

# The Paradigm Shifters - Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools initiative

Since the initiative began in April 2016, twenty-three secondary schools from across Victoria and New South Wales have each committed to undertake actions in their schools to cultivate young people that are more entrepreneurial-minded.

The three guiding principles for the *Paradigm Shifters - Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools* initiative are to:

- Develop more personalised education experiences, so each person can pursue passions and talents to excel in unique ways
- Engage in creative and entrepreneurial product oriented learning experiences that can, in authentic ways, benefit local and global communities
- Cultivate and prototype new approaches, processes and or products.

The first newsletter for the initiative aims to provide participating schools with an update on activities to date, the accompanying research and what it will entail, and next steps and key dates for the rest of the year.

## NETWORK UPDATE

### Victorian network

There are currently twelve Victorian government secondary schools participating. The schools are located in various parts of the State (including metropolitan and regional centres) and have diverse communities and contexts.

Many of the schools have decided to participate in the initiative as there is good alignment between their priorities and the initiative's three guiding principles, particularly around personalised education experiences.

The network has met three times - on 9 March, 3 May and 26 July. The network gatherings have provided an opportunity for school action teams (where students are key, active partners) to meet face-to-face and plan and refine their ideas for action.

At the most recent network session in July each school prepared a short video or PowerPoint presentation to share their journey. Students presented on their school's priorities and progress in planning and implementing actions.

Wayne Perkins, Network Coordinator has been meeting with school action teams and Professor Yong Zhao has been holding individual Skype sessions with the students and schools. A further gathering of the network before the end of the year is being discussed in consultation with the network.

Ideas and actions being undertaken across the network vary and include: personalised 'passion' projects for particular year levels; students designing new indoor and outdoor spaces in partnership with their community; and students scoping and pitching business ideas to mentors.

One school's journey so far, Traralgon College, is **attached**.



Caption: VIC CreatIF media team planning digital communications

CreatIF, the Victorian student media team, have met several times with Yong and Wayne. As the schools are geographically dispersed, the role of CreatIF is being reframed so that the students document and share stories for their respective schools, rather than for the whole network.

Slack, an online communications platform, has been set up to provide an interim way for the network to share their activities and support one another:  
<https://theparadigmshiffters.slack.com/>

## Western Sydney network

Eleven government secondary schools are participating in the NSW Network. Located in the Western Sydney region, each school's specific reason for opting 'in' to the initiative varies. For some, it is the good alignment between the initiative's guiding principles and the school's strategic plan. For all, it is an appetite to expand more personalised and entrepreneurial opportunities for students. Perhaps then it's no surprise to see that the Western Sydney Network's student media team is called 'WOO' – World Of Opportunities.

An important learning space for the initiative is the workshop days where school action teams (~100 people) gather at Rooty Hill High School. They have met twice, 5 May and 25 July, with a final gathering this year planned for 31 October. Dianne Hennessy, the Network Coordinator and former principal in the region, works with the action team co-ordinators, the WOO students and the initiative's partners.

The workshops are dominated by the presence and the voice of students. At the most recent gathering, students took the lead on sharing their school's entrepreneurial story 'so far'. This was done via short video clips. At the same session, the WOO team captured the key messages and challenges for the group and offered their reflections back to the group on what they heard. The input of Yong was once again highly valued as he offered commentary and provocation throughout the day.

Consistent with the intent and principles of the initiative, different ideas and products are emerging across the network. Some of these include: students re-designing their school's library, as a prototype for redesigning other learning spaces; students developing a social entrepreneurial initiative as part of a Year 10 Young Entrepreneurs Program; and students working towards developing an app to better customise their education.

An exciting aspect of the initiative is the opportunity to generate ideas, try them out and, if needed, change direction. As one school notes in their recent action learning cycle document, students are "realising they are

falling forward. Mistakes are what they are learning from, to then be able to evaluate and better their designs".



Caption: WOO media team with Yong

## Research

Along the way, Mitchell Institute and partners want to better understand how young people's self-efficacy and agency to be entrepreneurial-minded can be at the forefront of the design and outcomes of education at the school and system level.

As the school action teams apply the initiative's three guiding principles in their own context, the research will seek to identify and understand what conditions help, limit or prevent:

- **developing entrepreneurial-minded young people**

*Research definition: Entrepreneurial-minded (informed by the writings and work of Prof. Yong Zhao)*

*Individuals or groups whose curiosity leads them to seek out and identify or solve problems that are worth solving. They look at problems as opportunities, rather than as dead ends. They apply their creativity and talents to develop innovative ideas and solutions. They care about the quality of what they produce, embracing mistakes as markers for learning and improvement. They are energised by the potential benefits to others, locally or globally, from what they do and produce.*

- **increasing students' participation as valued contributors and decision makers in their education, and their engagement**

*Research definition: Student participation (informed by the research literature and research by Dr Harry Shier)*

*Each student is listened to, supported to express their views and their views are taken into account. They feel like they have a genuine stake in decision-making processes. They are involved as co-designers of processes and in the actual act of making decisions. They share power and responsibility for decision-*

*making around their entrepreneurial opportunities, experiences and services or products. Adults play important roles in scaffolding and supporting this type of student participation by creating openings and new opportunities with and for students.*

The research team will use a mix of methods (surveys, interviews and artefacts including Action Cycles) to answer three initiative-wide research questions:

- What do students notice help, limit or prevent them from being entrepreneurial-minded?
- What do the adults and students do in the networks to develop students' participation in entrepreneurial learning experiences and what constraints do they encounter?
- What, if any, are the perceived benefits and shifts resulting from this experience for participating? Do the participants think these will be long lasting?

