

DTA Award for Excellence

Avondale Technology Design Challenge

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Attachments:

1. Nomination Form
2. Letters of support
3. Synopsis supplied by Avondale School
4. Education tool – Power Point presented to Year 8 students

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The annual Avondale Technology Design Challenge provides an opportunity for residents within two aged care facilities to engage with year 8 students who are set the task of designing something to improve the life of an older person. Small groups of students are matched with 'their' resident to find out all they can about them, the groups then go about creating something specifically for the resident; from design concept through to production in line with their school curriculum. This program offers many benefits to residents and students including:

- intergenerational programming, the opportunity to educate students about stereotypes and the stigma attached to aged care and ageing
- increased student engagement, potential ongoing friendships created between students and residents
- person centred programming which employs the strengths of narrative therapy to build improved sense of self and self esteem, and
- active community engagement.

The program offers professional development opportunities for myself as a Diversional Therapist in the form of exploring innovative programming, working with dedicated teaching staff and opportunities to educate and promote Diversional Therapy practice.

2. PROGRAM DESIGN

At the beginning of 2013 I conducted an evaluation of our existing program of visiting the local school each term. Our quarterly school visits aim to foster engagement with residents in programs such as Kindy room visits, and viewing dress rehearsal productions and art displays. Both the school and the aged care facility acknowledged the value of our existing program, but considered that there was opportunity for improvement. Leading from discussions with teachers from the technology and design department, the concept of the year 8 Technology Design Challenge was born. During this period I was a student studying Health Science (Leisure & Health) through Charles Sturt University. My particular interest is gerontology, and I am currently working towards a Masters qualification in this field. Employing the principles learned in the study of gerontology, my goal was to introduce an innovative program with depth that provided an opportunity for residents to engage with community, whilst promoting person centred concepts and narration. The school hoped to engage students with 'out of classroom' learning.

The four main stages of program design are:

- Diversional Therapist education session with students – power point presentation with question time. (see attachment number 4 education tool – power point).
- Student groups introduced to residents at the school in 'cafe' environment.
- Residents and student groups meet during 3 or 4 organised sessions either at the aged care facility or at the school.
- Presentation – oral presentation by student groups and handing over of the creation, as well as acknowledgement of excellence at the end of year presentation night at the school.

3. REVIEW

The teachers and I met following the power point education session to review the first step in the process. Teachers reported that they were very satisfied with the level of student engagement, and some of the design concepts being discussed. One teacher mentioned that following the presentation, a student who was very difficult to motivate and who was a poor academic performer had been one of the students to ask me a question. The teacher was amazed to see this boy ask the question, and come up with an initial concept which proved to be his groups submission for the challenge.

Meanwhile, at the aged care facility, I was working with staff and management to inform them about the principles of this innovative new program we were working on with the school. I spoke to the residents, both individually and in open forums such as the resident meetings to tell them about the Year 8 Technology Design Challenge.

Residents thought the idea was wonderful – many of them viewed the existing outings to the school as a highlight, and couldn't wait to work with 'their' group of kids!

4. IMPLEMENT

My presentation to the student group was the first stage of program implementation.

Here I aimed to instil excitement about the challenge, educate the students on ageing, suggest possible ways for them to merge the identified resident need with their ideas and create a forum for discussion and questions.

The next step to implement the program involved matching residents to their student groups and allowing them to get to know one another. To promote a relaxed, conversational-promoting atmosphere, we organised a 'cafe' experience in the school auditorium. 'Cafe' tables were arranged to seat the resident and their student group, while the school organised for catering students to take drink orders from each table. It was amazing how careful consideration of the environment and the first introduction of residents and students seemed to have all participants relaxed and feeling at ease.

Over the course of time, while the students continued developing their design they also built a relationship with 'their' resident during scheduled visits, either residents going to the school or the students coming to the aged care facility.

