Teach the Teacher – The Concept

‘Teach the Teacher’ is a school-based professional development program for teachers, led by students. It brings students and teachers together to explore ways to enhance student wellbeing and engagement with the curriculum through improvements to the classroom environment. It provides another perspective on what occurs in the classroom, and enables students, through their Student Representative Council, to be involved in important discussions about learning and teaching.

Teach the Teacher - Project Background

The ‘Teach the Teacher’ professional development program began with a resolution agreed to by students attending the 2011 VicSRC Congress. Students recognised the importance of the relationships built between students and teachers and were keen to become more involved with discussions around enhancing student wellbeing and engagement with the curriculum, through making improvements to the classroom environment. The result was an idea that students could run professional development for teachers in ways that would provide other perspectives on what was occurring in the classroom.

Since the 2011 Congress, VicSRC Student Executive members have developed this initial concept. Based on their experience in implementing such an approach in two schools, they created a step-by-step resource for students and teachers to use in implementing a professional development program. The Executive decide to extend the scope of ‘Teach the Teacher’ to cover both the different learning styles and needs of students as well as ways to improve the learning environments in which students work. The aim of this student-led professional development is to allow students and teachers to work together to achieve positive change in their classroom environment, open up dialogue and develop stronger relationships. It provides a focus for students, through their representative organisation, to become actively involved in issues that are central to the school’s objectives.

Following its initial trials, the ‘Teach the Teacher’ program is being extended to further schools in 2013, with support from the VicSRC and funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Project Overview

The ‘Teach the Teacher’ approach is tailored to the needs of each school and can be adapted to the school’s needs and circumstances. In response to student and teacher identification of issues, the approach can either target areas with a specific focus or take a more general approach. By working in this way, the professional development remains relevant, defined and directed so that schools can use the information gleaned from discussions between students and teachers to make positive changes or to reinforce current practice.

Similarly, the support that the VicSRC will deliver to SRCs and schools is adaptable to
students’ needs. The program is student-based and student-led. Students, through their SRC or equivalent organisation, are provided training and guidance on how they would like to offer and organise the professional development. They then work alongside teachers to prepare a unique professional development session for the school, based on the needs of the student population, their teachers and the wider school community, and in order to improve learning environments and strengthen relationships. The key element of this project is that students are leading the way and are actively engaged and supported in the process through the training program that the VicSRC has developed.

In summary (further detail can be provided if necessary), the process that will be undertaken with each school will involve:

1. **Introduction of the idea to schools, including the development of a program timetable for training of students and timetabling of teacher sessions**

   Schools to be involved in this process will be identified through expressions of interest. It is important that there is broad understanding of the process and commitment to it from both the school leadership and student leadership.

2. **Identification and development of an appropriate team of students within the school, who are interested in leading the initiative**

   The SRC at each school will be used as the vehicle for engaging students and for deciding what themes the professional development session with teachers will address. The SRC may decide to allocate this responsibility to a specific group of students and may include students not represented on the SRC in order to gain a broader representation of views.

3. **Initial training of the student team to identify the themes and gather the student ideas and questions that will form the basis for the professional development; subsequent training of the student team to present and conduct the professional development activities**

   The students will undertake a process of gathering broader student views on critical issues, to form the specific theme focus and questions to be addressed. For example, students in the school may wish to focus on ‘engaging learning’, and therefore the series of questions that students would use to generate discussion with teachers would be based around this theme. The VicSRC will work with the SRC in each school on how they can get feedback from the wider student body and develop this feedback into themes and questions, and then assist the student team to plan the delivery of the professional development.

4. **Conduct of one or more professional development discussions between teachers and students around student (and then teacher) identified themes**

   The students will then deliver the professional development. It is anticipated that this professional development will take place after school, in a time already allocated for this purpose. The VicSRC will work with the SRC in each school on processes involved, including facilitation of discussions, collection of outcomes, and follow-up.

5. **Review and consolidation, including report-back about changes in classroom practices and outcomes**
Students will also follow-up the initial professional development activity, either through involvement in student and teacher reflection on observable outcomes within classroom and school practice, and/or through presentation of further professional development activities that involve discussions between students and teachers, possibly around teacher-generated issues and questions.

The following table provides further details about school and VicSRC responsibilities and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>VicSRC responsibility</th>
<th>School responsibility</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Provide background information to the school</td>
<td>Discuss with school and student leadership and make commitment to the initiative; submit statement of intent</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Discuss with school and student leadership to clarify the program and commitments – face to face or by phone/skype/email Negotiate an appropriate training schedule/timeline</td>
<td>Clarify details of intended participation Commit to initial training schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Identify and form a student team to lead the initiative; allocate/identify staff support; lock in a time-lined schedule for the professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Provide training of student team in processes; provide some CRT support for staff release (as agreed)</td>
<td>Provide student release, staff support, and facilities for training</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Email and phone support if needed and as appropriate</td>
<td>Support student-led process of consultation and program development as outlined in training</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>Sit in as observer at the professional development session if appropriate and by arrangement</td>
<td>Conduct by students of the initial teacher professional development session</td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>Provide a de-brief session for students and support staff</td>
<td>Meeting of the student team to reflect on the initial session and plan further steps</td>
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<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and support further steps as decided</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Write up case study, evaluation; publicise and report as agreed</td>
<td>Provide evaluation and outcome data</td>
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</table>
Do you want to take part in this exciting project?

The ‘Teach the Teacher’ program will be run in ten Secondary Schools in Victoria during 2013.
We are currently looking for ten schools that would like to be a part of this exciting project.

What will the VicSRC do?
The VicSRC will liaise with your school, provide training for your SRC and create exciting resources to assist with the running of the program. We also have some funds available for teacher release time to assist with any extra time you will need to support this program. For more information please see the project overview above.

What will you do?
Make a commitment to run such a program in your school. Make sure that your school leadership team and SRC are on board and ready to work with the VicSRC to implement the program.

If your school is interested in running the ‘Teach the Teacher’ program during 2013 please fill out the application below or contact Kate Walsh, VicSRC Coordinator for further details: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au or phone: 9267 3744.
Application for the VicSRC Teach the Teacher Program 2013

School Name:________________________________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________________________________

Phone Number:________________________________________________________________________

Contact Person:________________________________________________________________________

Position:______________________________________________________________________________

Email Address:________________________________________________________________________

Statement of Intent:

I have spoken to the school leadership team and the SRC and we would like to take part in the ‘Teach the Teacher’ Professional Development for Teachers program offered by the VicSRC. We understand that the program’s implementation will be the responsibility of our school, that it will be student-led, that we will also provide the necessary resources to support the program, and that the VicSRC will provide support and training to us to assist us to run the program.

Signed:

Name:

Date: