

# Community Challenge PoLT Student Feedback

By Ash Gardner - Year 9 & Kaitlyn Dunstone - Year 8 2006

Community Challenge is:

- ▣ Learning about the community in which you live
- ▣ Completing projects and tasks in the community
- ▣ Contributing to the community
- ▣ Working in learning teams
- ▣ Improving your communication skills

Our thoughts on Community Challenge:

Ash Gardner

- ▣ Your learning is more active because you are doing stuff with students and teachers
- ▣ It's fun learning
- ▣ I've got more confidence
- ▣ It's great to develop better friendships with teachers and students

Kaitlyn Dunstone

- ▣ I've developed confidence
- ▣ I've developed better relationships with the teachers and students
- ▣ There is a different level of talk in the class
- ▣ Things are more free and there is more negotiation

1. Supportive and productive learning environment.

- ▣ We discuss lots of things and they give us hints or tips
- ▣ We can negotiate what we do
- ▣ No putdowns – our teachers are cool and calm
- ▣ Our roles and responsibilities in groups are clear
- ▣ We are more mature about what we are doing
- ▣ We have a friendship with the teachers

2. The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self motivation.

- ▣ When we work in groups we also highlight what skills individuals bring to the group
- ▣ Working with people boosts your confidence, trust levels and develops good relationships
- ▣ Working in mixed groups means you don't have to know everything
- ▣ We are motivated by our outcomes they are the reward that keeps you going
- ▣ Motivated by not always being in the classroom, by having freedom to negotiate the rules and tasks

3. Students' needs, backgrounds perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program.

- ☐ We are engaged because we are actively doing things
- ☐ We are given choices which inspire us
- ☐ We can negotiate what we do
- ☐ We get to learn in different learning environments
- ☐ We get to discuss ideas and from that we can see things different
- ☐ We work with lots of different people

4. Students are challenged and supported to develop deeper levels of thinking and application.

- ☐ We solve problems and often come up with lots of different solutions
- ☐ We discuss new ideas and relate it to what others think
- ☐ We brainstorm in depth so that we think and come up with different ideas
- ☐ The 6 Hats make us look at things from different perspectives and cover all the areas
- ☐ Graphic organisers sets out our thinking so it is not just a mass of writing, it's simple and easy, less writing but you think big

5. Assessment practices are an integral part of learning and teaching.

- ☐ We get assessed on our skills like communication not just the work we do
- ☐ We are assessed on how we work as a team
- ☐ The outcomes are our reward
- ☐ We do a lot of presentations
- ☐ We can peer assess each other
- ☐ We get a lot of feedback to help us improve

6. Learning connects strongly with the communities and practice beyond the classroom.

Semester 1 Projects:

SMS Training

- ☐ Communicating with senior citizens to teach them how to use their mobile phones.

MAD Day

- ☐ Teaching primary school children about how to care for their community.

YHQ

- ☐ Responding to issues that affect young people in our community

LOOP

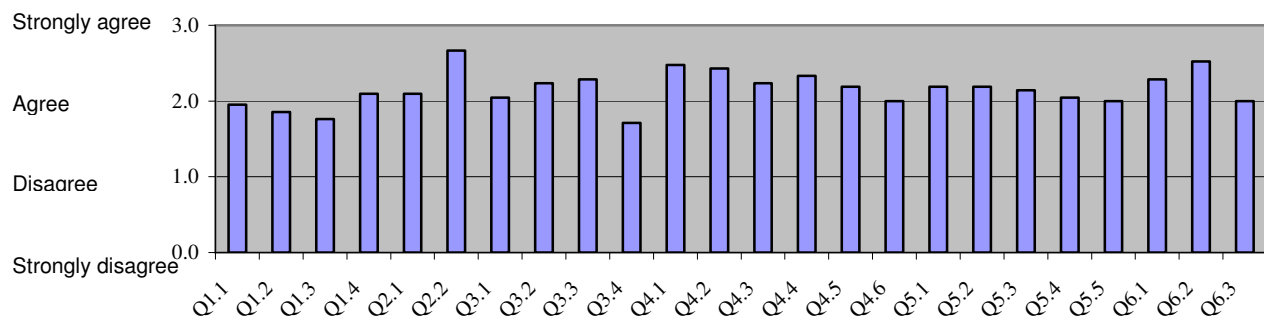
- ☐ Reporting to the broader community about Community Challenge and the learning we do.

Planet Ark

- ☐ Investigating our environmental practices in our school and making changes to our practice.