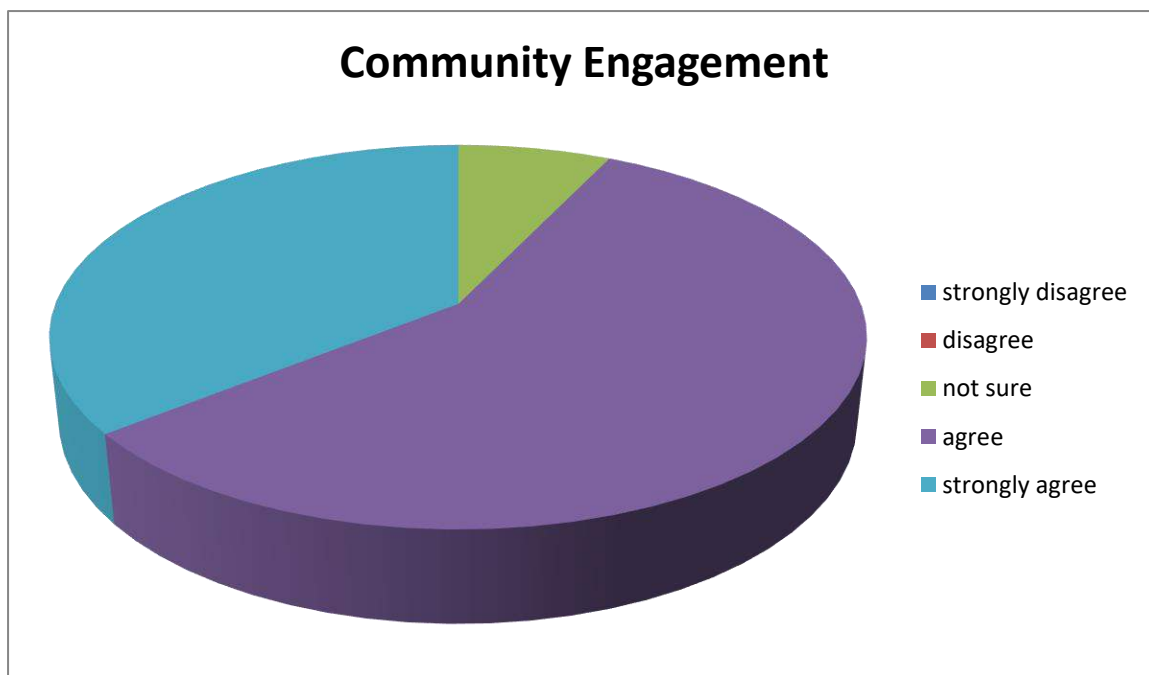
Students were innovative and considerate of their resident and the residents' preferences. Some examples of designs include an electronic catalogue of favourite recipes (students from Information & Communication Technology); a hand made quilt incorporating the residents favourite colours and photo's transferred onto fabric (students from Textile Technology); a timber box on wheels with a clear lid designed with spools to hold wool & stop tangles for a resident who's hobby is knitting (students from Timber Technologies). Teachers and I found it immensely rewarding to observe the interactions between students and residents, and to watch concepts become meaningful creations.

We organised a morning for the student groups to present and formally hand over their creations to residents. Student groups were required to address the group of residents, aged care staff and teachers to explain what their Challenge concept was, why they chose this idea, and which resident they had been working with. From this experience, students gained public speaking experience, the residents enjoyed hearing their group talk about how their creation was designed around their preferences, likes and dislikes. Some residents and staff were asked to score the student groups using a matrix which considered the presentation, aspects of design, degree of detail to resident preference etc. This matrix, along with teacher assessment allowed a top achieving student group to be chosen. I attended the end of year school presentation night and presented a special award to the highest achieving student group. The program received public accolades from the school principal.