The research is expected to start in November 2016 and end in May 2017 with an initiative-wide forum. Interviews will take place during network gatherings where possible.

The research findings will contribute to informing local and system education change so that all young people have the knowledge, skills and capabilities to succeed in school and beyond.

The Mitchell Institute and partners are in the process of gaining approval from Victoria University, the New South Wales Department of Education, and the Victorian Department of Education and Training to conduct the research. Once approval is granted schools will receive a letter from the Mitchell Institute inviting them to participate in the research.

Following this a representative from the Mitchell Institute research team, in collaboration with the Network Coordinators, will contact each school to schedule interviews and confirm logistics for the surveys.

## Key contacts

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## Key dates

- 31 October - final workshop in 2016 for the Western Sydney network
- TBC - final workshop in 2016 for the Victorian network
- November 2016 - research to commence
- Late May 2017 - Initiative-wide forum. Further details will be provided soon.

All schools should have had the opportunity for a one to one Skype session with Yong. Please email [yongzhao.uo@gmail.com](mailto:yongzhao.uo@gmail.com) and cc your relevant Network Coordinator to take up this opportunity if your school has not already done so.

## Is your school interested in preparing a feature for the newsletter?

Please contact your Network Coordinator and Hannah Cole ([Hannah.Cole@vu.edu.au](mailto:Hannah.Cole@vu.edu.au)) at the Mitchell Institute if your school's action team would like to contribute to the newsletter and share their story of cultivating more entrepreneurial-minded young people.

For more information regarding this initiative, visit the Mitchell Institute website at <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/our-work/entrepreneurial-learning-in-schools/>



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# Traralgon Secondary College Paradigm Shifters

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## Background

Our Creat*IF* entrepreneurial learning program involves Year 10 students developing skills in a passion area and then testing and using these skills – being able to use these skills to generate an income or help solve real problems, rather than hoping and relying on others to provide them with a job.

Our Entrepreneurial Learning website can be found at:

<http://logan4leaf.wixsite.com/tcentrepreneurs>

## Student projects

D&N Constructions – making metal outdoor furniture  
Repairing and selling trailers  
Digital Art – commissions on website – deviant art  
Lizard breeding business  
Art – oil and water based paintings to sell. Major project at the moment is to paint mural – might extend to business in the future  
Adventure racing – making own adventure race  
Writing a novel  
Assorted! Short story collection ATM  
Music video – music and filmmaking. Main project at the moment is a video about our program for the school to take to China  
Short video about a charity  
Programming/algorithms/game design. Current project is building a website for our group

## Journey so far...

The team had a Skype session with Yong on August 12. Some key points that came out of that were:

- “What is your niche?” “How will your idea be different from other people already doing similar things?”



- Connections. New ideas for what we can do with our projects and learning present themselves when we talk to each other about what we are doing.



Caption: Circle time session

The team meets twice per week using circle time to share progress and reflect on their learning and process. During the August 24 session, team members commented that the Entrepreneurial Program had enabled *“learn faster and learn more”* about their passion.

***“You get better at what you enjoy”***

Another positive is the freedom to express their opinions about their learning and to talk about what they would like to do.

***“If we have an idea they are not going to take it away straight away”***

A couple of challenges were raised.

***“It was really strange being without a teacher”***

This was linked to the challenge of staying on task. The responsibility required as part of entrepreneurial learning is seen as both an opportunity and a challenge

One student raised the issue of the continuation of the Program in 2017, saying that she would not stay to do Year 11 at Traralgon if it did not.

The students' comments linked with Aden's discussion of the role of trust, building commitment and supporting the students to follow through and build responsibility and accountability.<sup>1</sup> He raised the need for identifying and developing prerequisite competencies to support students to further develop their entrepreneurial learning.

The range of individual passions added to this demand (*"less structure compared to a team project"*) and the need to balance autonomy and control. Aden keeps a record of his discussion with each student (this is shared with the student) about their progress and the actions they identify as being necessary to progress the development of their product. We discussed the use of agreed milestones and timelines to support this process.



### ***"I want to be the best compared to others"***

A couple of students raised the understanding of some teachers outside the Program which has led to students being questioned about being unsupervised in the team space, *"What are you doing here without a teacher?"* and, in the case of one student, his absence from schools on the days that he is working with his professional mentor offsite.

The circle time ended with a discussion of a team product that could be used to celebrate the students learning and products and to promote the Entrepreneurial Program. A video or expo was suggested, with audiences including Year 9 students, the College leadership and parents.

On 10 October the Year 10 students enrolled in the program 'pitched' their business ideas to a panel of investors. The panel included our campus principals and representatives from Bank Australia. This pitch was their first big opportunity to show others what their skills are and test how useful they are.

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<sup>1</sup> Aden Wyers is Teaching and Learning Leader at Traralgon College.

A number of the students were successful in obtaining investment money or establishing a contract with the school to provide paid services. A number of other students are also in the process of negotiating various projects with the school.

Students will now be working hard to develop their projects as much as they can, and will be presenting these at a public exhibition later in the term.

**Update provided by the Victorian Network Coordinator and Traralgon Secondary College**