and Being Fair Dinkum (Honesty)'.

http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=20957

Students are aged from 13-18, engaged in Middle and a Senior School. The latter is a recent addition, 'because there were problems in the transition for students back into mainstream'.
Students are not grouped by 'Grade'; they may be 16, but operating at Level 2 in Literacy, Level 5 in Maths. Therefore each program is individually planned. The goal is to assist a smooth transition to positive pathways – VET/TAFE/employment.

The Acting Principal coordinates the Work Experience program in conjunction with Logan School to Work. The emphasis is on introducing students to real work options and building aspiration through small steps.

BoysTown

BoysTown 'provides innovative, practical services for children, young people and their families experiencing social and economic disadvantage. BoysTown is an incorporated company managed by a Board of Directors on behalf of the De La Salle Brothers. BoysTown is inspired by the ethos of the De La Salle Brothers. The services are solution focussed and are designed to build on the resilience possessed by children and young people' (http://www.boystown.com.au/about.html) . In the 1960s, as part of the 'de-institutionalising movement', BoysTown began delivering 'welfare through training and employment.'

It caters for the most marginalised young people 15-17.

BoysTown provides:

- Intensive welfare support
- Individual case management
- Individual mentoring
- New Learning Choices
- School-to-work transition &
- Employment assistance

The Spot

The Spot was initially a Youth Drop in Centre for 15-25 year olds. It has been operating as a transition education centre since 2005. Its clients are 15-17 year olds who need alternative pathways. The majority have family and/or school problems and are referred by schools or youth Workers etc. They're predominantly male (60-40%) with a mix of cultures.
They do Year 10 Maths & English there and return to school or move to other pathways for Years 11 & 12. The Spot negotiates flexible pathways to a structured environment. To return to learning, students have to be dedicated and purpose driven. Some make the transition successfully, if they have sufficient support and are sufficiently self-aware and motivated. Most students transition to training or employment.

Centre for Continuing Secondary Education

Known locally as 'Kingston College Adult Education Centre', CCSE is an Education Queensland facility which has courses for people 15 years of age and over who wish to undertake flexible part-time or full-time studies in:

- A fast track course for Year 10 in English, Maths, Science and Computer Studies;
- A fast track Year 11 and/or Year 12 course in English Communication and/or pre-vocational Maths;
- A literacy and Numeracy course that prepares students for Year 10 covering elements of Year 8, 9 and pre-10 Maths and English..

Courses begin in January and in July with day and evening classes in designated subjects. Senior Authority subjects, such as Accounting, Ancient History, Biology, Art, Legal Studies and Physics, which are externally assessed, are also on offer.

Kingston College CSSE received funds under ETRF for 180 students aged 15-18 participating in a literacy and numeracy intervention program offering a continuum to Year 10 Certificate level courses. The additional funding is particularly used to reduce class size.

The Shed

The Shed was established by YMCA Brisbane to assist at risk and marginalised young people. It aims to develop industry related skills and self awareness and confidence. Most young people at the Shed are partly enrolled at school.

The Shed is moving towards a formal partnership with Mabel Park SHS, which provides teachers for Metal Arts, Literacy and Sewing/Textiles. Other courses are taken by Volunteers. The woodturning is of a particularly high quality and students are very proud of their products. Woodturning is taken by a community volunteer who is an established expert in the area.

U-Turn is one of the programs operating out of the Shed. U-Turn is funded by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council and the Australian Government's National Crime Prevention Program as a response to youth crime, particularly car theft. Young people are referred by Police, Probation Officers etc.

Logan Institute of TAFE

The TAFE learning environment has traditionally catered for relatively motivated, trades-oriented adults. Staff generally come from an industry base and are experienced in delivering competency-based learning programs to adults engaged in apprenticeships. In recent times, TAFE has had applications from much younger school-rejecting adolescents. TAFEs are increasingly involved in school-based traineeships and apprenticeships.

As part of ETRF, the Department of Employment and Training (DET) has developed a resourcing framework for 15-17 year olds to undertake courses at TAFE, the Australian Agricultural College and registered training organisations that hold a User Choice contract. Get Set for Work is a major source of funding for TAFE places.

Tuition fees do not apply to students undertaking a subject at TAFE as part of their secondary education.

What's Mainstream?

This questionnaire is designed to be used with students in schools in the Logan-Beaudesert District in small group discussions in February, 2006.

It is part of a study funded by Dusseldorp Skills Forum, a small national, not-for-profit organisation working to improve learning outcomes for young people. The Forum has engaged Jenni Connor to survey and interview students and teachers. This questionnaire aims to record the opinions of students about their experiences at the senior phase of schooling.

