

Loretta Goldsmith

Monbulk College



Local and meaningful

Loretta has a student-centred approach to her teaching. This means she keeps content and teaching method relevant to her students. She taps into their lives and the community around them to develop materials and subject matter. Her teaching methods encourage active engagement and getting out of the classroom and into the community to learn.

Perhaps the best example of Loretta's ability to make class work significant to students is the unit she and her team have developed around fire safety. Bushfire is an ever-present danger to students attending Monbulk College, in the Dandenong Ranges.

The Black Saturday fires affected many Monbulk College students so Loretta uses this relevance as well as the students' wealth of knowledge of fire risk and hazards, to cover many OHS outcomes. She gets the students to begin working on an audit of fire risks and hazards around their school before requiring them to approach the local community to perform further audits. The audits are carried out on places frequented by the students themselves such as the local skate-park, sports stadiums, vulnerable neighbours, such as the elderly and isolated, the supermarkets and the police station (perhaps not visited so much as of interest!). When students begin work-placements the audits are again useful tools.

Loretta looks for as many opportunities as possible for her students to learn through experience: they get to use a fire hydrant and a fire blanket; they run the fire drills (there are two each term) and often end up as the fire wardens in their work places; they are responsible for promoting the fire safety program to other schools in fire prone areas.

As the year progresses Loretta expands her student's interest to include the wider circles of nation and globe. The way Loretta moves her students from the familiar to the new is a good example of scaffolded teaching.

In the senior class, students look at what is happening in the world and units are developed in an integrated way from these incidents. The Tasmanian mine disaster provided a wealth of material—students looked at leadership skills through the VCAL Personal Development

Skills units, oxygen requirements of those trapped underground in maths/numeracy, imagined what was going on in the minds of the miners for literacy, and so on. From this point students were asked to create a place or town, develop a situation or emergency and then decide what was needed in relation to safety. From personal to global, or global to personal, the student is always central.