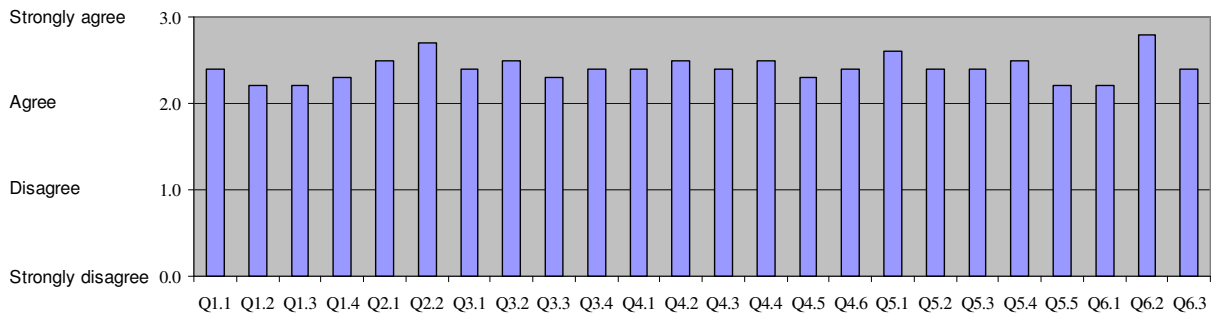
## Games Day Jack Lonsdale Lodge

**PoLT STUDENT PERCEPTIONS SURVEY - SC Community Challenge February 2006**



- Facilitating a games day for senior citizens at their accommodation.

**PoLT STUDENT PERCEPTIONS SURVEY - Community Challenge June 2006**



In comparing the data from the start of term 1 til the end of term 2 there is an improvement across the board in response to how the students feel about their learning, their teachers, each other, their assessment and their community.

The Community Challenge class was designed to address the Principles of Effective Learning and Teaching and in reviewing the data this was

successful. The initial planning process was imbedded in developing relationships, in creating learning experiences whereby students got to learn about themselves and each other. The emphasis was on building a community in which students felt safe and supported.

The culture within the classroom changed as a result of processes such as reflection and critical friend discussion being incorporated into the daily classroom management plan, students were assessed on their performance both academically and as individual and team performance therefore they developed a commitment to holistic development. The students personal commitment and communication to the projects and classroom involvement was just as important as the academic outcomes. Students have responded to the expectation that being a productive community member is highly valued by the teachers in Community Challenge.

Jeanne Gibbs in her article Wanted: leader of Leaders for the Tribes Learning Community 2004 at [www.tribes.com](http://www.tribes.com) summarised that in a classroom in which there is a productive learning community developed then:

- ❑ The **school culture** changes as a set of relational agreements are learned and practiced
- ❑ Students will help to **manage the classroom** as responsibility is transferred to small learning groups.
- ❑ Long-term student-led small groups give **students** a voice in **decision-making**.
- ❑ Students become involved in daily reflective practice and assessment.
- ❑ The **teacher's role** changes when students are learning in small cooperative (research, inquiry and project) groups.

Jeanne Gibbs explains that the emphasis on nurturing students' human development and resiliency as well as cognitive learning is extremely important, and is done so by actively creating and sustaining the inclusive caring culture. Feeling inclusive and valued by the learning community has kept students committed to their learning process, and if you keep in mind that a central concept in the process of developing Tribes is: "If a person does not feel included, he or she will create his or her own inclusion by grabbing influence attracting attention, creating a controversy, demanding power or drawing into passive belligerence." ([www.tribes.org](http://www.tribes.org)) This applies to adults as well as students, the disruptive ones, whether students or adults, all have a contribution to make.

This is true of Community Challenge when reviewing the data from the student perceptions we can see that the development of a learning community is evident in principle 1 where students are connected to their teachers and each other and feel valued and respected for what

they contribute to the learning community. In principle 2 the students identify the pride that has developed from their ownership of their learning and their ability to negotiate elements of the tasks to best suit their learning needs and outcomes. In principle 3 their perception of group work has increased since February as the students have learnt to work effectively in groups. They are now able to establish roles and responsibilities easily and can identify their strengths and areas where support is needed. In principle 4 students have responded well to the learning challenges given and as the focus by the students for learning has developed over the semester with the teachers including more content for analysis and consideration to match their thinking sequences and learning tool development. Principle 5 assessment has become critical in the development of the learning process and the development of understanding between the teachers and students and students and students that what learning takes place is important and critical in the development of their learning processes. Over the past 6 months students have become more objective in their review of each other and themselves and are able to give constructive advice in order to support the development of the project. Questioning of decision making is essential in unpacking their learning directions and refocusing the tasks. Links with the community is essential in principle 6 but so to is the connection to contemporary knowledge and issues that impact on their world and future. Students have been immersed into the community on many levels such as working within the community in response to community needs and using community people as experts to impact on their projects. The students have responded really well to being actively engaged with others and have developed effective communication skills.

Michael Fullan believes that *reculturing is the name of the game*. Structure does make a difference but is still not the main idea in successful change. Transforming the culture is the main point. True reculturing activates and deepens moral purpose. Educators need to work together while respecting differences in culture (p.43). Reculturing is a difficult process that takes time and energy. Community Challenge has set about reculturing the delivery of curriculum within the classroom, the relationship that is developed between student and teacher and the construction of learning. Reculturing does take much time and energy and therefore requires that students and staff to have the same vision and direction for learning, when analysing Community Challenge from a teaching perspective it is clear to see that the reculturing has had the greatest impact on the development of team coherence and systems management. Time for reculturing needs to be consistently built into the curriculum development and organization.

Fullan, M.G. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[Home](#)