All information collected through the questionnaire and recorded interviews will be de-identified to protect the confidentiality of participants. It will form part of a report reviewing provision for senior students as Queensland's Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) is implemented.

What's Mainstream? Study 2006

Student first name (these will be fictionalised in the Report):

Age:

Grade:

School/Centre:

Number of children in the family:

....

Q.1 How do you feel about the school or centre (now)?

This is a place where ....'

PLEASE TICK up to four boxes

I feel happy
I feel awkward
I make friends easily
I feel lonely
I feel I belong
I feel left out
I feel safe

I feel bullied	

Q. 2   If you've come here from a different school or centre, how did you feel about that (before)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.3 *How much do you think you are learning at the school or centre?*

PLEASE TICK up to two boxes

A lot	
A fair bit	
Not very much	
Nothing at all	
It depends on the subject	

Q.4 If you ticked the last box, which are your favourite subjects?

PLEASE TICK up to three boxes

Maths	
English	
Art	
Physical Education	
Design	
Science	

Q.5 If you are doing VET, which areas are you studying in?

- Agricultural & horticultural
- Business
- Computer studies
- English Communication
- Hospitality
- Literacy & Numeracy
- Physical recreation
- Tourism
- Other: Please name

Q.6 If you are doing VET, how is it working for you?

PLEASE TICK up to two boxes

- It's great and I'm learning heaps
- It's pretty good and I think I'm learning stuff
- It's just ok, but I can't get the hang of it
- I can't see the point, so I don't try very hard

Q.7 If you are doing any work place learning, how do you feel about it?

PLEASE TICK up to two boxes

- It's great and I love going
- It's pretty good and I don't mind turning up
- People treat you like an adult
- People treat you like a kid

Q.8 If you are doing any learning at TAFE, how do you feel about it?

PLEASE TICK up to two boxes

- It's great because it's more adult than school
- It's good because it's connected with work

It's no better than any school learning

Q.9 How would you describe your learning style?

I learn best by reading and writing

I learn best by working in groups

I learn best by doing practical things

I learn best by being creative

I learn best by using ICTs

Q. 10   Which of the things listed below do you think are most important in a teacher?

Please put a 1 in the box next to which option you think is most important, 2 for the next most important one through to 5 in the box next to the one you think is least important. (1 = most important 5 = least important)

Good sense of humour

Intelligent

Strict

Approachable

Easy to understand

Q.11 In your experience, how many teachers are like 'the best?

A lot		☐
A few		☐
None		☐

Q.12 How would you describe the teachers at this school or centre, generally?

They care about me

They know their subject

They help me to learn

They keep order in the classroom

They keep me interested

Our teachers expect most kids to do well

Most teachers encourage kids to try harder

Q 13   If you feel particularly positive about some teachers, which subjects do they teach?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.14 Please tick how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

PLEASE TICK one box in each line.

a)

b)

Q.15 Which of these do you look for in the things you do outside school?

PLEASE TICK up to four boxes.

Making friends

The chance to do new things

Doing outdoor activities

Playing sports

Doing creative activities

Learning about work and jobs

Part time work that pays

Doing something challenging

Having fun

Q.16 What do you like doing with your family (either individual family members or as a group)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.17 How do you feel about your self?

PLEASE TICK as many boxes as suit you.

I get along well with other kids	
In general, I like the way I am	
In general, I like the way I look	
Overall, I have a lot to be proud of	
I'd like to change a lot of things about me	
I learn new things quickly	
I worry about school work	
I worry about how I'll go in the future	

Q.18 How is your general health?

In the past six months how often have you had or felt the following:

I often have headaches	
I often have backache or stomach-ache	
I often feel depressed	
I sometimes feel irritable	
I regularly have trouble getting to sleep	
I often have rashes or other skin problems	

Q.19 How do students view learning here?

PLEASE TICK as many boxes as suit you.

Most kids think it's important to do well at sch
Most kids try hard at lessons
Most kids find school work easy
Most kids find school work OK most of the tim
Most kids find school work hard
Most kids do homework and assignments
Most kids don't care about school
Most kids muck around in class

Q.20 How do you feel about the rules at this school or centre?

Rules in this school are fair and we all know the
Rules in this school keep changing
Rules in this school are unfair
Students generally behave well in class
Students generally have a say about rules and
Punishments are generally fair
Punishments often don't seem fair (can you giv below?)

Q.21 In the past year, have the adults you live with:

Helped with homework or assignments
Discussed how you're doing at school
Talked to you about working hard at school
Talked about what you might do in the future
Contacted the school to see how you're going
Become involved in school activities

Q 22   Do you have any advice about how things could be improved at this school or centre, or in schools generally?

_____

_____

_____

_____