

Industry- school partnerships to facilitate “Learning by Doing” regarding agriculture

- There are many ways of teaching students the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enable them to understand the science behind agriculture
- One is to use the tried principle of learning by doing
- Industry - school partnerships provide a framework to enable this to happen, with benefits to both sides(a partnership is “a joint interest”)
- From the industry side, it gives a chance to provide a practical context in which the core curriculum is taught, with the potential for increasing the awareness of what industry needs
- From the school side, there are several benefits:
 - It gives a chance for students to be involved in useful real – life experiments, where the answer is not known, rather than text book experiments where the emphasis tends to be on getting the “right” answer
 - It gives a chance to allow students to learn outside the classroom, and in particular be *expected* to get dirty (because that’s the reality of agriculture), which they enjoy
 - It has the potential for re-engaging the student “school /classroom refuser”
- Given the “joint interest”, previous experience has shown that this framework:
 - provides an opportunity for an Inside/Outside team to develop, with the nominated teacher being seen by the students as a partner with the Visitor, which changes the dynamics in a positive way (students tend to better behaved when there is one)
 - gives the teacher an opportunity to learn more about industry
 - gives Farmers Marketing Network (FMN) an opportunity to learn more about the school
- The approach lends itself to most Years, but the pilot was conducted with a Year 5/6 class at a small rural primary school in Tasmania with a total enrolment of 75 students – FMN are keen to work with urban schools as well , beginning in NSW
- Years 5 and 6 are probably the earliest levels to begin with, to ensure the results can be used by FMN, as was the case in the pilot – it will be repeated at the local high school
- In this regard, one of the reasons for the success of the pilot was that the students understood very well that their involvement was “real” and they took it very seriously, as can be seen from the formative evaluation
- This real involvement with industry provides an example of community engagement for the school to use if it so wishes
- It also raises the profile of agriculture, which is the intent of the partnership, as can be seen from the partnership agreement