5. EVALUATION

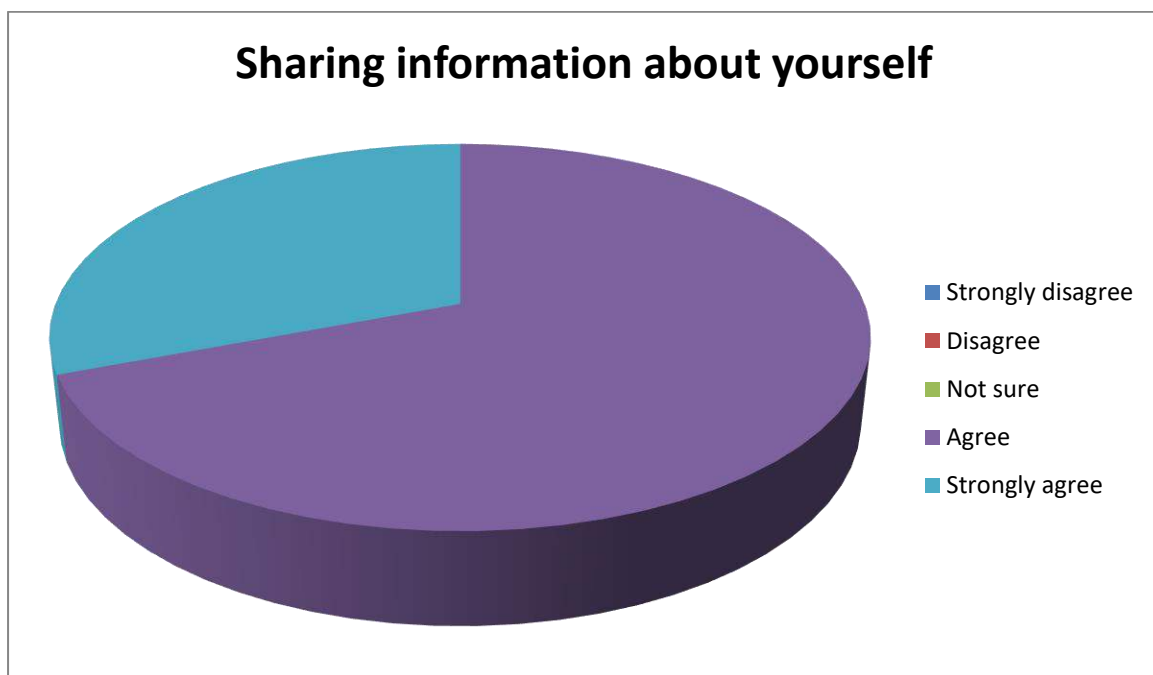
There were two identifiable outcomes for residents participating in the year 8 Technology Design Challenge. Firstly, did the program offer residents improved opportunity to engage with the community? (we are looking for opportunities to address ageing stigma, intergenerational opportunities, promote deinstitutionalisation). Secondly, did the program offer residents an opportunity to share with others their story, preferences, likes and dislikes? (Using narrative principles to promote meaningful connections, improve self esteem and sense of identity. Promoting person centred principles).

The 16 residents who participated in the program where asked to complete a short survey at the completion of the program to ascertain their views on these two concepts, as well as an opportunity to provide comment. Of the 16 residents surveyed, 14 results were submitted. Two residents declined to participate in the survey.



Graph 1:

Survey question: Do you think that participating in the Year 8 Technology Design Challenge has provided you with opportunities to **engage with the wider community**? (n=14, 1= not sure, 8= agree, 4= strongly agree).



Graph 2:

Survey question: Do you feel that the Year 8 Technology Design Challenge has enabled you to **share your story**, preferences, likes and dislikes with others? (n=14, 9= agree, 4 = strongly agree).

Comments:

- “I wish my family could have been here for the student presentation.” Thora
- “I really enjoyed my time with the students, and hope to do it again.” Laurel
- “It was wonderful.” Evelyn

6. EXPLORING THEORY

Carl Rogers was the first person to coin the term 'person centred care', and this concept has grown to encapsulate "a recognition of and connection with the *person*, a focus on the person's strengths and goals, and interdisciplinary approach, and recognition of the centrality of relationships." (Nay & Garrett, 2009). The Technology Design Challenge draws on the person centred model to focus on positive outcomes for residents. The residents interaction with their student group allowed them to connect as a valued person and to share their strengths and interests with others. Relationship building is a central and vital component of the program.

Narrative therapy and story witnessing is a concept explained by Andrews (2001) which employs the concept of residents talking about their lives with therapeutic goals of reminiscence, validation and reclamation of dignity. The outsider witnesses (students) also benefit from interactions; the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback to the resident via their personalised Design Challenge creation. The benefits and opportunities facilitated by narrative therapy within the Design Challenge are vast.

Consider Andrews (2001) comments in relation to her Story-witness project:

"Upon reflection, I now see this work as just as important as providing food and a roof. We must provide forums for the acknowledgement of people's stories and lives." (Andrews, 2001, p. 266).

The Technology Design Challenge program promotes wellbeing for residents; student engagement; professional development for Diversional Therapist & teachers; and allows stakeholders such as families, management and staff of the school and aged care facilities to understand the importance of social aspects of community engagement for senior residents living in care.

7. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Diversional Therapy practice in aged care is regulated mainly by Standard 3 – Resident Lifestyle- within the Accreditation Standards as set out in the Aged Care Act 1997.

(Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd., 2014). The Year 8 Technology Design Challenge addresses the standards in the following ways:

- 3.1 Continuous Improvement – The program is innovative, and seeks continuous improvement through evaluation and feedback from all stakeholders including residents, students, teachers, staff and families.
- 3.5 Independence – The program encourages residents to “achieve maximum independence, maintain friendships and participate in the life of the community within and outside the residential care service.” (Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd, 2014, n.p.). Resident independence is promoted through their preferences being explored; maximising community engagement; and the fostering of friendship and social networks.
- 3.6 Privacy and Dignity – Respectful relationships are fostered between residents, student groups and staff.
- 3.7 Leisure interests and activities – “Residents are encouraged and supported to participate in a wide range of interests and activities of interest to them.” (Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd, 2014, n.p.). Residents are participating in a group environment that is focused on them and their interests. They have the opportunity to pass on knowledge and to narrate to an interested group of students, who then create something meaningful to the resident.
- 3.8 Cultural and spiritual life – The essence of this program is constructed around individual interests and individuality. For example, one of last years student groups focused on a residents cultural background and designed a personal catalogue of information about her home town in South Africa.

- 3.9 Choice and decision making – “Each resident.....is enabled to exercise choice and control over his or her lifestyle” (Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd, 2014, n.p.). Residents are actively encouraged to opt in and out of activity programs. To participate in the year 8 Technology Design Challenge is completely optional, but much sort after by residents.

8. MERIT OF THE PROGRAM

Professional development

This program has informed my professional knowledge as a Diversional Therapist in several ways. Firstly, it is interesting to note how the program evolved from taking residents on a quarterly bus outing to the school into a program which is engaging residents and their families, students and their parents, teachers and the wider community. Whilst my focus has been on resident outcomes in relation to community involvement and person centred practice, it has been educational to learn from teachers that there have been some amazing results achieved by some students as well. Their main focus was on engaging students out of the classroom, and for the students to experience 'real life' learning away from the classroom. The school has valued the program to the extent that they have rescheduled classes and included the program in their end of year presentation night. (For further insight into the school's evaluation of the project, refer to attachment number 3 synopsis supplied by Avondale school.)

Another professional enlightenment revolves around the value of making the program 'all about the resident'. Trained Diversional Therapists know the principles of personhood and person centred care, but, watching it in practice to this extent is something else!! Seeing the residents' talk to the students with pride about their life history, the things they have done, the things they like and dislike is like seeing them awaken. It has been my pleasure.

Addressing the student body to promote Diversional therapy, seniors and the program itself is very rewarding. I developed and presented a power point presentation to the students which addressed stereotypes associated with ageing, a brief introduction to theory on ageing, some information about our residents and information about the challenge. I aim to inspire the students to be excited about meeting the resident, to

challenge their views of older Australians, and to make their Technology Design Challenge project be something that truly does make a difference to the life of an older person. During this presentation, students were asked to complete a questionnaire, and I knew that I had captured their attention, as they asked questions which indicated that they were taking this challenge seriously.

The facilities and the community

The Year 8 Technology Design Challenge has positively impacted upon the aged care facilities, and the wider community. The Challenge provides an opportunity for residents from two aged care facilities to mingle, and it has raised the profile of Diversional Therapy within the service. Upper management, including the Chief Executive Officer, are aware of and support the program, and will sometimes ask me questions about when it's happening this year etc. Management have committed to funding a small cash prize for the winning group of students. The wider community are coming to know about the Challenge through their involvement with either the aged care facilities or the school. Families of residents, and parents of students support the program.

9. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is always scope to make a great program better. Some aspects that have been considered for improvements in 2014 include:

- Greater involvement of residents families throughout the process, especially during the student presentation morning, when residents receive their item (feedback from resident Thora)
- Opportunity for residents to debrief, share and discuss their thoughts or concerns throughout entirety of the program
- The school has identified that the student assessment process needs to be redesigned.

10. TRANSPORTABILITY OF PROGRAM

Is it possible that every aged care facility seeking an innovative and intergenerational program could embrace the concept of the Technology Design Challenge? Absolutely! Diversional therapy staff would need to make contact with an external group – maybe a high school, adult education centre, men’s shed, rotary club etc. The program could be modified to meet the needs of participating groups, but the essence of promoting person centred care and resident story narratives would still be the ultimate goal.

11. REFERENCES

Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd. (2014). [Electronic version].

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