



Sue Erwin

Ashwood Specialist School

Scaffolding OHS learning

The VCAL program at Ashwood Specialist School is very hands-on. A strong focus is the transference of knowledge from the academic and theoretical sphere, to a practical and real life context.

Sue understands that students need practice at tasks to develop the confidence to perform those tasks independently. Scaffolding tasks and providing simulated but real-life contexts are key aspects of Sue's approach. With so much repetition to develop confidence it is important to keep students engaged, and the board game activity outlined on Sue's page is an example of her creative approach in keeping students interested.

Within this practical approach, assessment is performed not for its own sake or as an end in itself; rather, students are assessed during the learning process itself.

Simulated work-stations are perhaps the best examples of Sue's approach to teaching and demonstrate the strengths of the Ashwood program. The work-stations are small scale enterprises which simulate workplace settings. Students attend the work-station one day a week. Work-stations include a catering kitchen where students prepare lunch orders and canteen items for a local primary school; a packing company where students collate and package items; and a textile workplace where students assist in producing canvas goods. The work-stations ensure a gradual and scaffolded progression to competence in VCAL learning outcomes.

A distinctive feature of Sue's teaching is patience. She understands that learning cannot be rushed and that students need time and repeated exposure to tasks before they will be competent.

Sue lists the following aspects as strengths of Ashwood School's approach to teaching and learning:

- Strong teacher involvement with school activities

- Team teaching and learning
- Practice at new tasks
- Real life contexts and consequences
- Development of real employability skills in real contexts
- Evaluation of teaching activities.

Visiting Ashwood School, I felt a sense of patience and harmony. Teachers worked co-operatively, sharing ideas and evaluating each others' teaching and ideas.